

Robert McClure Interview on Helen S. Meyner

John Kincaid (JK): Good afternoon. We're at the Meyner Center with Robert McClure, who worked with Helen Meyner. It is Friday, September 28, 2018, at five after two in the afternoon. Also present is Diane Shaw, who is director of special collections at the library of Lafayette College. Edwin C. Landis, former law partner and friend of Robert Meyner, is here too. I'm John Kincaid, the Meyner Professor and director of the Meyner Center for the Study of State and Local Government. And so Bob, maybe you could begin by just giving us a brief bio so we can situate your work with Helen within the context of your life.

Robert McClure (RM): Fair enough. I graduated from Lafayette in May of 1974. My first job out of college was as a cab driver over in Phillipsburg, where my parents lived. Within a week, I, through a family connection and some serendipity, had an interview with Governor Bob Meyner in his Phillipsburg office. Governor Meyner kept Friday morning hours in Phillipsburg even though his main law office with Mr. Landis was in Newark. He would also not only keep law hours but he was on the board of the Phillipsburg National Bank, and they would have board meetings then. So, I go down and I'm interviewed by Governor Bob and, lo and behold, I am hired.

RM: I then spent a good portion of the next four-and-a-half years working for Helen. I became the coordinator of the Helen Meyner 1974 congressional campaign for Warren and Sussex counties. I had one of the three headquarter buildings in Phillipsburg that was mine to run for the volunteers that we had in town. When Helen won, I went to Washington, DC, with her and became basically, truth in labeling here, the file clerk. I didn't exactly get the job I had wished with Helen at that point, but I worked in her Washington office for eight months, whereupon I left for a special congressional election down in Nashville, Tennessee. Barbara McConnell, who was Helen's campaign manager in 1974, was from Nashville. I called Barbara and told her that I was interested in getting back into campaigns, and Barbara in her great way and Southern drawl told me about the four candidates running: who would be the best funded, who she thought was the best, and who she thought would win. I went to work for the person who she said she thought would win. I ended up being almost – I wasn't the campaign manager but I was the only person on the campaign who had campaign experience and got a tremendous amount of experience working for Clifford Allen's special congressional election in the fall of 1975, in Nashville. That was just fantastic.

RM: Clifford won and I got the job with him back in Washington, starting right after Thanksgiving when he was sworn into Congress in the role that I had hoped to do with Helen, as a matter of fact. So, I was also helped along this way that Mr. Allen thought that Helen had basically lent me to his campaign. So, he was grateful. On a trip to Washington, he went by Helen's office to thank her for sending me (laughs) and told her what a wonderful job I was doing, which was great at that point (laughter). I stayed with Clifford until late January 1977. Now, because he had won a special congressional election, Mr. Allen did not have any opposition when he ran in 1976. No one saw a reason to run after he'd just run the year before. So, he actually told me that I could use, in quotes, vacation time to go up and volunteer for Helen's campaign in 1976. So, for three weeks in October of '76, I returned to Phillipsburg.

RM: Helen's '74 campaign was headquartered at Budd Lake, even though I ran an auxiliary office in Phillipsburg. But the '76 campaign was headquartered in Phillipsburg at the Elks' Club on South Main Street. I worked for Barbara McConnell for those three weeks and saw Helen through to victory and, when it was all over, went back to work for Mr. Allen. But that reestablished my relationship with Barbara McConnell. When she decided to run for the assembly in 1977, she asked me if I would join her as her campaign manager. Her district, much like Helen's congressional district, was extremely Republican. Only the southern portion in Mercer County was Democratic, and it was represented by Republicans, too, in the assembly and one in the senate. Barbara ran and I worked as her campaign manager out of Flemington. She won. Well, that was beneficial to me, not only in enhancing my reputation but I also took Barbara off the table for being Helen's campaign manager in 1978. So, I'm sure she had discussions with Governor Bob, and in late January of that year, they hired me to be her campaign manager for the 1978 campaign. I worked with her through the rest of the year.

JK: Okay, great. Now, you said when you began talking about Helen that you were hired by Bob Meyner rather than by Helen Meyner for the '74 campaign?

RM: This was a bit of a problem, John, in that Barbara McConnell had made it clear that she really did not want much of the governor's direct involvement in the campaign. I think even the governor decided that that was best in a way. But I believe what had happened was by meeting with him and having an old friend of his – Cliff Allen, who had been the former mayor of Lopatcong Township – and, in fact, the first person I had ever done any political work with – I think when I was 10 or 12, I was a paperboy. Because I had a paper bag, Cliff Miller hired me to take campaign literature out (laughter) and distribute it in the township. He agreed to meet with me, and then I made myself so unbelievably cheap that – and Ed, is it fair to say Bob was parsimonious in his own ways? (laughter) For the record, Ed is chuckling (laughter). So, I think between Lafayette, the Cliff Miller recommendation, being from Phillipsburg, and how inexpensive I was willing to work.

Diane Shaw (DS): You had it all.

RM: He said I was on. Well, this did create a problem at the headquarters in Budd Lake, and it took not much convincing. They did not have a Warren-Sussex County coordinator at that point. And I met with them and everything went very well. I don't think they were arguing either with what they were able to hire me for. Even the fact that I was to meet with Bob in his Phillipsburg office on Friday mornings was not a source of contention since he still had incredibly good political contacts in Warren and Sussex and would be a tremendous help as I built a field operation in those counties.

JK: So, you stayed in touch with them through the campaign, then?

RM: Yes –

JK: Yeah.

RM: – as I did in 1978, also.

JK: Yeah.

RM: Yes.

DS: So, Bob, I'd like to just clarify. You actually worked for Helen's first campaign and then...

RM: First winning campaign.

DS: First winning campaign, that's right.

RM: I did not work for her in '72.

DS: Right, her first winning campaign. Then you went to Washington and worked in her office –

RM: Yes.

DS: – for several – about eight months.

RM: Eight months, eight months.

DS: And then, the next involvement directly with Helen was as her campaign manager in '78

RM: Yes.

DS: Okay.

RM: Now, we would see each other –

DS: Right, right.

RM: – often because I remained friends with her office. I had my own office on the Hill, in Clifford Allen's congressional office, and I continued to play softball with Meyner's team.

DS: (laughs) That's great.

RM: And so, I kept in contact with everybody. And so, yes.

JK: What are some of the highlights from the '74 campaign that you recall?

RM: Being the field coordinator, the way that the campaign was laid out, we got to spend an inordinate amount of time with Helen when she was in our part of the district. That was really wonderful. The district was so large that, I mean, you would have Helen for a three-, four-, maybe five-hour chunk of time. I remember one Saturday when I had her for the entire day. So, we really got to know one another, each other's foibles, the quirks, that type of thing. I liked the fact that I was dealing with, you know, with Bob Meyner. I mean, the former governor of New

Jersey, I remember as a kid from Lopatcong going into the governor's office on a field trip. He was no longer governor at that time but, I mean, he was known. And so, that was, you know, something for somebody right out of school. But then, Helen was special in her own way. And getting to spend the time, just taking her around, seeing her in action –

DS: Yeah, what kind of –

RM: – feeding her information –

DS: – demeanor was she? What kind of campaigner was she?

RM: In '74, she did a lot of retail campaigning. She was not afraid to ring some doorbells at that point. It was something that was basically dropped in '76, and we did none of that in '78. But she would do that – there were a lot of – being that there weren't a lot of big towns, there were a lot of small events, and Helen was just wonderful one-on-one. She's one of the few people who was as good one-on-one as she was in a larger crowd. She did have an aura about her, and she projected very well. Physically, I mean, Helen was a larger woman for that time. She just came across as somebody who was larger and dynamic. And it was not larger in a bad way. It was larger in a good dynamic sort of way. So, one of the foibles was that the area, even the Democrats were relatively conservative, much more than Helen was. I never learned this trick until I was much better at it in '78 when I worked for her. But we would try to get Helen to tailor her speeches a little bit toward the audience. Helen was very liberal, much more liberal than Governor Bob. I don't think he was actually comfortable with a number of her positions (laughter) on things. But he was very good at keeping quiet. Maybe he said something to her in the privacy of his own home, but we never heard that. I don't recall him ever talking to the staff, you know, "Keep Helen away from that position or don't go there" or anything like that. So, he really let her do her own thing. But if you would say to Helen, "You know, when you go to this area, maybe you want to focus a little bit more on" – healthcare wasn't a big issue then but – "on the environment because they're big on open spaces. But because they're big on open spaces, maybe you want to stay – don't do as much on gun control." Well, Helen would take this as my position (laughter). And then, all of a sudden, it was, like – (laughs) it wasn't my position but it was, like, "Why do you feel that way, Bob?" (laughter) "No, Helen." And that was kind of the – Almost the biggest source of contention during these long car rides was trying to explain to her that I was trying to explain to her the audience she would be addressing, not me. She had me from go. So, go from there.

JK: What were some of the leading issues in the campaign?

RM: Well, at that time, integrity was probably number one in that it was certainly in the midst of Watergate, Nixon's – was becoming more and more prominent in the news. So, that, the whole issue that was springing up around the hearings that had begun in '73, and, at that point, they had discovered the tapes. During the campaign, pardon me, more and more things about Nixon were coming out, to the point where it certainly all came to a head in early August of 1974 with Nixon's resignation. Now, our feeling was – and it'd be worth asking the other campaign managers, campaign operatives as you interview them if they felt the same way. But if I remember it, we still did not think that Joe Maraziti's vote as one of the ten who refused to

impeach Nixon on the Judiciary Committee was enough to sink him, that it was that much of a Republican district that Maraziti had won with about 57%, 58% of the vote in 1972. Of course, Helen ran a truncated campaign then. But we thought that was kind of indicative of where the district stood. So, that was a big one.

RM: Also, for our district, the seniors – the district was maybe ahead of its time in the advancement of seniors in terms of more folks getting elderly in our district. So, there were a lot of issues involving geriatrics. I remember myself doing a debate against one of Maraziti's people in a Sussex County town on senior-citizen issues. So, Helen addressed that. She was very dynamic. She also, even then, was in favor of universal healthcare and backed something that Hubert Humphrey had put forward in the Senate. I believe Kennedy was also one of the sponsors of that. So, senior citizen issues.

RM: The Tocks Dam was an incredibly big issue, which was complex enough that I'm not sure even by the time we were done in '78 we understood the full magnitude of where people stood on that issue. Helen was actually slow in coming around because we kind of thought that Bob Meyner might have been for it, although, again, he didn't say anything, and I think his opinion may have changed. Or maybe he was open-minded about it to start out with. So, Helen was very much on record against Tocks Dam and that was a big issue.

RM: The other issue, if you get down to Mercer County, was Mercer County still had a GM plant. And it was one of the few places, Phillipsburg being another, where there were still union workers. So, this started to be the era in which there was a decline in industrialization. By 1978, I could really see that in the debates that I did with Courter at union headquarters, trying to get the endorsement. But Helen was very good in going to the GM plant in Mercer and shaking hands there and things like that. The same thing with Ingersoll Rand. I remember taking her to a Saturday function at Ingersoll Rand where she shook hands. But we did a lot of small forums: senior citizens, fellow Democrats, to get them stirred up because the first Democrat in a long time had just been elected in Sussex County the year before. So, they actually were hoping for some better things at that point. And Warren County had one Democratic freeholder. So, there were some Democrats who were around. They were all gone by '78, interesting enough, except for the Sussex County surrogate, who was a Democrat, who happened to win reelection.

JK: Wow. Did she get any outside help on the '74 campaign from any well-known Democrats?

RM: You know, I don't really – the only one I remember was Bella Abzug came into the district to do a women's event that Irene Smith from Belvidere, New Jersey, who was a very big operative, political operative in Warren County, ran. She would do a women's lunch every year. Bella Abzug came in for that, but I do not remember any additional surrogate speakers. Even Bill Bradley was quiet. And Helen did not run in '74 until she had gotten the assurance from Bill Bradley that he was not running for the House, to the point where when Helen went to file her papers in '74, something that she wasn't available for and I did in '78, Bill Bradley went with her to the state house as a show of support because everybody thought that he was going to run in '74 and then he delayed until '78 and the Senate seat came open, or up for grabs, let's put it that way.

DS: Did Bob campaign for Helen?

RM: To my knowledge, no. He wasn't even at very many functions. I was trying to think of this. I don't recall him being at either the '74, '76, or '78 debates that took place in Warren and Sussex counties, although my mind is – I don't really remember Warren County to be a – I remember the Sussex County ones very well because all three of them, in '74, '76, and '78, took place at the Playboy Club in Vernon, New Jersey – (laughter)

DS: Interesting (laughs).

RM: – which Playboy had sunk millions and millions of dollars into, and it was a grand failure. So, they were doing anything in the world they could to bring in business.

DS: Yeah.

RM: So, the area communities, the senior groups, anybody was using the Playboy Club as their headquarters. I remember being at all three of the debates, '74, '76 – (laughter), and Helen was very comfortable in that situation. I mean, in a sense, while she was a new-school woman in certain ways, she was an old-school woman in other ways. I remember we sat in a booth after the debates at the Playboy Club and had a drink afterwards (laughter). She had no problems with the bunnies coming and serving her, anything like – there was no political screed or anything like that (laughter)

JK: Wow. Is there an explanation for why Bob Meyner was not more actively campaigning for her?

RM: Well, you don't know what Bob was doing behind the scenes in terms of giving moral support. He loved her very much and, you know, her running for Congress was really – and this'll be sexist way to put it, but him letting her do it in a way was really an act of love. He, I think, missed her in that sense. She was gone. He had his own career. I mean, his law firm was doing great. I think he really enjoyed that work. He was still doing his bank work. In some ways, I was thinking about this, he did have his hand in the campaign a little bit in that the treasurer for the campaign, Ted Hargrove, was an employee of the Phillipsburg National Bank (laughter). So, I'm sure that if Ted saw anything – or Bob may have had a question or two about Ted and Ted would've told them, you know, exactly what was going on. One funny moment in the '78 campaign was when one of our volunteers, I guess, in putting a leaflet inside somebody's door had accidentally let their dog out of the house. I ended up, we ended up, the campaign, writing a \$200 check to the veterinarian. I remember our treasurer, Ted Hargrove, saying, "Is this something I should ask about?" We said, "No." (laughter) And he didn't. He left it – go at that.

DS: Did somebody hit the dog (inaudible)?

RM: No, no, but I think the person said something about the dog got ill or something happened. But anyway –

DS: Or – of course.

RM: We just didn't want any –

DS: Right, any –

RM: – problems, so we made –

DS: – [sure?].

RM: – something like that go away.

DS: Right, right. Of course, Helen was a dog person, right? Yes, yes.

RM: She was. And there were some extremely funny campaign moments, almost Kafka-esque (laughter). I remember taking her one Saturday to – we were meeting the surrogate and the freeholder candidate in Sussex County in the borough of Andover. Very small place. And the two Democratic coordinators of Andover must have been 80 years old apiece. They brought dogs. The freeholder candidate looked like he had just come off a golf course. I mean, he had, like, on yellow pants (laughter) and a plaid jacket and he was carrying a golf umbrella with him. Here we go down the streets of Andover with – oh, and this woman, had elk hounds, which I think is what Helen had, didn't she? But anyway –

RM: Helen just went nuts. I mean, this was great (laughter). Three dogs, three candidates, (laughs), a campaign aide. I think we scared the daylight out of anybody (laughter) who we attempted to knock on their door. I think it lasted for, oh, about an hour. But we could say we were in Andover knocking on doors (laughter). But Helen was pretty good-humored about that sort of thing. But it was tiring. She took Mondays off and that remained the same in '74, '76 to my knowledge and when I ran the campaign in '78. And in '78 and '76, she had the dual job of running back and forth between Washington and –

DS: Yeah, she was still [a functioning?] –

RM: – the district.

DS: Yeah.

RM: Yeah, so –

JK: Yeah, that's right.

RM: – the fact that she had, you know, tremendous stamina was extremely helpful in these conditions. She needed it.

JK: What did she say motivated her to run in the first place? What was driving her?

RM: I think she had two things. One is I really do believe that Helen had a service aspect about her that she just was somebody who, throughout her life, had been brought up in situations, being a Stevenson and having people in her family who were out there in the public service. I think that was just something that, in a sense, she grew up about. I don't ever recall Helen pontificating, you know, saying that this was any sort of a burden. She never, ever talked in those terms. It was something that she wanted to do and something as a congresswoman because I think she ran on her own motives, that she had her own beliefs as to what needed to be done, especially in regard to international policy, that she wasn't as political as what somebody who ran a campaign would hope she would be. She did not like raising money. Maybe Governor Bob did some of this – in his office or in Princeton--but Helen was not one to get on the phone to call people to raise money. I don't recall the Meyners, if they even put in the campaign limit of \$1,000 per cycle. I don't remember them donating to their own campaign. I'm not saying that in a negative way. If you think about it, I think their belief was that, "If we're actually going to be a real-life candidate, then we need people to support us. We're not going to go out there and fund ourselves and make this an ego-driven sort of deal." You know?

RM: So, she wasn't, I think, interested in being a congresswoman for the sake of having that title. I think she was interested in terms of actually doing something. Now, that doing something did not make her the most ideal candidate because her district was conservative. She was far more liberal than most. I think we benefited in '74 a little bit by the Maraziti issue-- 'cause the district had been designed for Maraziti. He was in the New Jersey Senate and it was kind of their gift to him that they redistricted to make that his seat. His support for Nixon brought her closer, but it wasn't until the mistress scandal broke and was picked up, I think, by the *New York Daily News*, where it was found out that Maraziti had a 27-year-old mistress who – and even that, interestingly enough – I had more people – this is a different time – women included, saying that this was the most interesting thing that they had ever heard about Joe Maraziti (laughter), that he was 65 years old with five kids and had a 27-year-old mistress. It was like, go, Joe! (laughter) You know, you wanted to smack your head. But, when it was discovered that this woman was on his congressional payroll and that he also had registered a real estate office out of his congressional office, that's what really broke his back and drove the election our way.

JK: Yeah.

RM: At that point, it was just Helen's not to lose. Then, in 1976, a moderate Republican, Bill Schluter (1927-2018), who just passed away, almost just a week after you first got in contact with me. It was Clark Walker, who was in my class of '74 at Lafayette, who put it on Facebook that Bill Schluter had passed away. He knew him 'cause he lives in Pennington. Bill was a moderate Republican. Bill came close in '76, but Carter prevailed over Ford that year. Helen's record – interesting enough, I think it benefited Helen that there was a Republican president during her first term because most of her votes weren't really necessarily in the limelight. When Carter came in, our '78 opponent could highlight her votes for Jimmy Carter as being liberal. You know, "This is the liberal Democratic agenda." Schluter didn't quite have that. I mean, Helen might have voted against Ford but he wasn't seen as that popular of a president. In fact, Helen had a great joke in '74 that – now, as everybody has heard it – but, when Nixon was packing up after he resigned to leave the White House, he accidentally bumped into Gerry Ford.

And Nixon said, "Pardon me" (laughter). And Ford said, "Not for another 30 days" (laughter). Helen was very good at telling it on the campaign trail.

RM: Another thing that she worked in – now, in 2018 when we have so many women candidates, this is not a new line, also – but Helen ran against three men in the 1974 Democratic primary. I didn't work on her primary campaign, but Helen would tell the story in her little campaign talks that she would end her debates with the three men by saying, "May the best man win, whoever she may be" (laughter). That was a good line in '74 that she used. But I think the fact that she got out there, that she was willing to go to all these little hamlets and burgs in Warren, Sussex, and Hunterdon counties – 42% of the district's vote was in Morris County. So, the headquarters was in Budd Lake. After she was elected, Tim Van Hise's district-services headquarters was out of Dover. And then, she had offices in Sparta run by Pat Dykstra and in Lambertville, where Caroline [O'Neill?] worked. She had a very, very good constituent services team. Tim did extremely well – Tim Van Hise, in that regard. And she had an excellent legislative team in Washington.

RM: But by 1978, the liberal nature of her votes had caught up with her. The decline of industry in Phillipsburg and in Mercer County was harmful as we didn't win Phillipsburg by anywhere's near the margin that we had in previous elections. If I can give you a Bob Meyner line, in '78, being that Helen was in Washington, I debated Jim Courter before a bunch of union groups going for their endorsement. Courter was very smart going even though he was going to lose. But just to give you an idea of things that he used against Helen. Helen had fought and had won the battle to keep Picatinny Arsenal by 1978. But I think Courter's campaign caught on to the fact, much like Reagan did in 1980, that there were a number of conservative Democrats and labor guys who were still very much pro-military, that sort of thing. So, Courter was able to use the fact that Helen had voted against the development of the neutron bomb, which was quite in the news at that time. One of the secrets was that Picatinny Arsenal might become the headquarters or be one of the places where – nobody was supposed to know that (laughter) but everybody seemed to know that. And Helen had cast a few--although they were characterized as protest votes--procedural votes against the defense budget. So, in Morris County, Courter was able to say, "Yes, Helen fought to save the post. But, you know, if you look at her record, she's not really doing things to continue to support the arsenal; she's not as strong on defense." And he was able to point out certain votes. So, I would hear this during the union talk, during our union debates, that Helen had voted against the defense budget and some other things. She was very strong for Davis-Bacon, so that was always in our favor with the union vote. I drew the lot to speak first, and I thought I would actually head off Courter by talking about the fact that Helen had cast these procedural votes against the defense budget but had actually, for final passage, always was for it.

DS: Right.

RM: – and don't let the opponent throw you off, and blah-blah-blah. I got the union endorsement. But that Friday, I'm in Bob Meyner's office, and somebody must have called Bob. The first thing Bob said to me was, "Do you always start a fight by punching the other guy's fist with your nose?" (laughter) So, I've used that a few times in the intervening years. Then, in '78, I, for the first part of the campaign – I'm going to use the word "I" a lot because until June, I was

the only employee of the campaign. We opened the campaign with Helen announcing her candidacy. And on St. Patrick's Day of 1978, I had gotten a Chinese restaurant in Dover, which was turning into a heavy Hispanic then Puerto Rican town, but the most populist town. We made a great thing out of--we didn't call it diversity back then--bringing everybody together, and Helen made her announcement and she was very happy with that. When I was in New Jersey at that point, Bob Meyner and I -- Barbara McConnell, I digress a second, had mentioned at the end of her campaign after she won that maybe it would be best -- she didn't know at that point I was going to become Helen's campaign manager -- but maybe for '78, it would be best if we had a large fundraiser, a dinner up front, to raise the majority of our funds so we could concentrate on the campaign. So, that actually got put into play. And I don't know if -- we have to fundraise with the Braidburn Country Club in Florham Park.

Edwin Landis (EL): With that -- well, Brae Burn?

RM: That Braidburn --

RM: So, we decided to do this in April. We agreed that the Braidburn Country Club in Florham Park, run by Sal Bontempo [Salvatore A. Bontempo, 1909-1989] would be great. Bob Meyner, being an old friend, and I wasn't aware of this, of Sal Bontempo, the two of us, Governor Bob and myself drive up to the Braidburn Country Club and sat down with Sal to work out the arrangements for this dinner. It was wonderful because little did I know that -- and these were terms they used, Ed--that Sal was Bob's bag man (laughter) during his gubernatorial elections. You could tell by the way they talked the deep affection they had for one another, but also of the fact that they were not enjoying these cleaner elections that good government had brought about (laughter). They were talking about how, on election day, they had distributed cash like it was water for the get-out-the-vote effort in various places in New Jersey. It was a lot of fun listening to that. Barbara McConnell secured for me, because I hadn't rented a headquarter yet, my ability to use the Hudson County--I'm sorry, pardon me--the Hunterdon County Democratic headquarters as my base for running the fundraiser at Braidburn.

RM: And Helen did her job. She got Tip O'Neill to be the main speaker. We sold over \$70,000 worth of tickets, and we had a great night, just a great night. And the Bontempos, Sal and his son Paul, were fantastic to work with in putting it together. It was nice that they were old Meyner friends. O'Neill was great. But that night was very special for me. And it shows how far our security consciousness has gone, from an April night in 1978. Tip O'Neill flew to the Morristown airport from, I think, from Boston, and his staff got him there. He was picked up by Hugh DeFazio and some Morris County bigwigs. He was from Dover. He was a lawyer. Unfortunately, he died early of brain cancer but was a wonderful person. And so, some Morris County bigwigs brought O'Neill from the Morris County airport to the dinner -- but it was my job to get him from the Morris County airport back to Washington. And the only thing that O'Neill's staff cared about was that the plane I rented had two pilots. They didn't know me. They had never met me. All this was done by the phone. I called up, basically using the Yellow Pages, the private services at the Morris County airport, found a private plane and got two pilots. The whole thing cost under \$550 (laughter).

DS: Wow.

RM: When the event was over, the delegation took O'Neill to the airport, and I went with him. My car was actually there. I guess I drove there, 'cause I was staying in New Jersey. And only Tom Berrigan, the press secretary to Helen Meyner, was supposed to fly back to Washington with O'Neill. Tom said, "Pop, get in the plane!" (laughter) He said, "It's coming back here tonight!" It was going to Washington and coming back. So, I did. And for the next hour and 40 minutes, Tom Berrigan and I had Tip O'Neill all to ourselves in the back of a small plane that I had rented to get Tip to Washington. And Berrigan being Irish and O'Neill being Irish, O'Neill started telling Irish stories. What I remember is by the time we got to Washington, O'Neill was asleep. We were flying very near the capital and Tom and I are crying. The son of a railroad guy and a secretary, and Tom's father was a meat cutter. You know, here we were with the third most powerful person in the country, alone with him, flying in a plane.

DS: Wow.

RM: And it was just great. If you're going to interview Tom Berrigan, when the time comes, ask him about O'Neill – what he did when he arrived in Washington. That's Tom's story to tell.

JK: Okay (laughter).

RM: But that was fantastic. I did go back to Washington because in May of that year, I ran the Washington fundraiser for Helen. And Helen was not the easiest person to raise money for in Washington because of her committee assignments. She had chosen international relations, which did not have a lot of lobbyists with deep pockets attached to it. And O'Neill, as an extraction for giving Helen her first choice, put her on the D.C. government committee, which was good for nothing. This was something else that Courter, Jim Courter, her 1978 opponent, was able to use, that Helen's committee assignments didn't directly affect a district that was now seeing more unemployment and things like that. So, we had that. Joan Mondale was our guest at the '78 fundraiser in Washington, and later that year, Joan came up and did a fundraiser that our campaign threw for Helen at Waterloo Village. She was the most gracious person to work with that you ever wanted to see. But we were very fearful in '78 of the help offered by Jimmy Carter's White House. And I still--(laughs)--had I known we were going to lose, I would have changed my mind on this. But this women's event that happened every two years that Irene Smith threw, she wanted somebody dynamic. And I knew that with Jim Courter attacking Helen as being far too liberal, I didn't want Bella Abzug and, you know, that sort of – something to give her ammunition. I accepted from the Carter administration Juanita Kreps, who was the secretary of commerce. She was an academic, out of Duke. A very nice person but somebody who could not rouse a crowd to save her life (laughter). So, I did not do those ladies well, unfortunately. Did not stir them up (laughs). So, I avoided one thing by not bringing in somebody who was so liberal that Jim Courter could use that person in a commercial, but I did nothing to arouse the base. I often wondered how I could have handled that differently and split the baby a little bit, so –

JK: Well, had Helen had any relationships with Carter earlier or –

RM: Not very much. This would be a Tim Lovain question, since Tim was her legislative

director and very much into international relations. But she agreed with probably about 60% of Carter's agenda. She had, with a congressional delegation, done a trip to the Mideast. During that trip, she had met with Yasser Arafat, which got used against her because at this point, Arafat wasn't seen as a cuddly person that an Israeli leader was later to actually embrace and make peace with. He was a terrorist. She also sided with the Carter administration to end the arms embargo on arms shipments to Turkey in 1978. The Greeks in our district saw this as siding with the Turks. I remember, as somebody who opened the mail in the office, the mail we got from the Greek community was this mimeographed or copied 8½ by 11 sheet of paper that showed a picture of the United States being injected with a heroin needle by Turkey in response to this. So, we had serious inroads to make up with the Jewish and Greek communities in '78, and I'm not quite sure we got there. It was patched over in terms of the folks that we talked to saying, yes, you know, we support Helen. But I never got the idea that, as leaders in the community, that – they said that to us but never really passed it on, that we did not get any further with that. And when we lost by a relatively close margin, 52 to 48 in '78, that all these little things made a –

JK: Added up.

RM: Yeah, that added up. And –

JK: 'Cause Turkey still occupied northern Cyprus.

RM: So, that's very – like, they still do, as a matter of fact.

JK: – Cypress, yeah. So, the country's been divided.

RM: In fact, that's, by now, that's a de facto separated country.

JK: Yeah.

RM: Nobody's even arguing the point –

JK: Right.

RM: – really anymore, so – it's been so long.

DS: Did you all have an inkling that you might not win toward the end? Or how did that sort of play out?

RM: Well, I like the question because the campaign seemed, all in all, to progress very nicely. And you never know what gut feeling is true. But I often felt that if the election hadn't been later that year – it was, like, on November 7th – if somehow that Tuesday had fallen, like, five days earlier, I kind of felt it turning –

DS: Yeah.

RM: – at the end. I remember the late Dan Dean, who was one of Helen's Washington staff who

was from Hackettstown. He came up and he said to me on election night, “Bob,” – this was nice, “That was a great campaign. We’re going to win, right?” I said, “No, Dan, we’re not.” And that afternoon, Helen and I had had our last conversation during the campaign. I had taken her to a Hunterdon County chamber of commerce event in Flemington. What was very interesting about that is that I’m sure the majority of those chamber folks had voted against Helen. But their questions all were that she was going to continue, that she was going to win the election. And on the way back to Phillipsburg, there was a collapsing church along old 22 that has a cemetery.

EL: Pattenburg.

RM: Pattenburg, yes sir. Helen said, “You know, Bob, I always wondered about this church.” I replied, “You know, I did, too.” We got off the road and we stopped.

JK: Oh! (laughs)

RM: And we walked around and through the graveyard. She said, “Well, how do you think it’s going to go?” I said, “I don’t think it’s going to go well, Helen. I just don’t think so.” And it was very touching. She said, “You know, I really want to thank you. You did a great job and I don’t know what else we could have done,” that sort of thing. That was very nice. But even then, there was the feeling that we were just going to be a little bit overwhelmed. There were a lot of things to swim uphill against. For one thing, the Democratic freeholder in Sussex County who had won in ‘74 had been defeated in ‘77, and they had a very weak candidate going in the freeholder’s race. The surrogate was on a three-year term. She had won in ‘77 but wasn’t running in ‘78, so we had no strong Democrat. In Morris County, the Democratic chair, Steve Richter, was not able to find somebody to even run for the freeholder seat; so he ran and was blown out incredibly. Hunterdon had no Democratic freeholders. Warren, at that point, Benny Bosco had lost, so they had no Democrat – and young, 24-year-old Mike Perrucci, who later became Governor Florio’s law partner, a very bright and talented guy. I went to grade school with him. He ran and Democrats just got crushed across the ticket. There was a lot of--and this would be something for you to put a researcher on, an intern or something--but I was told later that Helen ran better in the 13th congressional district than Bill Bradley did when he won his Senate seat. I have no idea whether that is true. We raised 30% more money than what we had raised in ‘76 and about 50% more than what we had raised in ‘74. But Courter still outspent us by about \$160,000. At that point, he raised more money than anybody in New Jersey history. And he was very gutsy. He mortgaged his house and then doubled down and took a second mortgage. Now, there was a bit of controversy about that because he took the loan from his father. The belief was that had he lost, his father would have forgiven the loan and nobody would have cared because he was the losing candidate. But because he won, he was able then to raise the funds and pay off his father. The candidate in 1980 tried to raise that as an issue. But just to give you an idea of how powerful the Meyner name was in that district, when Helen ran her truncated campaign in ‘72, she did about 43%. With the scandal in ‘74, she went up to 57%. With Carter running in ‘76, she was able to eke by with, I think, 50.2% of the vote. In 1978, she lost with 48.2% of the vote. In 1980, the candidate, the Democratic candidate – this would have been the last election held in what was the 13th congressional district before it was reconstituted with the 1980 census – the Democratic candidate, [Sickle?], got 26.4% of the vote. And lest you think there was a third-party liberal candidate, there was a third-party candidate who was a

libertarian who gathered two percent of the vote. Courter got about 72% of the vote that year. So, I think that shows the Meyner name, the power, you know, that type of thing that she brought to bear.

RM: One other story about Governor Meyner is that I, and I think rightly so, kind of treated him as the chairman of the board in '78. I'm sure if he had said the word to Helen, you know, "Bob's got to go" or something, I would have went, you know? That type of thing. I'm sure she discussed me with him before she hired me. Given the fact that he watched money very closely, one of the things that helped gain his trust of me as a campaign manager was in May, I put together a flowchart along with a budget that matched the flowchart. I don't think that had been done in '74 or '76, although I think Barbara McConnell was so good she knew exactly what she was doing. So, he liked that. And then, on both the Fourth of July and Labor Day, I took all of our expenditures and added them up by category and put them against the budget, showed Bob, showed him where I felt we needed to do some adjustments. I did this in order to show him I was on top of things and to make sure I had his full trust and everything. And that did come in handy because although they didn't contribute to their campaign, for the first time ever in one of Helen's campaigns, I went to Bob and Helen in late October and I asked for a bridge loan of – I think it was \$10,000 that – I was able to show him what money was coming in, that we needed it to do a final media buy in order – 'cause Courter was coming up with so much money, we needed really to match his media, his radio. And we did a little cable television, actually, also. First time we had done television. We could buy ads on the cable very inexpensively. Bob Meyner wrote a check for \$10,000. And they were repaid. The money did come in as I said it would and – (laughs)

JK: Yeah.

RM: – otherwise, I don't know what I would have heard from Governor Bob on that. But (laughter) that worked out well.

JK: What were her interactions with Millicent Fenwick [Republican U.S. House member from New Jersey's 5th District, 1975-1983]?

RM: When she first got to Washington, my recollection is that she was envious of the fact that Millicent got far more publicity than she did. Millicent was a former fashion editor. I think part of it was that she was tall, lanky, stylish. She smoked a pipe. She was one of the few Republicans; I think there was only something like 144 House Republicans after the 1974 election. Democrats picked up 49 House seats in the Watergate year.

JK: Yeah.

RM: So, there were far fewer of her partisans than there was of Helen's. I do remember that we were at this – I think either Millicent came to our office and there was a little party of some sort. Millicent got out her pipe, and Helen had come prepared. Helen pulled out a cigar and lit it up (laughter).

DS: That's great.

RM: Yeah, she did that. But I think she was a little envious of how much ink Millicent was able to get. Part of that, though, was that her district was a little bit more confined. The newspapers were a little bit larger in Fenwick's district. They actually had more contacts with D.C. I mean *The Newark Star Ledger* wasn't even in our district. Then, you had the Morristown newspaper, which also wasn't in our district. The *Easton Express* was in Easton. I mean, they did have a small Warren County section, but the media was very dispersed for us. In fact, I recall during the '78 campaign – Helen was just, you know, very forthright. This is why she came over so good in debates. In the 1978 campaign, two things come to mind. One, Nick [DeRenzo?], the conservative owner of the Washington, New Jersey, radio station, had Helen for an interview. I went to New York. She stayed at her Manhattan apartment on Columbus Circle, and I drove in from P-burg and brought her back to Washington, New Jersey. Nick's first question was – they used to call their off period back then district-work periods. Nick's first question was, "Helen, why does Congress need another vacation?" And she said, "Nick, I'm sitting here at a radio station with you. Are you on vacation?" (laughter) He said, "No." She replied, "If this is your idea of a vacation, your head needs to be checked." And that was her response to him. When Jim Courter, who I think did run a very, very good campaign against Helen in '78 – he was extremely polite. He recognized how much in well regard the Meyners were treated. He referred to her as Mrs. Meyner in his commercials. I mean, he would point out how liberal she was. He was, you know, running a cash register, pointing up how the national debt was going up under the Democrats. He was hitting all the anti-liberal buttons of the time. At the Sussex County debate, he mentioned her meeting with Arafat. Helen hit back by saying, "You know, Jim, if it means bringing peace a second closer, I would meet with the devil himself." And that was how she felt. You know, if she lost a couple votes, why run for office if you don't stand for something? And so I was proud. I mean, proud of my involvement, so –

JK: So, being on the international affairs committee and the D.C. government committee, as you said, didn't do her any good. What led her to be so interested in international affairs and sort of put that ahead of some more domestic issues?

RM: Well, I think that was her nature. I think she had an international outlook. If you think about the Stevenson family, I mean, Adlai became our ambassador to the United Nations under Kennedy. Also, Helen had worked for Pan Am as kind of the international ambassador. So, I think, that was her outlook. Plus –

DS: And the Red Cross in Korea.

RM: Yes, she did, absolutely.

DS: Yeah, and her parents were in Korea, during World War II.

RM: And we'd just come out of Vietnam, a war that she had opposed. We had the conflict in 1973 in the Mideast. Things weren't getting any better there. So, on the world stage, I think she still saw the world as being in peril and that it was very important from her point of view to work to bring peace and to see what she could do in that regard. I think that's where she was coming from. Now, the D.C. committee was nothing she had control of. That was Speaker O'Neill

saying basically, “Helen, I love you, I gave you your first choice, but I need somebody here and, (laughter) you know, freshmen don’t normally get on the international relations committee and there’s a *quid pro quo* here, you know?” That sort of thing, so – (laughter)

JK: Right.

RM: But I remember she was for D.C. statehood, and Governor Bob was very much opposed to that.

JK: Oh, really?

RM: He did not like that idea at all. Another Governor Bob story that has nothing to do with the campaign – but going back to the fact that Governor Bob could be parsimonious in certain areas. Perhaps, Ed, you remember they owned twin Chevy Vegas at one point in the early 1970s. Now –

EL: I don’t remember right now (laughter).

RM: – they, I do believe, had a third car that was (laughs) a showier model. But whenever Helen did drive herself to Phillipsburg or someplace to meet up with us, she drove the Vega. Well, Governor Meyner told me the story about sitting on the general public utility board, and they were undergoing some controversial decisions. I guess Bob was seen by the protesters as being on the wrong side. There was a massive protest outside of where GPU was holding its board meeting. And Bob Meyner delighted in telling me that he drove to this meeting in his Chevy Vega, and none of the protesters ever thought that, either a board member or a former governor would show up in such a car. He said, “I show up, the Vega shows up, they part like the Red Sea” (laughter). And Bob Meyner had this great laugh. He just had a wonderful, deep laugh about him that was really special. You wanted to hear the governor laugh. I mean, it really was something.

JK: Yes.

RM: He just got the biggest kick out of that. He said, “They opened the gates up; I drove right in.” He said, “They never thought I came.” He said, “It was first reported that I wasn’t at the meeting” (laughter). So, he said, “One time that paid off.”

JK: Wow.

DS: These are wonderful stories you’re telling us. I really appreciate all the memory that you have and, you know, the wonderful outlook. I’m curious about you and what you did after that ‘78 campaign?

RM: Well, in ‘79 – I had taken two leaves of absence from graduate school after doing part of a spring semester at George Washington University. So, in ‘77 and then ‘78, I actually did two courses each semester before I took a leave of absence to run Barbara McConnell’s campaign, then Helen’s campaign. In ‘79, I completed my graduate degree from George Washington

University. Unfortunately, I was unsuccessful in landing a job back on the Hill. To survive, I took a job in the community services division of American Security Bank. That lasted for a little bit over 15 months. Then I landed on the staff of Congressman Frank Guarini from Hudson County, New Jersey. I was a legislative affairs person. Frank was on the Ways and Means Committee. His legislative director did his tax work. But I did his trade subcommittee work. So, I did defense, trade. I did all the economic issues outside of taxes. And in my last year-and-a-half with Frank, I actually became his Washington office director, besides continuing to do his trade subcommittee work. I gave up my other legislative duties to somebody else on the staff. But I continued doing his trade work. And in 1986 – and one of the reasons: Clifford Allen actually died when Helen was running. Congressman Allen never served a full term in Congress. There's a good story with that but it doesn't deal with the Meyners, so I won't tell it today unless you want me to. So, I couldn't go back to Clifford's staff. He was gone in late May, early June. I think it was June of '78. So, for over five years, I worked for Frank Warini. Loved it. But I used to tell people that I had one boss die, one boss lose, and I quit the third before anything untoward could happen to him (laughter).

RM: I went into association work and I spent 30 years – 19-plus working for the Travel Industry Association of America, which was an umbrella group that represented the U.S. travel industry. We promoted inbound tourism into the United States. I spent the last 11-plus years working for the Building Owners and Managers Association International, people who owned and managed commercial real estate, medical office buildings, that sort of thing. I never went into lobbying. My focus was more related to campaigns. Being that the Travel Industry Association was an umbrella group, I used my campaign experience to target different messages to different elements of the industry to bring them onboard and to gain their membership. And each organization had a foundation. I did the development work for the foundation, both the fundraising and the programs. So, scholarships and we ran a couple advanced programs for the – at Georgetown University for the Building Owners and Managers Association. I retired a year-and-a-half ago and so, I'm enjoying retirement immensely.

JK: Very nice.

RM: Yeah. But this really did bring back – like, I'd forgotten all about – I remember doing the financial sheets and going over them with Governor Meyner. But I had forgotten all about the benefit of doing that and coming back and having to ask him for a bridge loan so we could run the end of the campaign. Actually, we had ads scheduled, but we really needed to beef 'em up to match Courter's schedule at the time. And I still have – Washington staffers helped Helen move out. Oh, this is a good story. Helen took an apartment when she got there in '75 that was only a block from the entrance to the Cannon House Office Building where she had her office.

JK: Oh.

RM: In a very strange quirk, this building charged Bob Meyner \$10 a night for every night he stayed over with Helen (laughter). This drove Bob Meyner nuts! "I'm married to her!" (laughter) You know? And that he had to pay to stay with his own wife, extra money above her rental for this place, upset him. Because of him and because of that, she, I guess, complained. Tip O'Neill heard her complaining about this. There were some apartments--and it became a bit

of an issue years later and they're no longer there--above one of the auxiliary House buildings. In fact, I even went, my first two years working on the Hill without even realizing that that was a congressional office building, but on the top floor it was apartments. Tip O'Neill gave Helen – well, she had to pay rent – one of those apartments. I think the problem later on became – this was long after Helen left--that it wasn't market rate or something like that. And then, the party in power controlled it and blah-blah-blah. I think they ended up taking the top floor and making offices out of it. But Helen gave away her furniture. The McClure household is still a repository of two end tables from (laughter) Helen's apartment in Washington.

DS: That's great.

JK: Would you reflect on – and I realize you didn't work with her the whole time –

RM: Right.

JK: – but are there any particular accomplishments that stand out to you during her time in Congress?

RM: There are a couple. I think the fact that Tocks Dam never got built is a major accomplishment. I had said earlier that I thought it was misunderstood from a campaign's perspective. If I can elaborate on that a little bit is it turned out that it was a much more comprehensive subject than the dam itself. I found out in running the '78 campaign that a lot of people who opposed the project didn't necessarily oppose the dam. They actually opposed the park that was being built on each side of the dam because they thought that it was going to bring all sorts of extra people through Sussex County to use the park. And so, the park got built. You know, I don't think in all of its original form but all those people were moved out and it is a large park. So, there were a lot of people who actually weren't necessarily happy with the way it ended up, even though the environmentalists – and I think there were a lot of other issues related to salinization of the Delaware Bay and all those other sorts of things and the flow of water and the overall cleanup of the Delaware that went into play here. But with the park being developed, she never got the votes out of that. Those people were moved out, and the park was still developed, okay? The dam's not there, that was good for the environmentalists who were going to vote for Helen anyway. But, jeez, now, I don't think the traffic ever developed even near what people envisioned. So, that was good but it didn't actually help her as far as the election goes.

RM: The other thing I believe was saving Picatinny Arsenal, what that meant to that part of the district at that time as there was decreasing industrialization. We started seeing, especially in the Phillipsburgs and some of Mercer County, such as the GM plant, some losses of employees. It was sad in '78 when I would go to some of the debates with Courter before the union. They had already lost half of their employees, you know, that type of thing. So, those folks weren't there to vote for Helen anymore. But Helen worked very hard with Bo Callaway, the Republican Secretary of the Army, all the meetings that she did, all the generals she sat down with. I thought it was very interesting that Courter, who then continued that, when he left Congress, he was put in charge of the base-closing commission (laughter). In fact, he did an excellent job, I think, in that capacity. I think he was tremendous. For the district he represented, he was probably perfect for the district during the Reagan era, and I don't think he necessarily showed himself as being as

conservative as what he was until he ran for governor and really got his comeuppance because he really went very right-wing when he ran for governor and got clobbered. He showed himself to be a little bit more moderate. But at the same time, he was very good at that point. I think he caught on to the fact that there was – with Reagan running against Ford in '76 and the emergence of the Christian coalition, which we never saw that much of in our district – but it was a much more organized conservative coalition and I think he caught that wave. In '78, when he beat Schluter in the primary, you have to remember Jeffrey Bell, who was extremely conservative. Using right-wing money, national right-wing money, he defeated Clifford Case in the primary. So, Bill Bradley did not go up against Clifford Case. He went up against the much more conservative Jeffrey Bell. I think on a statewide basis that actually helped Bradley because Bell was so conservative. And Courter was able to get more national money than what we were able to get. The conservatives were much more out in front of developing fundraising mechanisms. Emily's List and some of those things hadn't come along at that time. The National Committee for an Effective Congress really was so small that they ended up going out of business. They were not worth much money to us as it turned out. I think that with how little money was available on a national basis that when they did the final calculation, they didn't think Helen's seat was necessarily one of the salvageable ones.

JK: I see.

RM: So, we did not get any extra money from a national call. We did very well with – in fact, you know, when you lose a campaign, you continue to kick yourself about what could we have done differently, you know? I just do wonder whether if I had – I was very good at raising funds through direct mail. And we had a very large base in '78, much larger than what we had in '74 and '76, and that's what enabled us to expand the money over '74 and '76. But we had the same \$1,000 givers that we always had, and I did not expand that. I'm just wondering if, you know, in retrospect, what mechanisms I would have had to have called somebody up and find out, you know, what Norman Lear's number was or what his wife's number was and get \$1,000 from them. Now, some of this might have been used (laughs) against us if they saw – but, you know, but I did not do that. I often wonder what could we have done with more money? We were 7,000 votes shy. You know, either change 3,500 people's minds or find 7,500 –

JK: Right, yeah.

RM: – additional Democrats to come out and to vote, but –

JK: In terms of personal relationships, her and the staff and so on, I mean, she had some nicknames like Bumpy, and so –(laughter)

RM: Bill and Bumpy.

DS: Bumpy was her mother.

JK: – what was –

RM: Her parents.

JK: – the mode of address? Who got to call her Bumpy, who called her Helen, who called her Mrs. Meyner? (laughter) How did that work?

EL: She had a nickname, Daney.

RM: Yes, it was –

DS: Daney.

RM: Daney, Daney.

DS: Daney, okay.

RM: No one I knew outside of her family – her sister, Priscilla, I think, if it was even that called her Daney, that I know of. She insisted that everybody call her Helen because, given the stature of her and Governor Bob, people’s first want was to call her Mrs. Meyner. And she just would not have any part of that. She was very uncomfortable with that. I do remember her mom and dad, Bill and Bumpy. Somebody in the office once said, just as a joke, “Oh, your parents, Bumpy and Boopy” (laughter). She did not like that at all. “My dad is Bill” (laughter). So, she did not take kindly to the Boopy thing. No, this has nothing to do with nicknames, but I remember: this has to do with the 1960 Democratic Convention where the Kennedys, depending on who you talk to, and maybe Ed, you have something to say about this, either screwed Bob Meyner or outmaneuvered him, depending on where you stand. Tom Berrigan, being from quite a staunch Irish Catholic family, brought a picture of Bobby Kennedy into the office one day. Tim Lovain, the legislative director, had in 1968 been a McCarthy person. So, he wasn’t thrilled about this. I was never a big Bobby Kennedy fan and I was not thrilled about it. Helen comes in in this very singsong voice, and goes, “Oh, Bobby Kennedy!” And about three seconds go by and she exclaims, “That bastard!” (laughter) Tom put the picture away, never got it back out again (laughter).

JK: Well, is there –

RM: Yeah, but she did not stand on ceremony –

JK: So, yeah.

RM: – in that regard. And ‘78, after I opened up the Phillipsburg headquarters, we had a little bit of a contentious relationship along the way. But just in ‘78, once June hit, we had a great relationship. We were very much in sync. She was extremely pleased – I don’t know where I came up with this idea but I rented the historic train that runs between [Reading?] and Lambertville. I basically papered the house. I sold tickets for all of five dollars, and we did a whistle-stop tour. We put Helen on the back of the train and loaded the train up with sodas and some adult refreshments.

EL: You don’t mean Reading.

RM: Yes, sir. And – we stopped, I think, at three or four different places. I had sent postcard mailings to each of the communities telling them what time we were stopping. Although we got, actually, very few people from the local community to come, the train was filled enough that everybody got off at each stop – so, we had a built-in crowd! (laughter) Well, I hired a professional photographer. One thing Bob Meyner did see and wasn't thrilled about, but it was done 'cause I paid, like, \$700 for the guy (laughter). He took pictures of it, and we turned those pictures of Helen giving speeches from the back of the train into one of our mailings. She just loved it. Oh, my gosh. And it was very nice. Barbara McConnell told me that she thought that was the finest piece. Gina Glance, who was from Bergen County and was Andy Maguire's ex-wife, wrote the piece for us. I worked with her. Tom Berrigan did all of Helen's speeches and things like that. And we both prepped her. Tom wrote the opening for the debates; then I would do the questions and things like that for her to practice on what might be asked at these debates. She really enjoyed that. I think we were pretty much in sync with what her schedule had to be with her Mondays off. It was, you know, difficult with Congress being in session that we had her – and I saw Tim Van Hise's interview with you. He was right on to talk about the fact that once the campaign got in gear, he didn't have her for the constituent services as much as what he had had before. She was now in our hands for the last three or four months. Especially after Labor Day, she was all ours as far as where we went. We tried not to wear her out, and I think she appreciated it. But at that point, she was doing less. We didn't have the time to do retail politics like she did in '74 any longer.

JK: But didn't you get her into a canoe at one point?

RM: 1974 (laughs), Tocks Island. There was a big anti-Tocks Island event, and there were newspapers there. Helen drove herself up and met me there. When she got there, she was in a dress. And this was somebody who was supposed to go out in a canoe (laughter). All I knew was she was supposed to go out in the canoe. I'm twenty-three years old, and she was demurring. "Oh, Bob, you know, I'm not dressed," blah-blah-blah. And I, you know, with all the chutzpah of a 23-year-old, said, "Helen, get in the canoe" (laughter). Well (laughs), I caught a little heck from that because the pictures of that – you know, Barbara McConnell, the campaign manager – it was very interesting to have a woman campaign manager in this respect: the things that guys can do and a woman can't do. Like, I could never say to Helen, and I never would, 'cause I never knew the difference, "That's not a good hairstyle for you." Or, "We're not going to take a picture and put it on a brochure of you in that hairstyle." Like, Barbara would call me and say, "Bob, you know, you have that picture of Helen with that" so-and-so. "Well" – "You know you can't use that." Well, I never thought about it – you know, Helen was supposed to go out and so – but it's, like, "Bob, she was wearing a dress!" You know, picture this – so, anyway, and it – (laughter) but at the time, I still don't think she was fully sold on being anti-Tocks Island. I think she came to that conclusion the more that she learned about the project, so that by the time she got into Congress, she was fully committed to killing it. But the seizure of land and the eviction of folks for the park was an ongoing process that could not be stopped at that point. And that was carried on. But, yes, and there is a –

JK: Is there anything we have not asked that we should have asked?

RM: Oh, you've been very thorough here, and I actually cannot think of something.

JK: Well, we want to preserve this for posterity.

RM: I know!

DS: Yeah, and (overlapping dialogue; inaudible)

RM: Please!

DS: – questions.

RM: Yes.

EL: What's your impression of what Bob Meyner's attitude was toward Helen running in '72, and what his involvement in her decision to run?

RM: You know, in '72 –

EL: I know – that's history.

RM: – I wasn't there but what I –

EL: – that's history, but you were closer to the –

RM: It is.

EL: – history than I was.

RM: Ed, what I understand is that the Democratic chairs all but begged her to run. They knew that Bradley was interested, but he was still playing basketball and he wasn't committed to retiring yet. So, they knew that wasn't an option. I think they thought that if there was going to be any chance at all, they needed somebody who had ready name recognition. But they must have recognized how the district was developed, that it was kind of a Don Quixote-esque effort, that she was getting in late. But she basically was begged to run. And in '74, like I said, she really, I think, wanted to defer to Bradley, who at that point had retired. But Bill said he wasn't ready yet.

EL: I don't recall that Bradley voted in the district, but –

RM: He did not.

EL: (inaudible)

RM: Oh, well, hold it here, let's – Denville. Bill Bradley lived in Denville, and I do believe Denville was a – yes, he was –

EL: (inaudible)

RM: Yes. Course, Helen – well, let's talk about this. Helen's residence in Princeton was outside the district, but her address that she gave on Lincoln Street in Phillipsburg was a home that Bob Meyner, I believe, owned that he rented to his cousin, his first cousin, Joe, and they lived there, I mean –

EL: That was his nephew.

RM: Nephew.

EL: Joe.

RM: Thank you. Oh, Joe was a nephew.

EL: Yes.

RM: Okay, thank you.

EL: And he voted there. But you said she did not?

RM: She may – have been registered there.

EL: – my impression was that she voted there, also.

RM: But let's put it this way. If Helen had to drive there, she could not find that house on her own.

EL: I agree.

RM: Okay (laughter). All right?

DS: But it was listed as her address.

RM: Yes, it was listed as –

DS: (inaudible)

RM: She had to vote there because it was listed on where we filed. And because Helen was in Washington on filing day, I took in the petitions. That was when I first met Jim Courter. And I do want to get this story on record. We met in Barbara Ackerman's office and Jim was--never having met him before--I was very much surprised when he told me that it was not only his plan to defeat Mrs. Meyner in this election but that he was going to win the next 10 congressional races, serve 20 years, and retire with a full pension. I mean, for not having ever met the guy before – (laughter). Helen met him at an event, at a party. I don't remember who threw the party,

but I remember where: it was in Harmony or White Township at a place that still exists. It was a restaurant, as you go north on 519 toward Belvidere, on the left. It was a mixed party event. I was there with Helen, Jim Courter was there, and they had a pleasant conversation, much like they – and they only crossed paths a few times because I did debates when he came with him before the union organizers. And there were very few forums in '78 where both sides showed up.

EL: I have another question.

RM: Yes, sir.

EL: It's my impression that she was not as invested in winning in '78 as she was in '76. You think that's –

RM: I do think that's true.

EL: – well-founded?

RM: When I came to Helen and Bob on election eve and told them it was over, I didn't feel like there was any real sadness. My experience with the few politicians I've talked to – I remember having a great conversation with Al Gore, senior, and Richardson Preyer, former senators from North Carolina after they were defeated that the sting of losing, because it's very personal, stayed with them for about six months. Then they woke up one morning and said, "What the heck was I doing? I now have a life." Bob Meyner – I think they missed one another. I think they were happy to get back together. They were a real love story, and I think the separation, you know, both of them felt it. Although Helen did everything that, you know, in a sense, we asked her to do in '78, it was nowhere near what she had done in '74. Now, of course, we didn't need the name recognition at that point. Plus, she had her duties as a congresswoman to fulfill. So, no, I did not get the idea – I got Courter on the phone for her and she gave a very, very sincere congratulations to Jim (laughs). I felt it twice that night with Jim Courter. My date for the evening, my girlfriend at that point, was from Hackettstown. I took her back home after that evening. And just by chance after dropping her off, she only lived about four blocks away from Courter. It was about two o'clock in the morning, and there must have been 10, 12 cars outside of the Courter home still. My guess is they were drunk enough that they had stayed over so they didn't have to worry about driving and that they were still celebrating. So, I got that feeling.

EL: One of the things that surprised me – I wasn't involved in this campaign, of course – was that she did as well against Courter as she did because he was so much better a candidate than she had run against before.

DS: Yeah.

RM: He was a wonderful candidate, and he had wonderful ads. She matched him in debate, though. I mean, she didn't maybe dominate the way she did against Maraziti. She came across incredibly well against Joe. I mean, it only would have been the nature of the district politics that would have – and the fact that so few people, unfortunately, watch debates that Courter

matched up well. But she more than held her own against Jim. He came across exceedingly – he was young, he was energetic, he was dynamic, he was incredibly well-funded. He was in tune with the district politically. And, yeah. But 48.2% of the vote. I think, again, what I said earlier, that just speaks to what people thought of her. I mean, even though she was far more liberal than the district, people had such great respect. Courter did just a magnificent job of showing that respect for her so that he didn't get people mad at him, pardon me, for disrespecting her while he was pointing out the political differences. Now, again, one of those things that you wonder about over the years is, at that time, I didn't hire a – and we didn't do it in '74 or '76 – hire a private eye to do a background check on Courter. I don't know if we would have found anything, but the campaign book I was working from was that when you run against somebody who has never held elected office before, you don't attack them and give them undue publicity. What I didn't realize until too late in the campaign was the fact that he was taking out these mortgages and second mortgages and going to end up spending over \$300,000, which was humongous for the time, the greatest amount ever spent at that point in New Jersey congressional history for a representative's race. And so, we didn't attack him. You know, could we have found, you know? Well, you know, you just wonder, what did you leave unturned? What did –

EL: (inaudible)

RM: – you know, did we not – you know, the era of clean government. I was very reticent. I mean, we handed out some cash for get-out-the-vote efforts but we weren't dumping money all over the place for get-out-the – I mean, it was – more people were watching at that point. Could we have done more get out the vote, you know? Could I have hired professional canvassers?

EL: There's always some way you can win it when it's that close.

RM: Yeah, you know what I mean?

EL: Yeah.

RM: You know, where are you? What did it take to get that 7,000 votes that needed to be done? I mean, things were swinging back. I mean, you know, I think it shows by the fact that the Democrat, [Eady?], got 26.4% of the vote in the district, but –

EL: One last question regarding Dr. Kincaid's reference to Millicent Fenwick, who I knew fairly well. Do you think if Garry Trudeau had spent as much time characterizing Helen as he had (inaudible) (laughter) Millicent, Helen could have won?

RM: --the office was filled with readers of Garry Trudeau, of *Doonesbury*, 'cause that, yes, I'll tell you – (laughs)

DS: Oh, yeah, he was busy lampooning Bill Simon, too, right?

EL: Yeah.

DS: Or at the same time.

JK: Yeah. (laughs)

EL: Oh, yeah (inaudible)

RM: But it was interesting that –

EL: – his classmate at Yale.

DS: Right. Oh, that's great.

RM: You know, one of the difficulties of the district, given the fact that the assemblymen and the state senators and most of the freeholders were all Republican, there was no incubation center to send folks up the chain. We didn't really have very good surrogates. That's something else I'm wondering. Could I have somehow developed a better surrogate network? I mean, we had – I had hired a campaign staffer who was in Dover. We had an office there, and Roberta (Karpinecz?) handled Mercer and Hunterdon counties. She was very good. And this wonderful guy named Dan Ashenbach did my old job in Warren and Sussex counties. And we covered the events, but we were doing it. I mean, Helen was in, you know, Washington, you know, that type of thing. We didn't have the dynamism that she would have brought to that had – like, she would have been in '74 when we had her full time. That could have helped but that's not a reality. That wasn't the situation. Courter could go full time. He was full time, he went retail, and he went to the airwaves. And he was successful at doing it all in that regard.

JK: Thank you very much, Bob. We really appreciate your taking the time to come. It was great.

RM: Well, thank you, John. Thank you.

DS: Bob, it was a wonderful –

RM: Oh, my gosh.

DS: – interview. Thank you, it's going to be a wonderful (inaudible)

RM: What do I do with what I think of as I leave here that I didn't tell you? (laughter) Too late.

DS: You know, you put that in writing –

JK: That's right.

DS: – absolutely. Well, thank you, everybody. All right, turning off –

END OF AUDIO FILE