



JOHN JOSEPH Moakley

ARCHIVE & INSTITUTE AT SUFFOLK UNIVERSITY

John Joseph Moakley Oral History Project

Oral History Interview with

Robert F. Moakley and Thomas J. Moakley

Interview Date: April 29, 2003

Interviewed by: Robert Allison, Suffolk University History Professor and Joseph McEttrick, Suffolk University Law School Professor

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Interview Summary

Robert and Thomas Moakley discuss the life and career of their late brother, Congressman John Joseph Moakley. This interview covers growing up in South Boston in the thirties and forties; how military service helped shape their perspectives on life; their parents; what political campaigning was like in the fifties; how Joe Moakley enjoyed public service; their brother's work in El Salvador; their thoughts regarding Boston school desegregation in the 1970s; what it was like to be related to a respected member of Congress; how politics has changed since their brother began his career. They end by expressing their hope that others can learn from the example their brother demonstrated through his entire career.

Subject Headings

Boston Harbor Islands (Mass)

Busing for school integration

El Salvador

Moakley, John Joseph, 1927-2001

Moakley, Sr., Robert F.

Moakley, Thomas J.

South Boston (Mass.)

Table of Contents

Part 1

Growing up in South Boston	p. 3 (00:24)
Military service	p. 12 (17:01)
Family background	p. 15 (22:55)
Involvement in local politics	p. 18 (28:02)

Part 2

El Salvador involvement	p. 24 (12:44)
Staff relationships	p. 25 (15:36)
Congressional campaigns	p. 26 (18:38)

Part 3

School desegregation	p. 34 (05:39)
Thoughts on political figures	p. 37 (12:28)
Improvements to Boston	p. 41 (21:38)
Congressman Moakley's health (1995)	p. 44 (27:10)

Part 4

Change in politics	p. 45 (00:09)
Congressman Moakley's legacy	p. 46 (01:35)

Interview transcript begins on next page

This interview took place on Tuesday April 29, 2003, at the home of Thomas J. Moakley.

Interview Transcript

PROFESSOR JOSEPH McETTRICK: Well, gee, this is really a privilege. I've been looking forward to this. I think this should be a really fun interview.

THOMAS J. MOAKLEY: Well, I hope we can make it worthwhile, anyway.

McETTRICK: I've always wondered what my brothers would say about me, so this is sort of an experiment.

PROFESSOR ROBERT ALLISON: So thank you for giving us the time to talk to you. And, I think some of the things we're really interested in are what it was like to grow up in South Boston in the thirties and forties. So any memories you have of the neighborhood, and things you might do for fun, what your family life was like.

T. MOAKLEY: Well, when we were younger, boys didn't stick much together. Everyone had their own game. Bob had the barn boys, what we called them. You didn't have to see them, you could smell them before they came. No offense. (laughter)

McETTRICK: You'll get equal time.

ROBERT F. MOAKLEY: I hope so.

T. MOAKLEY: And of course, Joe had his crowd, and I had my crowd. And of course, we were always busy outside. But I remember growing up. And of course, everybody was poor, but nobody knew it because everybody was the same. But they used to make the rounds when they had the barrels out, to pick up baby carriages to make carts and trucks, stuff like that. Then, to make money, I used to sell papers, or shine shoes, or sell papers down at the beach. But I always kept busy, anyway.

McETTRICK: So how many different addresses did you live at in South Boston? Was it just one? Or did you move around the town?

T. MOAKLEY: Oh, I didn't realize how many times we moved until I—first, we started in Dorchester Street, 291 Dorchester Street. Then from there, we went down to Bateman Place, which is now Bantry Way. Then from there, we went to Old Harbor Village. And from Old Harbor Village, we went to Frederick Street. Then from there, we went to the corner of Mercer and Dorchester Street; always in the same ward, though.

McETTRICK: And what were your relative ages, and who was the oldest?

T. MOAKLEY: Joe was the oldest. He was a year and a half older than I was. I was in the middle. And Bob is a year and a half younger.

McETTRICK: So you weren't really that far apart. But it makes a difference, I guess, with what you—

T. MOAKLEY: Exactly, yeah. Even a year makes a big difference. I mean, if you're a year older, hey, you're an old guy now.

McETTRICK: And did you all go to the same elementary schools? Or did you have different places?

T. MOAKLEY: Yeah, pretty much so. We went to the [Thomas N.] Hart School. We used to call it Tony's Nut House. (laughter)

R. MOAKLEY: Then went to the Nazareth [High School] for a while in grade school.

T. MOAKLEY: That's when you used to go to school, when you talked in school, the nuns would get the pencils and break them over your knuckles, and you had to pay for them.
(laughter)

McETTRICK: But at least they were cheap then.

T. MOAKLEY: A penny a piece. But a penny was a lot of money in those days.

R. MOAKLEY: When we moved up to Bateman Place from what they called the Lower End in Southie [South Boston], in those days, up to the Point, we transferred from public school to parochial school. And the nuns were very genteel. I remember my nun stood me up at the front of the class. It was in the middle of the school year. And she said, "This is Robert. We'll have to be patient with him. He transferred in from the public school." (laughter) They introduce you as though you're a moron. (laughter)

But later on I won the spelling bee, when the bishop came around. I won the spelling bee, much to her chagrin. Then I won the history test. But what really topped it off was I won the religion quiz after coming from a public school. (laughter) So, needless to say, she had a big smile on while the bishop was there. But I had a miserable year after that. (laughter)

McETTRICK: Well, you must have been in different parishes then, too, if you were moving around.

R. MOAKLEY: Yes, oh yeah.

T. MOAKLEY: Well, first of all, we were in Saint Augustine's. That's where we were baptized. Then from there, we went to—

R. MOAKLEY: Saint Brigid's.

T. MOAKLEY: Saint Brigid's, that's right. I eventually got married from Saint Brigid's.

R. MOAKLEY: And Saint Monica's after that, and back to Saint Augustine's.

ALLISON: So, when did you meet Doris?¹ Was it when you were in school?

T. MOAKLEY: In high school. I was a senior and she was a junior. And I was in junior English. I always had a problem with English. But then I went in the service and started writing back and forth. Been going with her since she was sixteen years old. So we had our fiftieth anniversary—actually, fifty-one is this Saturday, fifty-first anniversary this year.

ALLISON: Congratulations.

T. MOAKLEY: Thank you.

R. MOAKLEY: As Tom mentioned, when we got a little older, we all kind of went our separate ways. But when we were small, when we still lived on Dorchester Street, we spent most of the time together because we were small. We were the little kids in those days.

So there were things that we did. And it was only because of the way the economy was. There was a barrel factory out in back of our house. And they used to make barrels and store them. And Baker's Chocolate used to use this particular barrel company; they had wooden barrels. And our first taste of chocolate had splinters in it. We used to go over and break a stave out of the barrel. And you'd be sitting on the curbstone chewing the chocolate off it. And that was the first time we had chocolate, I think, was off Baker's—

McETRICK: Well they did make good chocolates.

R. MOAKLEY: They did. They made excellent chocolate.

¹ Doris is Tom Moakley's wife.

McETTRICK: Did you have neighbors upstairs and down or side by side? Or was it a single house?

R. MOAKLEY: Well, we lived over a hardware store, actually. And our aunt lived upstairs from us. We lived with our grandmother. And in those days, multi-family homes were quite common. And when a couple would get married, they'd move in with the parents on one side or the other.

ALLISON: Was that your mother's mother or father's mother?

R. MOAKLEY: My mother's mother, yes. She was the only grandparent that we ever met. The other three were dead before any of us were born.

T. MOAKLEY: And she didn't speak that great English. She was Italian. But she knew everything you wanted. She used to take us to the movies, even though she didn't understand English. She used to take us downstairs in the cellar, and when she made the wine, and gave us our wine with about this much sugar in it (gestures). So, that's our first taste of wine. And she used to make the scooters for us, and used to have the two-by-four boards, and attached the roller skates to your scooter. She used to make them for us. But she was really good.

McETTRICK: Now did you have a special spot in the neighborhood where you'd try those out? Or did you have a nice incline someplace that you could use them?

T. MOAKLEY: No, actually, you just have a sidewalk out in front, with all the cracks in it. And every time you went over a pebble or something, you went head over heels.

R. MOAKLEY: So it was relatively no traffic in those days. We have a picture of the three of us standing out in front of our house on Dorchester Street, which is one of the main drags in Southie. And you could see probably three and a half or four blocks up the street. And there was one car in the whole picture.

McETTRICK: So it was fairly safe?

R. MOAKLEY: So there was very little traffic in those days. In fact, in the winter, they used to block off Telegraph Street for coasting. And you could coast from up at Dorchester Heights, up at the top of the hill, all the way down, and down Dorchester Street to make the turn. There was no traffic at all.

T. MOAKLEY: It took you about ten seconds to get down, and about twenty minutes to walk up. (laughter) It was good times then, you know, didn't have to worry about anything.

McETTRICK: Did you get down to the beach much? Did you do much on the water?

T. MOAKLEY: Oh yeah. Well, we'd always go down the beach, and get cooked down there.

R. MOAKLEY: In the summer, we'd get up in the morning and all we'd put on is our bathing suits—no shoes, socks, shirts or anything—go to the beach, spend the day at the beach.

T. MOAKLEY: Like I say, in those days, sports weren't really organized the way they are today. And used to go around on a Friday night to get a football game for a Saturday. And you had to get down the park early enough to map out a space big enough to play football because there were so many other kids around, you had to get a spot. And that's the way we always did.

And most times, when the kids were playing football, they might have one piece of equipment, or shoulder pads, or a helmet. That's why most of the kids went out and played high school football; so they could have football equipment to play for their teams. So it was good fun in those days.

R. MOAKLEY: And the park, which is now Joe Moakley Park, that's where we had our first cookout. We used to bring a potato with us, and light a fire. (laughter) And it would be a raw potato or it was black on the outside, basically, and you'd eat that. And we'd have a little piece of wax paper with salt in it to sprinkle on. But that would be our lunch.

ALLISON: That's while you were playing football.

T. MOAKLEY & R. MOAKLEY: No.

R. MOAKLEY: From the beach, instead of going on.

T. MOAKLEY: Oh, it was good. Used to do a lot of crabbing down at City Point there. The head house used to be the base. It used to be a bridge at one time. Of course, it's all filled in. And you used to make a crab net, and go down crabbing. And even in those days, when everybody used to go down to Carson Beach² at night, and get a gang of kids, and just kick the water, and used to kick fish enough right into the sand, and cook the fish there.

R. MOAKLEY: The way we used to get bait to go fishing was, and it shows you how much the harbor has changed. Two of us would stand in water up to our knees, and you'd hold the towel underwater. And the minnows would swim over it, and you lift it up. And you'd have minnows. And we'd put them in an old French fry box or something, and use those as bait later. But, there were that many fish around in those days.

ALLISON: And would you have fishing rods at all?

R. MOAKLEY: No. Drop lines.

T. MOAKLEY: Fishing lines.

R. MOAKLEY: A drop line, I think.

T. MOAKLEY: I don't think too many people had rods.

ALLISON: Would you catch a lot?

² Carson Beach is located on the South Boston shoreline of Dorchester Bay.

R. MOAKLEY: Yeah. Well the crabs were plentiful. The old wooden pier, we used to go out from where the World War II memorial is now. And we'd go up and we'd get a barrel hoop and an old burlap bag, and you'd stretch that over the barrel hoop, and tie it with clothesline rope, put a sidewalk brick and the fish head in there, lower it down to the bottom. And you'd only have to leave it down five or ten seconds, and pull it up, and there'd be eight or ten crabs in there. And you'd just take the big ones, throw the little ones back in.

McETRICK: Was there an army camp over there, Camp McKay?

R. MOAKLEY: Camp McKay was over where Bayside Expo is now. It started out as an American army camp. The troops were waiting there to be shipped overseas. Boston was a port of embarkation in those days. And then later, during the war, as the war progressed, it became an Italian prisoner camp. They had the Italian POWs there. And they were probably the happiest people in the country.

T. MOAKLEY: You didn't even have to close the gate. They wouldn't go.

R. MOAKLEY: They used to take them out on work details. This was before the housing projects were built. They had knocked some of the houses down where the D Street project is now. And they used to take the Italian prisoners over there to clean up, and pick up, and everything.

And everybody would be talking to them. On weekends, all the Italians from the North End, and everything, would go down to the fence and give them food. Nobody stopped them from doing anything. They used to get weekend passes. In fact, one of our cousins met one of them at a dance at the Bradford Hotel, didn't even realize he was an Italian prisoner. Had met him there for about six weeks in a row, and they started dating. Then she realized he was a lieutenant in the Italian Army. She ended up marrying him. She was one of our Italian relatives. And she ended up marrying him.

ALLISON: Did he stay here?

R. MOAKLEY: Yes.

T. MOAKLEY: Yeah, they stayed.

R. MOAKLEY: He was a war bride. (laughter)

McETTRICK: In fact, I think they used it as public housing after the war. Because I had some friends who lived at Camp McKay before they moved out to Hyde Park.

R. MOAKLEY: Yeah, it was just wooden barracks. It was not built as a permanent fort or anything. They were just wooden barracks raised up off the ground, and no foundation to speak of or anything.

McETTRICK: Did you have much of an opportunity, the three of you, to get part-time jobs?

T. MOAKLEY: Oh yeah.

McETTRICK: Did you have any good places to go, snow shoveling or anything.

T. MOAKLEY: I worked for the Crown Laundry, in the middle of summer, taking clothes out of the dryer. It used to burn your hands it was so hot. Then the Royal Crown Cola Company was down on Columbia Road there, Old Colony Boulevard. Then used to sell newspapers or shine shoes.

R. MOAKLEY: Tom had mentioned earlier that I was a barn boy. I actually hung in the livery stable. The kids I hung around with used to be down Ninth Street, and they had horses and wagons there. And we started off by going out with the peddlers or whoever, working for them, and they would give you a day's pay for working for them. Then once we were like thirteen or fourteen, up to that age, if we had enough money we would rent a horse and wagon, and we'd go

out ourselves and make money. And then in various ways, some not too honest. (laughter) But we used to go junking, you know, pick up scrap metal. As I said, they were knocking a lot of houses down. We'd go in and take all the plumbing, the lead pipes, and the old cast iron stoves and things, and sell it for junk.

McETTRICK: This was early recycling?

R. MOAKLEY: Yes. And we'd make good money like that. Then they had the Pony Boy Ice Cream, and they kept the ponies there, and we used to work those wagons, too, selling ice cream.

McETTRICK: Now, did your brother Joe have any many of these jobs? What did he like to do for a little spare change?

R. MOAKLEY: Joe had worked at the South Boston Market for a while. And one of the ironies was, Joe loved potato salad. In fact, sometimes he would stop and buy a tray of potato salad—they came in little paper trays in those days—and sit down and eat that, rather than a meal. He loved potato salad so much. And he got this job up in Broadway at the South Boston Market, and he was working in back at like the meat counter or deli counters—all the same in those days. And the guy that was making the potato salad had a cold, and he kept going like this (gestures), wiping his nose with his finger, and mixing the potato salad. And Joe never ate potato salad again after that. (laughter) And he was addicted to it, but he could never eat potato salad again.

T. MOAKLEY: But that would kind of cure you though.

McETTRICK: So what was it like as the older brothers became military age, and you started going off when the war started? I suppose you saw a lot of that, as you guys are getting older. But Joe, I guess was the oldest, and went in when he was really pretty young. So tell us how that worked to your advantage?

R. MOAKLEY: Well, in Southie, it was a disgrace to get drafted. In fact, they'd talk about somebody. They would say, They had to draft him. It was a disgrace to get drafted. Everybody joined as soon as they were eligible, unless they had something wrong with them. And a lot of them went in underage, as Joe did. And what kids used to do was, if they were too young to go in and their parents wouldn't allow them to go, they would register for the draft and say they were eighteen when they were fifteen or something. And they'd get drafted. But that was okay if you got drafted like that.

In fact, my father had me ready to go. I was going in the navy at that time. I ended up going in the army. But when I was fifteen, which was June of '45, I turned fifteen. I had a phony birth certificate. He took me over to join the navy. I signed up for the navy, but it ended in August, so I never got called. But I left on my seventeenth birthday for the army because he was singing the Marines' hymn in my ear. So the day before I turned seventeen, I went over and enlisted in the Army, and left on my seventeenth birthday. And Tom had already gone into the Coast Guard.

T. MOAKLEY: Well, at first I started for the navy. I went to the navy. At that time they had so many kids signing up. I had a slight overbite, so they rejected me, of course my father didn't know about it. One day in May, the year I was graduating, I was coming out of the school and my father was there to pick me up. He drove me over to the Coast Guard recruiting station. I got signed up for three years. He said, "When are you guys going in the Coast Guard?" because that's what he was in. And that was my first summer vacation away from home, doing boot camp.

R. MOAKLEY: It was funny. After the Korean War had broken out, I had already been in and out of the service. They had eighteen-month enlistments when I went in. And I was considered to be a World War II veteran, even though the war was over when I went in. So I wouldn't have got drafted or anything. And I was in the Longshoremen's Union at the time, during the Korean War. And I used to go over to Charlestown to work the paper boat every Tuesday. And big reams of paper would come in that went to the *[Boston] Globe* and to the *[Boston] Herald*, and all the newspapers. And I used to work that every Tuesday, and work in Southie the rest of the week.

But I was on the subway going over, and I ran into this kid I grew up with. And I said to him, “What are you doing up so early?” He says, “I’m going over and join the army.” He says, “I’m going back in the service.” Then he started talking about how he wasn’t getting along at home and all of this. So I started thinking. At the time I was still single and kicking around. I said, “I’ll go over with you.” So I went over with him, and they turned him down and took me. (laughter) So I ended up back in the army for three years.

So I was on my way to Korea. I was on the Korean route, and I ran into him at Wallace’s Sport Light on Old Colony Avenue. And he said to me, “Geez, I’m glad I didn’t go. I met a nice girl, and I’m thinking of getting married.” I said, “You son of a b,” I said, “I’m going over to get my fanny shot off, and you’re telling me how good things are.” (laughter) So that’s how I ended up back in the service.

McETTRICK: So what was the family reaction when Joe had his military vocation? I guess everybody was going, so it was just really pretty much expected?

R. MOAKLEY: Yeah, it was expected and accepted. And when he came home, of course, he had dropped out of school early. So he went to prep school to build up his high school credit and everything so he could attend college. He went to Miami University first, and he played football and boxed down there. He was a good boxer. He boxed in the light heavyweight division. And they used to call him the “Boston Bull,” because he was a bull. He was one like Rocky Marciano.³

T. MOAKLEY: He was so hairy, he looked like an ape. He had hair all over his back and his arms.

ALLISON: He boxed here too, or in Boston too?

³ Rocky Marciano (1923-1969) was a boxer from Brockton, Massachusetts, who was the heavyweight champion of the world from 1952 to 1956.

R. MOAKLEY: No.

T. MOAKLEY: No.

ALLISON: He took it up down there?

R. MOAKLEY: Yes. Just in college. We had all boxed as kids. They had boxing programs in the park department.

T. MOAKLEY: My father had—

R. MOAKLEY: Boxing gloves—

T. MOAKLEY: Boxing gloves and speed bag down in the cellar—

R. MOAKLEY: And a heavy bag.

T. MOAKLEY: And a seed bag filled with sand. It was like—

R. MOAKLEY: That was the heavy bag.

T. MOAKLEY: It was like hitting a brick wall. And he used to do push-ups with the three of us sitting on his back. I remember one time he caught me. I had a pack of cigarettes, and he said, “Put the gloves on.” So I put the gloves on, and he pisted me. I slid right across the floor.

R. MOAKLEY: My father was a big man. He was taller than any of us are now. And his ring fit on my thumb. I’ve got big fingers, but you could drop a quarter through his ring that fit on his finger. A quarter would fit through his ring.

T. MOAKLEY: He was tough.

McETTRICK: Was he a member of the union? Was he on the Longshoremen's?

R. MOAKLEY: No. He was in the Teamsters Union. He got into the bar business young. He drove a laundry truck when he was first married and all of that. And then later he got into the bar business. But he never gave up his union book. He paid his union dues right up till he died.

McETTRICK: When did your dad die?

R. MOAKLEY: Just before Joe went into the Congress. He died in '71.

ALLISON: Do you know how your parents met?

R. MOAKLEY: No. It was a really strange coupling. My mother was very timid, very religious person. Went to communion every day, one of those types of people. And my father couldn't say three sentences without cursing. I don't know if he could say one. No, he was a rough and tumble guy, just the opposite of her. When they say opposites attract, that was—

T. MOAKLEY: That was the main attraction. Like he said, my mother was a saint. She would go help everyone. My father would, too, but he's the rough and tumble guy. I remember when he had the bar on Tremont Street across from the old Hotel Bradford. I was sitting at the bar having a beer. I think I was about twelve. I think Bob was there then. He said, "Quick, jump in the car." So we jumped in the car, and he drove around to Washington Street where the furniture stores used to be. There was a guy walking down the street. He got out of the car and patted him. Then he got back in the car and drove away.

R. MOAKLEY: Well, there was a little conversation before that. (laughter) The guy had passed a bad check on him in the joint. So I heard him, he went up to the guy. He says, "Hey, what are you doing hanging wallpaper on me?" That's the way he talked. And the guy put his hand on his shoulder and said "Joe." Then he said, "Don't push me." Bam. One punch, the guy's out cold. The guy came out of the furniture store and says, "You going to do something

about that?" He said, "Do you want a spot beside him?" (laughter) He got in the car and drove away.

T. MOAKLEY: He said, "The guy gave me a rubber check." They never went to the police. They took care of their own problems.

McETTRICK: That's what you call a non-judicial sanction.

T. MOAKLEY: Well, the same thing happened when they had the place on Dorchester Avenue near South Station. A fellow was coming over the bridge. He stops the car. He opens the thing, he got a couple of bottles; it was his bartender. Now, the guy was an ex-con. He gave him a break. Needless to say, he said, "I'm glad you appreciate it." He patted him, and that was the end of him. That was the way it was.

R. MOAKLEY: I remember we were in the car with him once, and it was pouring rain. He had a place out in Savin Hill at the time. And we were near there. And there was a priest walking down the street, and it was pouring. So he pulled over and he said, "Get in, I'll give you a lift." So the priest got in, looks at him, and he said, "You're Joe Moakley, aren't you?" And he said, "Yes." He said, "I really don't approve of what you do at the bar," he said, "those women drinking up there and everything." He says, "Father," he says, "it's a tavern. No women are allowed in there. No women drink up there." And he said, "Well," he says, "I still don't like it, people going up there and blowing their paycheck on booze." He says, "I shut them off if I think they had too much." He said, "I know my customers. I'm not going to." And he kept on them. So he finally pulled over and he says, "If you didn't have your shirt on backwards," he says, "I'd take you down to the Mile Road and punch the shit out of you." The Mile Road is where Columbia Point project is now. He says, "Get out and walk!" (laughter)

T. MOAKLEY: My father was very generous. At that time, there was Camp McKay, an army camp there, and he had a bunch of guys, and they used to have like softball games every weekend. And he used to supply the food and the drinks and everything. And he sponsored a football team there. He was always great for people being in sports, always supported them.

McETTRICK: So what was it like when Joe came back from the war, and I suppose all of his contemporaries did? And everybody was back in South Boston. They were trying to get their lives started. It was '45, '48. What was the town like then?

T. MOAKLEY: Of course, all the guys that were getting out of the service all got together, and some of Joe's friends said, "Geez, Joe, why don't you run for office?" I mean, he never talked politics before. I guess they talked him into running. And the first time he ran for rep, I think he lost by 198 votes.

ALLISON: Now were either of you involved in the campaign?

R. MOAKLEY: Yes.

T. MOAKLEY: Yes. Just writing postcards, and those days you had torchlight parades, and knocking on doors and talking to people. That's the way you used to do it in those days.

McETTRICK: Who did Joe rely on to do things in that first campaign, to knock on the doors and distribute literature? There's usually a knot of people that really arm your campaign.

R. MOAKLEY: We had a pretty good organization because they were looking for a veteran, really. All the young guys that had come home from the service and everything. And the guys over in the office had been in for a dozen years or so, all through the war and everything. So he had a pretty good organization of young people, but not much political savvy. But that came with the campaigns.

END OF PART 1

(interruption)

T. MOAKLEY: The friends he used to hang with ended up being his campaign managers and good workers. Of course, most of them had gone. Like Sleepy Lynch⁴ who is—

R. MOAKLEY: Congressman Lynch's⁵ uncle.

(interruption)

T. MOAKLEY: Well Sleepy Lynch, who was very active in Joe's campaign, who is now the congressman's uncle, he was my class president up in Southie High. It's funny, there's a cemetery up the street here. Of course, we have our stone up already, save the kids department, Who's behind me? Sleepy Lynch. (laughter) I can't get rid of him.

McETTRICK: He was always close. Who are some of the other names that come to mind?

T. MOAKLEY: Davy Keefe, Looper Doherty

R. MOAKLEY: Joe Murphy—

T. MOAKLEY: Herbie Arrigal, Paul O'Donnell was involved.

McETTRICK: So I suppose not everybody had a telephone, not everybody had a car. So campaigning certainly was different. But at least everything is close together.

R. MOAKLEY: As Tom said, we used to do the street corners. They'd have a pickup truck in the procession. And when you'd stop at a corner, Joe would get off, and they'd give him a mike, and he'd say a few words. Then you'd go on to the next place. So, Herbie Arrigal you've seen introduced Joe, and Joe, at the time, was not much of a public speaker. He hated to get up and say anything in front of people. So the first stop, Herbie got up and said, "Now, I'd like to

⁴ John "Sleepy" Lynch (1929 -) was a volunteer on Moakley's 1950 and 1952 state representative campaigns, as well as a lifelong friend of Moakley's. He is an uncle of Congressman Stephen Lynch. OH-011 in the John Joseph Moakley Oral History Project is an interview with John Lynch.

⁵ Stephen F. Lynch (1955-), a Democrat, has represented Massachusetts' Ninth Congressional District in the U.S. House of Representatives since the death of Joe Moakley in 2001.

introduce the next representative from Ward 7, Joe Moakley!” And Joe would take the mike and say, “Thanks very much, Herbie.” He says, “My name is Joe Moakley. I come from South Boston. I’m a World War II veteran of the navy. I served on the South Pacific. And I’ll appreciate your vote.”

And then we go on to the next corner. And Herbie would introduce him. “I’d like you to meet Joe Moakley, a World War II veteran. He served in the South Pacific, and he’s looking for your vote.” And he’d say, “Thanks very much, Herbie. I’m active in the Ward 7 Democratic Club. And I promise, if I’m elected, I’ll do my best to make sure that things in Ward 7 improve.”

And Herbie would get to the next corner. “I want you to meet Joe Moakley, a World War II Navy veteran, an active member of Ward 7 Democratic Club, who will get things done,” and so forth. So, at the end of the night, Herbie would be giving a half hour speech, and Joe would be saying, “Thank you.” (laughter) He would copy everything that Joe said at the previous stop.

ALLISON: Had you been involved in politics before Joe ran?

T. MOAKLEY: No. Well, my father was. Johnny Kerrigan,⁶ he was the mayor years ago. And we used to have like parades. He used to march around the streets with banners and stuff like that. That’s the only politics we’ve ever done before.

R. MOAKLEY: Actually, my father worked in Governor Hurley’s⁷ office for a while. Governor Hurley was a Democratic governor of the state. Hurley liked guys from South Boston. He liked them hanging around. They were like his bodyguards. And it was he and a couple of other people from Southie, including Jack Crimmins, who later traveled with Ted Kennedy and everything. He was a friend of my father’s. They hung around these young guys together. And so during the Hurley campaigns, he’d put sandwich boards on us, with Hurley signs on both

⁶ John E. Kerrigan (1907-1987) was first elected to the Boston City Council in 1933, serving three terms as its president. He was a member of the council for a total of thirty years and served twice as acting mayor of Boston, in 1938 and 1945. He also served two years in the State Senate.

⁷ Charles F. Hurley (1893-1946), a Democrat, served as governor of Massachusetts from 1937 to 1939.

sides, and have us walking around. We were six, seven, eight years old, and walk around down the beach or wherever, with sandwich boards on. So that was our first involvement with politics.

McETTRICK: Was there a vacancy that Joe was after in 1950, or was it just a big—

R. MOAKLEY: No. There were two incumbents. There were two reps in Ward 7 at the time, and one in Ward 6. And he was running against an incumbent. But then when he ran again the following year, the one he came close to didn't run for re-election again. He knew that he would get tipped over that time. So he got a job someplace else, and Joe was elected. Joe topped the ticket the second time. He beat the other incumbent.

McETTRICK: So he really had a lot of momentum from the first one, and people that helped him and so forth?

R. MOAKLEY: Right.

McETTRICK: So were you surprised when he ran and won? Or was it, you figured he, you never know, but it looked pretty good.

R. MOAKLEY: When he was elected, I had already gone back into the service. The Korean War had broke out after his first campaign. I'd gone back in the service. I had been in Korea. And I still had two years to do after I finished my time in Korea. So rather than come back to the states, I put in for Japan. Because state-side duty was not good. You're always better off overseas. So I was in Tokyo, actually, when Joe was elected. And I have a telegram at home that he sent me in Tokyo, which I probably should have brought here today, saying that he had been elected, and what the vote was. And he listed all of the candidates, and how many votes they got. So I was in Tokyo when he won his first fight.

ALLISON: Do you have any idea why he topped the ticket, what made him so popular?

T. MOAKLEY: Well, of course, being young going into the service and all, and the veterans, and he was a new face, the other reps were in there for quite a few years, and nothing really happened.

R. MOAKLEY: Plus, he became very active in the community. As I said earlier, he had gone to school in Miami. So now he was back in Boston, and he was going to Suffolk, actually, nights.⁸ And he was working as a lifeguard down the beach, and he was helping coach some of the local football teams, and things like that. So he was active in the community. And he was much better known his second term.

T. MOAKLEY: He was very active in the community. One night he babysat for my wife and myself. We went to the movies. At that time we only had one son, my oldest son, Jackie. And he used to come up our house and study while he was going to school. And I guess my son did a load in his drawers. He calls up Evelyn in Cambridge. She came all the way over from Cambridge, to change the diapers. (laughter) That was an experience. That's probably why he'd never have any kids after that. Then at Christmas he used to come around dressed as Santa Claus, and Evelyn had the bunny rabbit outfit on, and he used to make the rounds to all the people he knew.

R. MOAKLEY: As Tom had mentioned earlier, we have Italian blood in us, as well. And in South Boston, the name Moakley was good enough. It was a good Irish name. But then, once he started running for the Senate, it took in the North End. So we had to let them know that we were half Italian, that our mother's name was Scappini. And we got the word out pretty good down there that he was half Italian. Plus, we had some cousins that lived over there.

So after he was in the Senate a couple of terms, I was walking through the North End at one of the festivals. We used to go to a lot of the festivals in the North End. And we were eating some sausages or something, and this little Italian guy comes up and he says, "Hey, Joe," he says. "Is that right what I hear about you?" And Joe says, "What's that?" He says, "Are you half Irish?" (laughter) So I guess the word was out pretty good by then.

⁸ Moakley attended Suffolk University Law School from 1952 to 1956, taking classes at night.

McETTRICK: Now was your mother still alive when he was campaigning, or had she passed away?

R. MOAKLEY: No, she died. He was elected rep—he was still a rep, when she died. She died in the fifties.

T. MOAKLEY: Like you said, by today's standards, she would still be alive, with the improvements they've made in medicine. She died on Mother's Day, too.

McETTRICK: So did Joe really like the job? Did he really like rep? Did he take to it like a duck to water?

T. MOAKLEY: Joe would work in politics for nothing, because he really enjoyed helping people. That's what was amazing. He was a people person. Like even as a congressman, he probably wouldn't turn around if anyone said "Congressman." Everyone calls him, "Joe." I remember when I visited him in Washington. We're walking along the halls. He knew the people running the elevators by name, the people sweeping the floor. He knew everybody by name. He had a terrific memory for names. Like during the funeral, everybody had a personal story to tell about him. I didn't realize he touched so many people, really.

McETTRICK: What did people need, do you think, from the reps? What sorts of requests do you think he would get as representative? Because you've got the big political issues—

T. MOAKLEY: Social Security checks.

R. MOAKLEY: Tom had gotten married, and Joe and I was still single. Neither of us had gotten married yet. And we were living with one of our aunts. My mother had died—no, it was before she had died. She was in the hospital, though. And the doorbell would start ringing about six o'clock in the morning on Saturday, people looking for things; a thirty-day appointment, or, Get my sidewalk fixed, anything, anything that was wrong on earth. So I used to say to him,

because I was working hard in those days—I was doing physical work, longshoreman—I said, “Joe, why don’t you get a real job (laughter), where people aren’t going to be coming to the house waking us up on the weekends.”

But he loved it. Joe was happiest when his phone was ringing or somebody was looking for something to do. In fact, I’m sure you’ve heard many times during the course of interviewing the office staff and everything, he’d get on the phone himself when somebody would call him with a problem. Where most pols are trying to duck it. Let somebody else handle that. He’d want to get on and talk to the people and say, “Look, I’ll find out about it. I’ll get it done.” He loved helping people. I don’t know if it was a flaw, but it was good for everybody else. I don’t know how good it was for Joe. It kept him very busy. But he really loved to do things for people.

McETRICK: He certainly accomplished so many different things. What do you think he was the proudest of? What do you think was really the most fun for him, or the best thing he did?

T. MOAKLEY: I think the proudest thing for him was the El Salvador situation, where he was so insistent on getting the right people.⁹ He said there’s a lot of people they said did it, but he knew they weren’t the ones. They had a couple of funny stories about it when they were going through the streets in El Salvador. They were in a jeep, and they were going to meet somebody that was going to give them important information. And there was a fellow with a machine gun in the jeep, and the guy’s going like hell in the streets back and forth. And he taps the guy on the shoulder and said, “I don’t care if we come in second.” He always tried to lighten the situation.

R. MOAKLEY: In El Salvador, he was not only coping with the El Salvadoran government, he was coping with ours. Because the State Department didn’t want to look into it. They were trying to cover it up because all the military, the people that were involved, were trained by us. They had the place where they trained all, and not only them, but [Manuel] Noriega and all of

⁹ In December of 1989, Speaker of the House Thomas S. Foley appointed Moakley as chairman of a committee to investigate violence in El Salvador, specifically the November 16, 1989, murder of six Jesuit priests, their housekeeper and her daughter at the University of Central America in San Salvador. The committee is commonly referred to as the Speaker’s Task Force on El Salvador or the Moakley Commission. The Moakley Commission investigation revealed that the Salvadoran military was responsible for the murders.

those guys, they were trained by us. And the State Department was trying to blame it on somebody else. They were giving Joe all of the wrong information.

And he was persistent. He knew that it wasn't right, what he was being told. And that's why Speaker Foley¹⁰ sent them down there. He knew he wouldn't let go once he put him on the job. He knew he would get to the bottom of it. So he ended up getting apologies from the State Department and everything else when it was over. But if that hadn't happened, that regime down there never would have been toppled, and the way of life down there would never have changed. Even at his service at the state house, there was some clergy from El Salvador who had come up because of that.

T. MOAKLEY: He had the funding stopped, too. At the time the United States was still sending money down to El Salvador. And he had the funding stopped when they found out what the real story was. So I think that was his proudest. Like he said, his only time with foreign politics was going to East Boston for a submarine sandwich.

McETRICK: I suppose, when you have a lot of constituents asking you to do things and try to get things accomplished, that you really need help at the other end. And who would you say would be the people that Joe would have to turn to then to try to get things accomplished? Who did he feel the most comfortable with?

T. MOAKLEY: His office help was great because when you called his office, you never got a tape recording. If you called his home, you never had an answering machine. If he was there, he would answer it himself. And he directed different people; one person take care of people, for Social Security, another one for immigration. And all of these people he had complete faith in. And if they couldn't do it, they would tell you. They wouldn't say, "Well, call me back later." If they couldn't do it, they would let you know right away. And that's what everyone appreciated about the office.

¹⁰ Thomas S. Foley (1929-), a Democrat, represented Washington State's Fifth Congressional District in the U.S. House of Representatives from 1969 to 1995. He served as Speaker of the House from 1989 to 1995.

R. MOAKLEY: His staff was like family to him. In fact, a lot of them called him Uncle Joe. They went to work there as kids. And he'd keep them on. He'd try and make sure they could handle the job that they had the resources to do it. And when he announced that he was not going to run again, he got them all together, the office staff, and told them, "Look, now is the time to get a job some place else. You let me know what you want to do, I'll help you get a job." Not one person left until after he died. None of them would leave while he was still alive.

T. MOAKLEY: As a matter of fact, while we were at the hospital in Washington, most of the staff stayed overnight. There was a woman that was supposed to go on vacation; she canceled the vacation. Another one didn't even go to her anniversary party that she had. She stayed at the hospital.

R. MOAKLEY: And Tom and I were down there. We spent four or five days there at the hospital with Joe before he died. And even the hospital staff, let alone the office staff—he was in Bethesda Naval Hospital, and there was a young girl there, Puerto Rican girl from the Bronx. And she was spending her days off there helping Joe, rather than go home. She liked him that much. And there was a young naval officer who was being transferred to Alaska. And he came in on his day off, before he left. And Joe had slipped into a coma by then. But he saluted him and said a prayer. The people in the hospital loved him as well. He was good to them.

T. MOAKLEY: And in fact, the last week before he died, in the hospital, he was on the phone and he got some young girl into a college that she wanted to go to.

McETTRICK: I bet that made his day.

T. MOAKLEY: Yeah.

McETTRICK: What do you recall about the point where Joe decided that instead of serving in the state legislature, that he was going to go for the congressional seat? Do you think that was just a natural decision? Did he have to think about? Was it a struggle for him?

R. MOAKLEY: What happened was John W. McCormack¹¹ retired. So the vacancy was created. He would not have opposed John W. He had the greatest respect for John W. And he would not have opposed him for the seat. But that seemed like the natural place for him to go because of his legislative experience. That was his ambition, really. We used to kid about it when he was a state rep, Someday you'll be another John W. McCormack.

T. MOAKLEY: But John McCormack was in Congress when Joe was real young, and stayed there.

ALLISON: He was about a year old when John was elected. What about in 1960, he ran against John Powers.¹² Were either of you involved in that?

T. MOAKLEY: Yes.

R. MOAKLEY: Yes, but very deeply involved in that. What happened was, if you recall, that was the year of the presidential election. And Johnny Powers was supposed to go to work for Jack Kennedy.¹³ He was supposed to get a cabinet job or something. And the reps in the senatorial district got together. At the time, John Tynan was a rep at the time in the district, and the rep from Roxbury and all the wards that were on the senatorial district got together and selected who would be Powers' predecessor, not predecessor—successor. But they decided Joe should be it because his was the most populous ward, and he at the time was the whip in the state legislature.

So Joe said okay. He got out and started his campaign. And then, maybe halfway through the campaign, Powers decided he was going to run again. I guess whatever he was supposed to get

¹¹ John W. McCormack (1891-1990), a Democrat, represented Massachusetts' Twelfth and, after redistricting, Ninth Congressional Districts in the United States House of Representatives from 1928 to 1971. He served as Speaker of the House from 1962 to 1971.

¹² John E. Powers (1910-1998), a Democrat, represented South Boston in the Massachusetts House of Representatives from 1939 to 1946 and in the Massachusetts State Senate from 1947 to 1964. He served as Senate President from 1959 to 1964.

¹³ John F. Kennedy (1917-1963), a Democrat, represented Massachusetts' Eleventh Congressional District in the U.S. House of Representatives from 1947 to 1953, then represented Massachusetts in the U.S. Senate from 1953 to 1960, when he was elected president.

fell through. So he got back in the fight, and that's how that happened. It was not a nice contest, either. And Powers became very bitter towards Joe, even though he was the one that put the word out that he was not going to run again.

McETTRICK: So then Powers did vacate the seat eventually.

R. MOAKLEY: Yes. He became clerk in the courts, and then Joe ran again.

ALLISON: What did he do in the years between when he—

R. MOAKLEY: He was a lawyer. Joe had a law practice. In fact, I don't know why he got back into politics. He was doing very well in his law practice. More money than he could ever make in politics.

ALLISON: Probably the thing the South Boston state senator is best known for is hosting the Saint Patrick's Day Breakfast. Can you tell us anything about that experience?

T. MOAKLEY: Bob was a good writer. Bob used to write a lot of material.

R. MOAKLEY: Joe used to host a—Johnny Powers had started it, and then Joe, of course, followed him into the Senate, and he hosted it. It used to be at Dorgan's in those days, which is gone now. Dorgan's was down near the beach. It was much smaller than the hall they have it in now. And the place would be packed to the rafters from all over. And I used to write the parodies. They used to have parodies there, and Paul O'Donnell, who Tom had mentioned, was an entertainer. He was a singer and banjo player, and he had an accompanist on the piano. And I used to write political parodies, which they sang there, and write one-liners for Joe to use at the head tables.

So it was fun. It was a fun time. Then they'd go from that into the parade. And then when Billy Bulger¹⁴ took over after him, then it became like a one-man show with Billy. But before it was like a variety show. It was a different format. But Joe really enjoyed doing that.

ALLISON: Did you write parodies for other things? Were you naturally a writer, or just a fun guy?

R. MOAKLEY: Or unnaturally. (laughter)

T. MOAKLEY: Actually, I think the time when Joe ran the second time for Congress, when he was going against Hicks,¹⁵ I think it was kind of your idea for him to run as an Independent. Because once in a crowded field, Louise was going to get back in again. So if he figured a one-on-one shot—

R. MOAKLEY: I would have actually told him to do it the first time, but nobody had done it, and he thought that it would hurt him in the Democratic Party. One of the reasons I used to write them was I was very political. And I knew everybody in politics. So I could work those kinds of things into songs or whatever. But I was very close to Joe politically, too, in helping them make decisions on different things. Not policy issues, so much. Joe had a knack for his own policy issues. But on how to handle different districts or people within the district that they were trying to win over, and things like that. So we were very close, politically and friendship-wise too. As Tom said, we never really got close until we all came home from the service. That's when we became close. We all went our own ways as teenagers.

¹⁴ William M. Bulger (1934-), a Democrat, served in the Massachusetts House of Representatives from 1962 to 1970, in the Massachusetts State Senate from 1970 to 1978 and as State Senate President from 1978 to 1996.

¹⁵ Louise Day Hicks (1916-2003), a Democrat, served on the Boston School Committee from 1962 to 1967 (serving as chair from 1963 to 1965), ran unsuccessfully for the mayoralty of Boston in 1967 and in 1971, and served on the Boston City Council before being elected to the United States House of Representatives in 1970. She represented Massachusetts' Ninth Congressional District for one term. It was in the 1970 election that Moakley lost his first bid for Congress, in part because Hicks was an outspoken critic of forced busing in Boston, while Moakley did not take a strong stand on the issue. Moakley defeated Hicks in the 1972 congressional election when he ran as an Independent so he wouldn't have to run against Hicks in the democratic primary.

T. MOAKLEY: Bob and Joe were the bachelors, and I was married then. And my time was consumed a little differently.

McETRICK: You had pointed out that, of course, John McCormack had been the congressman forever and Louise Hicks got the seat. And then there was a rematch between Joe and Louise. Were people surprised that that happened, or was everybody expecting that there was going to be an Act Two?

R. MOAKLEY: Believe it or not, Joe would have won the first time, even as a Democrat, if David Nelson¹⁶ had not gone into the fight. Joe actually beat Louise Day Hicks in South Boston, Dorchester, and all those places. And David Nelson, who was a black attorney—of course, the blacks were anti-Hicks because she was a great anti-busing advocate.

So he brought Coretta King into Boston election eve, and had made it a black and white fight, actually. That's what happened. He polarized everybody. It was, Then you either have to vote Hicks or Nelson. That's what it came down to.

T. MOAKLEY: Was there somebody else, too the guy that became—

R. MOAKLEY: That was Dave Nelson. He became a judge afterwards.

T. MOAKLEY: No. I think there was somebody else who was in the court system, too. I can't think of his name now, but I'm pretty sure there was another candidate.

R. MOAKLEY: No, that was the next time, Jimmy Hennigan. That was the point that he ran as an Independent.

McETRICK: When Nelson did that, that changed the whole situation.

¹⁶ David S. Nelson (1933-1998) was the first African American to serve as a judge of a federal court in Boston. He was appointed to the position in 1979 by President Jimmy Carter.

T. MOAKLEY: Oh, yeah. It took all of the Moakley votes away.

McETTRICK: Sure. So you could really see pretty clearly the opportunity was there—

R. MOAKLEY: We tried to explain that. Dave Nelson is a nice guy. And I knew Dave before that. His law partner was Joe Oteri at the time, and Joe Oteri was a friend of mine. I had gone to school with Joe. I grew up with him. But he couldn't understand that he was the spoiler in the fight. He didn't want to hear that Joe could beat her and he couldn't. And then afterwards he said that he did his own people a disservice. He admitted it.

McETTRICK: It's going to be difficult to make those decisions.

R. MOAKLEY: It is, it's tough. Anybody who gets into a political campaign can rationalize in their own mind why they're going to win, or they wouldn't be in there.

McETTRICK: Everybody could see clearly the second time around, where all the cards were and how this would actually break.

ALLISON: Did you ever think of running for office?

R. MOAKLEY: No, in a word. (laughter)

T. MOAKLEY: No. I've worked with him, but I wouldn't want to be in politics. I don't have the patience to be in politics.

R. MOAKLEY: In fact, a lot of people had tried to push me into going for Joe's seat after he died. Of course, I'm too old to start in that game, anyway. But I have no interest in becoming the office holder. I have a great interest in what they do, but I don't want to be the guy doing it, really.

ALLISON: The doorbell being rung at six in the morning on a Saturday.

END OF PART 2

McETTRICK: You could lead us. I mean you were there.

T. MOAKLEY: Well first of all, about Joe helping people; even on the weekends when he used to come home, he used to park his car on Castle Island in a certain spot. It was just like having office hours. People knew he parked there. They'd go down there, go over to it, "Joe, could you do this for me?" "Can you do that?" He had his book. I mean he just liked being near people, and taking care of them. And he really enjoyed that.

McETTRICK: And John McCormack was the primary political figure for so many. What was that like? And how do you think that effected Joe, and how Joe did the job when he became congressman?

R. MOAKLEY: Well, I think Joe had the greatest respect for John W. McCormack. And, nobody ever mentioned his name without saying his middle initial, John W. They sometimes would omit the last name, but not the middle initial. And he was considered to be a guy that—the rags to riches story—a guy who grew up in Southie and became a member of Congress.

And Joe had the greatest respect for him, and greatest admiration for him. And that's why I say he aspired to that seat, too. I think every kid who ran for politics in Southie hoped to someday do that; become a member of Congress just because John W. had done it.

T. MOAKLEY: It's funny, he never had any desire to be the House Speaker, but he did want to be the chairman of the Rules Committee,¹⁷ because that's a very important part, and it has a lot of power. And he figured he could do more for the area if he was the chairman.

¹⁷ The House Rules Committee is responsible for the scheduling of bills for discussion in the House of Representatives. According to the Rules Committee website, "bills are scheduled by means of special rules from the Rules Committee that bestow upon legislation priority status for consideration in the House and establish procedures for their debate and amendment." (See <http://www.rules.house.gov/>) Congressman Moakley was a member of the House Rules Committee from 1975 to 2001 and served as its chairman from 1989 to 1995.

R. MOAKLEY: And Tip wanted to make him like a floor leader, or something, in the House, or he'd be in the line for the Speaker's job after he got out of there. And Joe didn't want it. He said, "I'd rather stay in the Rules Committee because every piece of legislation comes through there." And that's where you can do some good; affect every piece of legislation.

T. MOAKLEY: A matter of fact, before he died, he spoke to Gephardt,¹⁸ and made sure that McGovern¹⁹ could get on the Rules Committee to be from the Massachusetts delegation, and he wanted somebody on the Rules Committee. And that's another one of his last-minute things he wanted to get done.

McETTRICK: So that was the same tradition. That's what had happened to Joe when he arrived.

T. MOAKLEY: Yeah, but Tip O'Neill²⁰ got him on the Rules.

McETTRICK: So, how was the transition when he first went to Washington? I suppose it's a whole new ballgame. It's not the state house anymore. What was that like?

R. MOAKLEY: What happened was he went as an Independent. But he had told Tip before he was elected, he said, "Don't worry. As soon as I'm seated, I'll be seated as a Democrat," which he was. And he hit it off with Tip right away. They became really good friends, socially as well as working. He spent most of his holidays, because Tom and I were married, and had our own family. And he spent most of his holidays with Tip and Millie. They'd go down the Cape for Thanksgiving and things like this.

¹⁸ Richard Gephardt (1941-), a Democrat, represented Missouri's Third Congressional District in the U.S. House of Representatives from 1977 to 2005.

¹⁹ James P. McGovern (1959-), a Democrat, has represented Massachusetts' Third Congressional District in the U.S. House of Representatives since 1997. He was a member of Moakley's congressional staff from 1982 to 1996.

²⁰ Thomas P. "Tip" O'Neill (1912-1994), a Democrat, represented Massachusetts' Eleventh and, after redistricting, Eighth Congressional Districts in the United States House of Representatives from 1953 to 1987. He served as Speaker of the House of Representatives from 1977 to 1987. He also served in the Massachusetts House of Representatives from 1936 to 1952.

Because Tip had lived in Washington most of his life. His family was up here. And he and Eddie Boland²¹ roomed together. And then after the kids all got married and everything, then Millie and he started living together because Millie was taking care of the kids.

But Joe and Evelyn²² spent a great deal of time with them. And they were really good friends. And they played in all the golf tournaments. And the funny thing, I ran into Ray Flynn²³ one time. And Ray had been in one of the golf tournaments with him. And he said, “Gee, I used to read about them being in all these golf tournaments.” He says, “I thought they were good golfers.” He said, “They stink.” (laughter) Which they did, I think. I don’t think either of them were great golfers, but they had a lot of fun doing it. And they did a lot of golf charity tournaments that helped a lot of people.

T. MOAKLEY: A matter of fact, the O’Neill family let Joe do the eulogy when Tip died. I mean other people requested it, but they said, No, Joe Moakley is going to do it. And that’s how close they were.

McETRICK: So then Joe just barely got settled in Congress, and then the upheaval started in Boston with the busing and so forth. How did that affect Joe, as community leader?

T. MOAKLEY: Well, I think the busing was going on long before that. I think most of the local politicians were very vocal in that. Well Joe, more or less, stayed kind of away because these guys were making their own name for themselves up there.

R. MOAKLEY: Well, what happened was you had some—and I don’t want to mention anybody’s name. But there were people that would get up in front of the people at different rallies and things, and tell them, No buses are going to roll in South Boston. Your kids aren’t going to be bused, and things like this.

²¹ Edward P. Boland (1911-2001), a Democrat, represented Massachusetts’ Second Congressional District in the U.S. House of Representatives from 1953 to 1989.

²² Evelyn (Duffy) Moakley (1927-1996) was Congressman Moakley’s wife. They married in 1957.

²³ Raymond L. Flynn (1939-), a Democrat, represented South Boston in the Massachusetts State House of Representatives from 1971 to 1979. He later served on the Boston City Council from 1978 to 1974, then as mayor of Boston from 1984 to 1993.

Joe was really, Joe was anti-busing, and voted against busing. He wasn't going to be a hypocrite about it. And when they asked him, they said, "It's the law." He said, "Tip passed that law." I said, "There's nothing that anybody is going to do to stop this." And they didn't want to hear that.

And people later in life realized that he was telling the truth and the others weren't. But in the heat of the passion over having your kid taken from your neighborhood and bused to another neighborhood, they felt like Joe had deserted them. And these people were helping him. But, the other people were just using them, actually, building support from him.

T. MOAKLEY: Yeah, just making a name for themselves.

McETRICK: So, he was really frustrated by that—

R. MOAKLEY: Oh, it really hurt him because people that he really liked, that were friends, some of them turned against him. And in fact, he even lost South Boston in one election. And he came back to win it again after that. But yeah, it hurt him because he was telling them the truth, and—

T. MOAKLEY: They didn't want to hear it.

R. MOAKLEY: Well, everybody else was telling him something else that wasn't true. And unfortunately, they then thought it was him, that it was his doing.

ALLISON: Were you guys living in South Boston then?

T. MOAKLEY: Oh yeah, we were living in South Boston. The thing is that, I think most people, even most of the blacks, didn't want to get bused either. But you had a group of blacks and group of whites that were just disturbing and making a lot of noise. Some people were making money on it, other people were making a name on it. So they kept the thing going.

R. MOAKLEY: Yeah. There was a fellow whose name I can't even think of at the time, but a very prominent—Mel King.²⁴ Mel King used to run for office all the time. And he made the statement that the people in Southie and Roxbury had more in common than they do differences. It's outside forces that are controlling them. And they were pitting the poor against the poor, the people who had no voice and no power against each other, unfortunately. And it was a sad thing.

ALLISON: And were your children in school at the time?

R. MOAKLEY: Yes.

ALLISON: And where were they going?

T. MOAKLEY: Well my kids were doing triple classes up at Southie High. So when I was living in Southie, they were coming down to Sacred Heart in Weymouth. Of course, my older son was out of school. And my second oldest boy finished Southie High. But my girls ended up going down here because the classes were so long. And people from other areas were coming to Southie High. And they kept on making bigger classes and adding hours on. And they weren't getting the education. So we sent them to parochial school down in Weymouth. So they went from Southie to Weymouth on public transportation to go to school.

R. MOAKLEY: I had a daughter that was also in Southie High. And they ended up sending her to English High School downtown. And she didn't like the idea of being sent someplace else, but she went. And then one day, she came home. And she said she used to have lunch every day with these two black girls. They were twins. And she really liked them. She got to know them, and she really liked them. And everyday she'd have lunch with them. And she said, one day, she went to sit with them, and one of them said to her, the brother said, "We can't sit with you anymore." So what it was supposed to accomplish, bringing the kids together, caused a schism within the school rather than just within the city. And that hurt her because she said, she

²⁴ Melvin H. King (1928-) is a community activist in the Boston area. He ran unsuccessfully three times for the Boston Community and once for mayor of Boston in 1983. He served in the Massachusetts State House of Representatives from 1973 to 1982.

knew they liked her and she liked them. And it was just the kids in the school. They weren't going to segregate themselves.

T. MOAKLEY: Because years ago, when you wanted to go to a different school, like if you wanted to study electricity, you went to Charlestown High. If you wanted to study mechanics, you went to another school. I mean they did that on their own. And there was never any problem. But when people force you to do something that you don't want to do, then you have your problems.

R. MOAKLEY: As I said, I used to come up with schemes. I had come up with that idea for Boston. And everybody pooh-pooed it, Mayor White,²⁵ the school committee, everybody else. And, it later became known as the magnet school.²⁶ And they use them out in the Midwest and it worked. But nobody wanted to do it here. And I said that. Because they did it for trades, so they could have done it for academic reasons as well, if you were interested in a certain field of study. But, they just pooh-pooed it here. Another city picked it up a few years later and ran with it, calling it magnet schools.

McETTRICK: Well, you must have had a chance—being the family of a congressman who was well-placed in Congress—you must have had an opportunity to go to a lot of exciting functions, and meet people that you never really would have seen otherwise, because Joe seemed to have a way of getting to know some of the presidents and the powers that be. Tell us a little bit about that. What's it like to have your brother be a leader in Congress? And how did that affect the two of you?

T. MOAKLEY: Well, people start noticing you, anyway. (laughter) But you know, Bob and I, we're never name-droppers or anything. You go some places and they call you, or you go someplace, you wait your turn. I was never one to say, "Geez, can I get here? My brother is a

²⁵ Kevin White (1929-), a Democrat, served as mayor of Boston from 1968 to 1984. He ran unsuccessfully for governor of Massachusetts in 1970.

²⁶ Magnet schools are schools offering special courses not available in the regular school curriculum and designed, often as an aid to school desegregation, to attract students on a voluntary basis from all parts of a school district without reference to the usual attendance zone rules. (Definition from the Library of Congress.)

congressman,” or something. I was always kind of laid back. And people say, Geez, you’re stupid. If my brother was that, I’d do this and do that. But that wasn’t our way anyway.

But we went to a couple of the big events in Washington a few years back. And they had a big party for Joe when he finally solved the El Salvador thing. That place was huge, and every seat was taken. And then you had your picture taken with [President Bill] Clinton and all that. So it was very impressive.

Then, of course, the latest thing when [George W.] Bush signed the bill making the courthouse Joe Moakley.²⁷ And he’s signing the bill, and my brother is over his shoulder saying, “G-E.” (laughter) So, he says to the president, “Can I have the pen?” And he says, in his Irish voice, “You only have one pen? I know you’re trying to cut the budget, but do you have to start with the pen?” And he said, “I have two brothers.”

R. MOAKLEY: Normally, when a president does sign a bill, they use as many pens as there are people in the room. He uses one pen.

T. MOAKLEY: Of course, it was his first bill, I think, he ever signed out in the Rose Garden.

R. MOAKLEY: It was. That was his first Rose Garden ceremony. And after the bill signing, Joe called us and our wives up on the stage to have a picture taken with the president. So when we got up, I said to Tom’s wife and my wife—of course, Evelyn was already deceased—I said, “Why don’t you two stand with the president? And Tom and I will get on the outside.” And the president said, “Yeah, these Moakley boys are real ugly.” (laughter)

T. MOAKLEY: Yeah, but he was good. After the ceremonies, we saw Andy Card.²⁸ And Bob’s wife was talking to him. And we wanted to see the Oval Office. So we finally got in there. And we’re in there. He’s showing us all around. And who walks in a couple of minutes

²⁷ On March 13, 2001, President George W. Bush signed Public Law No. 107-2 naming the U.S. courthouse on South Boston’s Fan Pier the John Joseph Moakley United States Courthouse.

²⁸ Andy Card (1948-) was White House Chief of Staff under President George W. Bush from 2001 to 2006.

later but the president. And geez, we had to break away from him. He kept on talking. And he asked us about our father. He is a good politician. He's really very easy to talk to.

R. MOAKLEY: Well, he's a well-met guy. I don't agree with most of the political decisions. But, socially he's—I've been fortunate enough, I've met every president since Harry Truman, and mostly because of my work. And I go to a lot of functions for veterans and things like this. And I speak at the national conventions and things like that.

But he's a very sociable, down-to-earth guy. And, of course, he came to Joe's mass, too. And he was very nice about that. And he sent us notes afterwards, after the mass. And he's a nice guy. But, as I say, politically, I don't agree with lots of things he does. But socially he's a nice guy.

T. MOAKLEY: It's funny that Joe used to call up my wife every once in a while. And when he'd get a new joke, he'd call up and say, "Do you know any new jokes?" and stuff like that. Afterwards, one thing Evelyn was telling us was one night—of course, she didn't see Joe that much. And she used to watch C-SPAN. And she saw Joe with a couple of congressmen, telling one of his jokes, like it was about a guy that was in a nursing home, and they wouldn't let him fart. So, she saw him going like (gestures). She called up Joe. She said, "People know that joke. You're going to tell it." (laughter)

There was something else that he did that I don't, like when he was sitting on the stage at one of these colleges, and getting one of these doctorates from there. And some fellow behind him says, "Mr. Moakley, what did you major in college?" He says, "Sheet metal." (laughter) Yeah, always had a wisecrack, to help things. But he was funny.

R. MOAKLEY: Yeah. I remember when he got his first doctorate degree. And he went home to Evelyn, and he said, "Well, you're going to have to call me 'doctor' now." And she says, "Okay doctor, take the dog out."

McETTRICK: Did he have much occasion to deal with President Reagan? I know it's unusual for congressmen to really see the president that much. But did he have much contact with Reagan?

R. MOAKLEY: Yeah, he did. Reagan used to love Saint Patrick's Day, and Irish jokes, and stuff like that. So he and Tip O'Neill would be around—he'd invite them over around Saint Patrick's Day all the time to joke and kid about—do Irish jokes. But there was another guy, a very well-met guy with a good sense of humor, but didn't agree with any of his politics either.

In fact, Tip told me one time that he had a group down there from the AARP when he was trying to cut benefits for the elderly and everything. And Tip said, "I said to the guy, 'Don't worry, I won't let that SOB cut anything. And he said, "Look, don't badmouth Reagan. He's a nice guy. We just wanted you to protect our benefits.'" (laughter) And he had that effect on people. He'd be killing them financially, but they liked him.

McETTRICK: Didn't Reagan come up, and did he have a drink at the Erie Pub in Dorchester?

R. MOAKLEY: Yes.

ALLISON: And we do have a picture, actually. It must have been one of the Saint Patrick's Day functions at the White House with Reagan, and Joe, and Tip.

T. MOAKLEY: Yeah. Yeah, I saw that picture.

ALLISON: A lot of bottles of beer on the table. The flipside of this, the whole idea of being a congressman's brother, you said how he liked to help people. And you mentioned, after you got the license plate, you were worried about parking at Castle Island. Would people ask you to help them with things because they knew you were Joe Moakley's brother? Or did you stay out—try to distance yourself?

R. MOAKLEY: Oh, they'd use us as a conduit to get to him, people that didn't know him, naturally, yes. And, of course, I had enough people after me anyway. I had an office in the JFK Building for many years. And Joe, he had an office there, but he'd be in Washington. So they'd all end up in my office.

And, of course, Joe used to call me for a lot of things, too. If it had anything to do with veterans, he'd call me, and I'd know who to get in touch with on it to help out in that respect. But yeah, it wasn't a downer. It wasn't that bad that you had to have an unlisted phone or there were lines outside our doors or anything. But sometimes people just wouldn't know which course to take. And they'd call you for advice or, you know, Would it be okay if I called Joe? Can I use your name? Things like that.

T. MOAKLEY: Yeah, it wasn't abused. I got a few calls, but really not enough to disturb you. They kind of respected your privacy, too. It wasn't overdone.

McETTRICK: So now that we've almost finished the Big Dig,²⁹ I guess that was another big story of Joe's career, really, getting that launched, and Tip O'Neill. And that was really a team effort. It seems to be one of the big impacts, really, that Joe had on the city, the Big Dig and the waterfront. It must be amazing to drive around and just look at all of this.

T. MOAKLEY: Well, I remember when I was walking along Castle Island with Joe once. And I said, "Geez, the water looks great. Look at the color." He says, "You're welcome." (laughter)

R. MOAKLEY: Joe was the only Massachusetts politician invited to the first Earth Day that was held at Harvard.³⁰ In fact, there were only two politicians invited there. And one was Senator Muskie³¹ from Maine and Joe. Because that far back, he had already filed legislation to clean up Boston Harbor, to preserve the island. He had a lot of foresight when it came to the ecology.

²⁹ The Big Dig, or Central Artery/Tunnel Project (CA/T), was the largest public works project in U.S. history and involved the replacement of downtown Boston's elevated highway with a tunnel. The project began in 1991 and ended in 2007.

³⁰ The first Earth Day was held at Harvard University on April 22, 1970.

³¹ Edmund S. Muskie (1914-1996), a Democrat, represented Maine in the U.S. Senate from 1959 to 1980.

And there are bills up there now that they still refer to as the Moakley Bills, that he had filed back in the fifties and sixties. And they're becoming national kinds of things now. In fact, there's a cigarette bill up there they refer to as the Moakley Bill.³² It's a self-extinguishing cigarette that will go out, if you're not puffing on it, to prevent fires. There were so many people burning themselves to death. And that's just been revived this year, I think. And they're referring to it as the Moakley Bill. But he had filed that when he was in the state legislature that long ago.

ALLISON: What made him interested in the harbor and the islands?

R. MOAKLEY: He was aware, as Tom and I had said earlier, the minnow used to be swimming around our ankles down there. You could see the fish. At night, you could actually see fish glistening. The streetlights would hit them. And, it doesn't take a genius to realize that they've been depleted.

At one time, they were talking about putting the World's Fair in Boston Harbor.³³ And they were going to link up piers from the island back into the shore, where you could go out, and they'd be all over the place. And Joe opposed it. He said, "All we're going to be left with are floating popcorn boxes and stuff like that. It's not going to do us any good here." They'd end up polluting it even worse than it was. But yeah, he was very conscious of what had happened. Since we were kids, he could see the difference.

McETTRICK: And I guess there was the difference between state and federal involvement because Deer Island³⁴ was a state operation, and some of those Harbor Islands were with the

³² After a family in his district died in a fire that was caused by a cigarette, Congressman Moakley obtained passage of the Cigarette Safety Act of 1984, which established Congressional committees to determine if a fire-safe cigarette was technically feasible, and the Fire-Safe Cigarette Act of 1990, which required the government to develop a test to assess how "fire-safe" a cigarette was. As of 2008, there was still no federal law mandating fire-safe cigarettes, but sixteen states, including Massachusetts, have regulations in place.

³³ In the late 1960s, a proposal was made to bring a World's Fair to Boston, specifically to the area surrounding Boston Harbor, as part of the nation's bicentennial celebrations in 1976. The proposal was not successful.

³⁴ Deer Island, once of the Boston Harbor Islands, is home to the Deer Island Waste Water Treatment Plant.

state. But I guess Joe really felt that it was time for the national community.³⁵ Do you recall a history of that at all and how that affected him, or how he got engaged in it?

R. MOAKLEY: Well, he was always interested in the islands. And he always talked about them. But I think one of the big things, too, is when Dukakis³⁶ was running for president. And his opponent came and said, "Look at the harbor." It looked like a big mud bath there. And of course, that probably had some effect on Joe, also.

McETTRICK: Of course, you look at Spectacle Island,³⁷ and that's just completely different. It looks different.

R. MOAKLEY: They'll have a ski slope there. But that used to actually glow at night. There was trash burning there for years. That was a dump years ago. And it was always smoldering continuously.

T. MOAKLEY: There was an old schooner that was tied up there that was rotted away, a real mess years ago when we were kids.

R. MOAKLEY: There was a lady; a Portuguese lady lived on it. And her family had all died, I guess. And she was still living on there.

ALLISON: Did you ever go out to the islands as kids?

R. MOAKLEY: Just to Thompson's Island.³⁸ That was the only one they used to let people on.

³⁵ Throughout his political career, Moakley lobbied on behalf of the Boston Harbor Islands, his efforts culminating with the creation of the Boston Harbor Islands National Recreation Area in 1996, which put the islands under the control of the National Park Service.

³⁶ Michael S. Dukakis (1933-), a Democrat, served in the Massachusetts House of Representatives from 1962 to 1970, then as governor of Massachusetts from 1975 to 1979 and from 1983 to 1991. He was the Democratic presidential nominee in 1988, but lost the presidential election to Republican George H.W. Bush.

³⁷ Spectacle Island is one of the Boston Harbor Islands and features a marina, visitor center, cafe, a life-guarded swimming beach, and five miles of walking trails.

³⁸ Thompson Island, another of the Boston Harbor Islands, is now home to and operated by Thompson Island Outward Bound, a non-profit educational organization that teaches leadership and other life skills.

T. MOAKLEY: They used to have some picnics from the yacht club that used to go out there.

ALLISON: Now did you join the yacht club as you—

T. MOAKLEY: Yeah. I had a big, sixteen footer.

R. MOAKLEY: Joe had become commodore of the Columbia Yacht Club. While he was in between the House and Senate terms, he became commodore of the yacht club, the Columbia. We all belonged. Our kids all learned to swim down there. And we used to put a rope around their waists and throw them over the side of the raft, and hold the rope, and let them swim.

T. MOAKLEY: My son is a captain in the navy now. That's where he got his first sea duty, sticking his head out of the porthole.

McETRICK: When you think back over your life and in Joe's career, how do you see him in your mind's eye? What are the critical moments? And when you think of Joe being in Congress, what associations come to mind, the triggers that you have when you think about him?

R. MOAKLEY: I think probably the greatest defining moment was him seeking reelection after Evelyn died. And that was Evelyn's doing. I was actually overseas when Joe got very sick.

T. MOAKLEY: I used to contact him.

R. MOAKLEY: And I came home to try to talk him out of running again because Joe was in poor health, and Evelyn was dying. And I said, "Joe, you should spend some time together," you know. "And you've done a lot for a lot of people. Take care of yourselves. Spend what time you have left together." I was that concerned about his health and, of course, Evelyn's as well.

So, Evelyn died. And I was on a little island. And my wife couldn't even reach me. They didn't even have telephones there. So by the time I got back to Manila, it was the night before the

funeral. So I couldn't make it. There's no way you can get back in time. It's twenty hours to get to the West Coast from Manila. And people don't realize how far away it is.

But anyway, I called Joe and apologized and everything else. But before Evelyn died, she said to Joe, "I want you to promise me you will run again. I don't want you dropping out of office on my account. I want you to promise me you'll run again." So Evelyn was the one that made him run again. And, as it turns out, it was the best thing that ever happened to him.

T. MOAKLEY: I think that's what made him last.

R. MOAKLEY: His most productive years were after all his illnesses and Evelyn's death. That's when he got most of the things accomplished. So that was probably the defining moment, and Evelyn talking him into running again. That was probably one of the defining moments of his life.

T. MOAKLEY: Yeah. It was kind of iffy because, at that time, after his operation, they were giving him different medications. And sometimes he was all over the place, you know. And I was thinking, Geez. I called Bob, I said, "I don't know what's happening to him." But once they got the medication settled, he was fine.

R. MOAKLEY: Because I flew home after I had talked with Tom.

END OF PART 3

McETRICK: One question I had for both of you is, you've seen fifty years of government, and politics, and campaigning. So you've really had a very special opportunity that many people don't have. And I was wondering if you had any reflections on how politics has changed, or how people's expectations of politicians have changed, or how politicians may have started to do things differently. What do you see in terms of change? And is the change good or bad? Where are we?

T. MOAKLEY: In the olden days, there wasn't all this fancy communication, like answering machines, e-mail, and stuff like that. I think everything was on a personal note. And people were close to their constituents. But today, it's e-mail and answering service. My brother Joe never had any answering service, always had people answer the telephone, which is a great thing.

As you know, when you call up places, you get a whole index of things that really irritate you anyway. And Joe always said that the people are his boss, not vice versa. That's why he always stayed close to people. He knows what they want and knows what they're thinking, and tries to do it the best he can for them.

R. MOAKLEY: And I think the politicians themselves have changed, and a lot of it due to the technology, but most of it due to personal attitude. When Joe first started in politics, and when we were kids growing up, the politicians were there to help the people, and they knew that. They knew that's why they were there.

When you see pictures of Mayor Curley³⁹ or Honey Fitz,⁴⁰ they're always doing something. They're getting turkeys for Thanksgiving for poor people. They're getting food for families whose houses burned down. They're doing things like that. And the local politicians, at least in the city of Boston, which they were the only ones we were really aware of at that time, did the same thing. They were there to help their constituency.

And Joe entered politics with that mindset. This is what I'm here for. I'm here to help the people who put me in office. But even though that is a noble purpose, he went beyond that because he went beyond his constituency. He never asked anybody that called the office, "Do you live in my district?" Or he didn't care that the people in El Salvador couldn't vote for him.

³⁹ James Michael Curley (1874-1958), a Democrat, served as mayor of Boston for four non-consecutive terms between 1914 and 1950, and as governor of Massachusetts from 1935 to 1937. He also represented Massachusetts' Twelfth Congressional District in the United States House of Representatives from 1911 to 1914 and the Eleventh Congressional District from 1943 to 1946.

⁴⁰ John F. "Honey Fitz" Fitzgerald (1863-1950) served in the Massachusetts State House of Representatives, in the U.S. House of Representatives, and as mayor of Boston during his political career.

So, he was there to serve whoever needed help. He was there not just to make life better for the people in his district, but for people in the country, and the people in other countries who needed his help. And he was very unselfish. Joe never cared about anything. He'd like you to tell him, "That's a nice suit," or something like that. But he was not a selfish person. He didn't care too much about anything else. He cared more about other people, how other people felt, how they were doing. He'd be visiting sick people when he was probably in worse health than they were, and trying to cheer them up.

I had told Bob [Allison] this story one time that we were at the dedication of a senior center. And he got up, and he was speaking to the people in the building, and thanking them for paving the way, and making life better for us, and helping to get things done so that we'd enjoy a better life than we do. And he went through this whole ritual of thanking them for paving the way.

And when we got through, this little old lady came up to Joe and said, "Joe, I remember when I was a little girl, and you were a lifeguard down the beach. You used to pick me up and rub me against the hair on your chest." And this other guy came over and he talked about when he was a kid, that he used to watch him play football.

So it turned out that we were older than most of the people who were in this senior citizens center. But you forget that the clock is ticking for you as well. And, he's thanking them for paving the way. And he had not only paved the way for them, but they were enjoying some of the benefits of his legislation through healthcare and things like that.

So he was very unselfish and very giving. And, that's a trait I'd like to see re-instilled. We still have many politicians like that. But unfortunately, nobody wants to print good news in the newspaper. Most people never heard of Joe Moakley until he announced that he wasn't going to run again because he did not seek headlines and he didn't do things for the publicity that was involved. He did it because he felt it was the right thing to do.

So there are a lot of good people out there whose names you may never hear, but they're doing good things. Unfortunately, we hear of the ones who are doing the bad things, and are not

improving the image of the elected officials or public servants. So I think we should re-instill the values. And probably, the press should play up some of the good things that some of these people are doing rather than the negative things.

T. MOAKLEY: Yeah, Joe was a very humble guy. And as Bob said, he never called for press conferences. As you know, some of these politicians, every time they do something, they want fifty cameras in front of them. Joe was never—he just did his work quietly, and he knew the people appreciated it. And that’s all he wanted. His greatest thing in life was doing things for people. And he said, “If God gave me one thing to do, he can let me do, let me stay where I am and help people. That’s all I want.” And it’s nice having a famous brother, too; proud of him.

R. MOAKLEY: The strange thing is, though, the press all knew him. And that’s how they knew him. He never bothered them for anything. Last year—Joe died on Memorial Day, and last year was the first anniversary of his death. And I got a call from a TV reporter, a Boston TV reporter, whose name I don’t want to mention, very nice person. And she asked if she could come over and talk to me. So, I said, “Sure.”

So she called the house, and she says, “I couldn’t help thinking about Joe.” She said, “I know it’s a year. And he was so nice.” And it was refreshing to have somebody come over like that. And we had a little conversation about him. And then she asked me where he was buried. She was going to go visit his grave. So the press remembers him but, as I say, not because he called press conferences, only because he treated them like he treated everybody else. He treated everybody with respect. And people like that.

McETTRICK: You must have a lot of conversations like that now where people will mention something that you didn’t really know about that Joe had done. Those are interesting moments.

R. MOAKLEY: As Tom pointed out, everybody that came through that line had a story about something that Joe had done for somebody in their family. And it was amazing. About two weeks before he died, Tom and his wife, and Joe, and my wife and I had dinner at my place.

And we were just sitting around talking. And you'd never know he was sick. He acted normal, never, Why did this happen to me? or anything else, laughing and joking, and everything.

And he had told us a story, and he had told it before, about this woman who was going to have her electricity shut off. And he went to Edison about it. He went to visit the woman. He got her address, went to visit the woman. And all she had in the house was a table and chair, and a box to sit on, or something. They had taken her furniture, repossessed everything. And the poor woman was handicapped. And they were going to shut off her electricity as well.

So he went to Edison and he said, "Look, you can forgive these big corporations for hundreds of thousands of dollars, and settle for pennies on the dollar on them. Why don't you forget this?" So he got them to forget about her electric bill. And she was allowed to remain in the house, didn't get evicted or anything.

Now, he had discussed her, a couple of times, only because he was so impressed at this poor woman. But when Joe died, we came back on the plane with his remains to Logan Airport. And when we arrived there, we were told that the woman was there, that she wanted to see Joe. Of course, she never got down to where we were or anything. They didn't allow her down.

And we learned two things that day about her that Joe had never mentioned. Number one is she didn't live in his district. Number two was she was black. And he didn't mention either of these things because it didn't matter to him. It was a person in need. And it was not part of his story, that there was this poor black lady who doesn't live in my district. That wasn't the way Joe talked. He had respect for everybody. And it was amazing. She said, "He's my only friend," or something to—that was the remark that was attributed to her in the next day's newspaper.

ALLISON: You talked about the need to instill this idea, this attitude in others. What was it that made Joe Moakley like this? And where did this come from for him?

T. MOAKLEY: I think his mother.

R. MOAKLEY: Well, both of our parents, really. We didn't know until our mother died—when we were at the funeral home when our mother died, more women came through that door that we had no idea who they were, who said, “Your mother used to come and do my laundry when I was sick. She used to feed my kids.” We didn't know she was doing this. She was out all day helping other people.

One woman came in walking with a cane, said, “I was never supposed to walk again. Your mother made me get up and hold the back of a chair. And she'd move it, and make me move my legs.” She said, “I was never supposed to walk again.” Now, we didn't know our mother was doing this. She never mentioned where she was. And we never questioned, Where were you today or what did you do? And that's what she was doing. She was out helping people.

And my father, even though he was a rough and tumble guy, hated bullies. That was one thing he could not stand was a bully. And you probably heard Joe tell the story about when we were in the car, and there were two kids fighting. And my father stopped the car and said, “What do you see there?” He said, “Two kids fighting.” He said, “What do you see there?” He said, “Well, it's a big kid beating up a little kid.” He said, “What are you going to do about it?” He said, “I don't know them.” He said, “Never mind you don't know them.” He said, “Get out there.” And he made Joe go out, two strangers, and stop the big kid from beating up the little kid.

So, those were the kind of values my father had. He didn't like to see anybody being victimized. And he had done that to all of us at one time or another, made us get involved in things we would have rather ignored.

T. MOAKLEY: Like going to boot camp. (laughter)

R. MOAKLEY: Those are life's little lessons.

T. MOAKLEY: All in all, the politicians today are a little more distant. Like Bob said, there's a lot of good ones. I remember talking to Steve Lynch before my brother even announced that he was retiring. I said, “You remind me a lot of my brother, Joe. You're quiet. You never call

press conferences. You just do your work.” And he said, “Thank you, that’s quite a compliment.”

McETTRICK: A lot to be said for that. I don’t know if there’s any other anecdotes either of Joe and constituents, or maybe things from childhood that we haven’t really had a chance to talk about that you wanted to allude to. I mean we’ve had a pretty thorough conversation. But I don’t know if there were any moments growing up that you wanted to allude to.

R. MOAKLEY: Well, when we grew up down in what they call the Lower End, every day was a confrontation. It’s like dogs meeting on the street. You don’t just walk by. If there was a kid you didn’t know, you ended up, “Who are you? What are doing?” It was always a confrontation. And so, we all learned to take care of ourselves, and handle ourselves pretty well.

And we moved up to City Point which, anyplace else, the kids up City Point would be considered tough kids, but not to kids from the Lower End. They’re considered sissies to kids from the Lower End. (laughter)

But the first day we went out up there, the three of us, three kids came walking over towards us. And he says, “Bobby, you fight the small one. Tom, you fight him. And I’ll fight the big one.” He’d think we were going to have to fight them because they were coming. (laughter)

McETTRICK: There are three of them?

R. MOAKLEY: But that’s the way we grew up in the Lower End. Everything was a confrontation everyday.

T. MOAKLEY: Until you got to know the kids, then you became friends.

R. MOAKLEY: Yeah, they would become your best friend, the kid you had a fight with. But it turned out these kids just came over to say hello. Who are you? We didn’t have to fight them.

T. MOAKLEY: I remember when we lived down the Point, I had a scooter. My brother, Joe, and I were on it, and hanging on to the back of a bus. Went over a sewer. I landed. I broke my front tooth. And I shouldn't have done that one. And Joe always said he was a mechanic, remember?

R. MOAKLEY: Yeah.

T. MOAKLEY: One Christmas, he got a nice brand new bicycle. He took the back wheel apart and apart. He couldn't get it back together again.

R. MOAKLEY: Yeah. I remember my father saying to him, "There's only two people that take the back off a watch, a jeweler and a fool." (laughter) In those days, you didn't replace batteries. Everything was gears, and springs, and everything. But that's what he said to him, "You shouldn't take anything apart you don't know anything about."

ALLISON: And he did take things apart?

R. MOAKLEY: Yeah.

T. MOAKLEY: Could never put them back together.

R. MOAKLEY: Very inquisitive. There were always parts left over. It might work, but there were always a couple of parts left over. But I remember my father saying that, though. "Only two people, a jeweler and a fool."

McETTRICK: Well I've enjoyed having the chance to chat with both of you.

T. MOAKLEY: It's been nice talking about him.

McETTRICK: It's a great subject, too.

T. MOAKLEY: Well, it's nice that people still remember him. I think he'd be kind of embarrassed with all the things that are still going on.

McETRICK: So what do you think about the Archives and what we're supposed to do in the future? What would you like to see happen? And how do you see all of this shaping up in terms of Joe's legacy?

T. MOAKLEY: Well, I think it's a wonderful thing, if it can inspire somebody to get into politics. Of course, like Bob said, usually politicians don't get very good write-ups. But if someone sees this and says, "Gee, he did an awful lot. Maybe I can make a difference in the world," hey, you never know.

R. MOAKLEY: Tom and I serve as members of the [John Joseph Moakley Charitable] Foundation, the scholarship awards. And the applicants who apply for the scholarship money from it have to write an essay as to public service they've been involved in. And it's amazing how many nice young people there are out there.

And some of them are absolutely tragic. You read the stories. They'll come from a house where the father is dead and the mother is disabled. And they're straight-A students in school. And they're out feeding people at Pine Street⁴¹ and doing things like that as well. So there are people out there who care.

And I think sometimes suffering helps you care and realize what people are going through. If they've suffered a little, it gives them a better awareness of what it's like not to have things, if you've been without. Like somebody from a very well-to-do family thinks hunger is if you hadn't had something to eat in a couple of hours. And you have to really witness it or have experienced it yourself.

Not that I wish that on anybody, but at least the awareness should be there, that there are people in need, and that there are people who need help. And I think that is a great function of the

⁴¹ The Pine Street Inn is a non-profit support organization for Greater Boston's homeless population.

Archives and the displays I've seen. Tom and I have attended the displays when they've been set up in other places as well as Suffolk. And it's always a good display showing that people need assistance and need help. And it creates that kind of awareness.

T. MOAKLEY: And you can also make something of yourself coming from a humble beginning.

McETTRICK: Sure.

T. MOAKLEY: Like when you stop and think you didn't start with too much, in your fondest mind, you'd never think you'd end up where we did.

McETTRICK: Well, that's quite a mission. And I hope our interview is part of that. And maybe we'll have a chance to chat some more. But I think we covered a lot of ground today. Thanks for your help.

T. MOAKLEY: Well, I hope we helped in some way.

ALLISON: Thank you very much.

T. MOAKLEY AND R. MOAKLEY: Thank you.

END OF INTERVIEW