



JOHN JOSEPH Moakley

ARCHIVE & INSTITUTE AT SUFFOLK UNIVERSITY

John Joseph Moakley Oral History Project

Oral History Interview with

George Lally

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Interview Summary

George Lally, South Boston resident and former Moakley campaign volunteer, recalls his work with Congressman Moakley on Moakley's early campaigns and in the South Boston community, specifically relating to the Babe Ruth Baseball League. The interview covers Moakley's role as legal advisor for the Babe Ruth Baseball League in South Boston; his commitment to justice both at home and abroad, including El Salvador and Cuba; his role in the Massachusetts delegation; and his commitment to his congressional district and his constituents. Mr. Lally concludes by discussing Moakley's legacy of public service.

Subject Headings

Babe Ruth League

Lally, George

Moakley, John Joseph, 1927-2001

South Boston (Boston, Mass.)

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Interview Transcript

CHRISTIAN ENGLER: Okay, it is May 26, Monday, May 26, at 12:06 P.M., and this is an interview with George Lally here at the Suffolk University John Joseph Moakley Archives.

Okay, how about—how were you first introduced to Joseph Moakley?

GEORGE LALLY: Well, it goes back a number of years to the 1950s when—there was this anecdote, Christian; Joe [Moakley] said this a number of times, he said, “When you were born in South Boston, three things happened: you were baptized in the Catholic Church, you joined the union, and then you joined the Democratic Party.” And as a youngster in Ward 7, Precinct 3 where they go to the South Boston High School [to vote] at the top of G Street and 5th Street, we used to collect the cards as the voters were going in, because the people that were giving out the cards and holding signs for the Kennedys, for Joe Moakley, and others, they in turn couldn’t go inside the voting area.

So we, as youngsters, some of us not ten years old more or less at the time, we’d go in and get these cards, and bring them back out and hand them out to the people, and they’d recycle them at that time. This was before it was fashionable to recycle in recent years. We’d get a nickel from them. And we’d go down to the corner store there, the (inaudible) Hill Deli, and get ourselves an ice cream for five cents. Then we’d go right back up again, and do it again, and get ourselves a tonic. But that was kind of the baptism to Joe Moakley, to politics, growing up in South Boston.

We go back a number of years in regards to working with Joe on various issues and various things that are in the best interest for all concerned. It’s always a win-win situation for Joe. If you have stalemate, it’s always, “How do we find a way to make this work for both parties?” Joe was always a great diplomat and obviously a great person that you could work and deal effectively with, and he would make things work for all concerned.

You had mentioned to me earlier there about El Salvador. In regards to that, the president of the United States asked Joe if he would look into this, knowing Joe comes from a very high-

concentrated area of Catholics in South Boston, Massachusetts. Joe said he'd be honored to serve as president [sic—chairman of the Speaker's Task Force on El Salvador]¹ for the people of the United States of America and the people of El Salvador. Jesuits were out-and-out murdered, and then the housekeepers were out-and-out murdered. It was totally uncalled for, and they tried to sweep it under the rug in El Salvador.

So Joe went over there and investigated things, and literally took his life in his hands at different times, as you hear the district director Fred Clark² mention, and also who they were working with at that time, Congressman McGovern,³ who handles District Three now in the Greater Worcester area, in central Massachusetts. They worked very hard and very diligently. They made a number of trips there back and forth. They communicated with the State Department of El Salvador and the United States of America State Department, through Congress, and through the presidential chains of command. And through perseverance and hard work and dedication, which is one of the things Joe was all about in getting to the bottom of something, and not letting anybody bully anybody, you know?

In the long run, these people were brought to justice. It didn't come easy. The El Salvador government eventually came across to that. And I'd like to mention a booklet that was put out by Joe on April 23, 1993 [attachment A]. It was published by the John W. McCormack—whom Joe succeeded in Congress, who was Speaker of the House⁴—the Institute of Public Affairs of the University of Massachusetts Boston.⁵ There's a great write-up in that in regards to El Salvador, beginning on page eleven, for a few pages there, and that would go into specific detail on the El Salvadorian situation.

¹ 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.

² Fred Clark was a member of Congressman Moakley's district staff from 1982 to 2001.

³ 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.

⁴ 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.

⁵ The John W. McCormack Institute of Public Affairs is now called the John W. McCormack Graduate School of Policy Studies.

ENGLER: Now, you said the president asked Congressman Moakley to get involved. Was he already sort of investigating this before he was asked?

LALLY: Joe was upset about it, even though it was many thousands of miles away in El Salvador. But it doesn't matter where an injustice happens in the world; we as a country have always stepped up to the plate to see anything that is not being done right, and people being murdered or persecuted. Not to go into the Iraqi situation, which is certainly another situation altogether. Things happen now, they happened back in '91 there, and also in other areas. But Joe was concerned over that.

A quick story that's associated with that; Joe and his dad were driving a car, coming up East 5th Street, and these kids were roughing on the corner. It was few guys beating up a kid on the corner. His father hit the brakes and he says, "Joe, look at that." He says, "What, Dad?" He [Moakley's father] says, "Three guys on one, beating the bejesus out of him over there." "So what?" he [Moakley] says. He [Moakley's father] says, "Hey, get bullying and go out there and take care of them." He says—Joe—"I learned at that point from my father," he says, "don't allow anybody to bully someone else." He says, "You use that throughout life." He went over and broke things up and squared things away.

As you know, Joe was a boxer, a fighter. He joined the service, the navy, at age fifteen, under age, and at that time, went off to war. But he took his training, his early and young training of South Boston, being age fifteen going off to war, but he remembered that street corner fight. Joe boxed in the service as well, and so on. But that's related to it as far as not allowing somebody to take advantage of another person unjustifiably.

ENGLER: Now Carol Pryor,⁶ who was a former member of the Jamaica Plain Committee on El Salvador and Latin America [Jamaica Plain Committee on Central America, or JPCOCA], she tried to speculate about the causes or the reasons why Congressman Moakley took the actions that he did. She was saying that Congressman Moakley was essentially a meat and potatoes

⁶ OH-008 in the Moakley Oral History Project is an interview with Carol Pryor.

politician who was very constituency-oriented. And then she tried to delve a little bit deeper in maybe it was sort of his Catholic upbringing, and the involvement of the Catholic Church.

Do you think it was maybe a hybrid of those things? Or do you think that was just his general nature, the way he was as a person? You seemed to know him a little bit more intimately, I think, than Carol Pryor.

LALLY: Well, Christian, it's a combination of things. As I mentioned, Joe had no problems stepping up to the plate to do the right thing, whether it was fashionable or unfashionable. Joe's a Catholic, a very devout Catholic of the Catholic Church. Cardinal [Richard] Cushing was born not that far from him. And he was the archdiocesan director here for many years prior to Cardinal [Humberto] Medeiros and Cardinal [Bernard] Law, and Bishop [Richard] Lennon. Joe was a communicant at St. Brigid's Parish in City Point in South Boston. It [the Jesuit murders] was a wrong thing to do, whether it was Catholic, Jewish, Protestant, whatever the particular religious faith was. We're all human beings, and that's the bottom line. That's what Joe looked at as well as all of the things. And those injustices, unfortunately, if they happen once, they happen once too often.

ENGLER: Now onto—how did you first meet locally?

LALLY: I met Joe as a neighbor, as someone that you knew of in South Boston that had given years to his country. He took the initiative in running for state rep, and that was a major thing in South Boston. Certain years you'd get, and I don't exaggerate, you'd get eight to twelve or more people running for rep. We used to have three reps, and it was the three divisions there, and it would be that many in each division. It was a big thing. And he was a person that would go out, talk to people, communicate with people. Whether it was a pothole that needed to be fixed on Burke Street for Mrs. Curran, or whether it was a streetlight for Mrs. Lyons up on P Street, those are important things, as well as seeing that the major roads were taken care of, that Mrs. O'Reilly's social security check was taken care of. The little things, if you take care of the little things in life, as Joe said, the big things have a way of not really mushrooming and getting out of line.

He was one of the founding fathers of the Babe Ruth League in South Boston for teenage youth baseball there. He was an attorney and became our legal advisor, and helped get us going in 1957. I became the league secretary in 1963, and vice president and president in 1966. Joe and I worked on a number of things, along with Bob Curran, who was my predecessor and my mentor. Bob knew Joe as well, quite a bit, Bob Curran did, and we worked hand-in-hand through the various ranks of the local league officials, the neighborhood league in South Boston, through the district level, the state level, the New England regional level, and national and international levels.

Joe was instrumental helping the youth of America and foreign countries through South Boston and through the things that he did. In tying it in with Babe Ruth League headquarters in Trenton, New Jersey, we implemented the first Babe Ruth Park Drive, which became adjacent to Moakley Park in South Boston there by the McCormack Bath House near the Carson Beach on Columbia Road. And that was dedicated May 18, 1968, when Joe was state senator. The following year in '69 at Fenway Park, through Tom Dodd, community relations director of the Red Sox, we dedicated the first Babe Ruth League Day, where all the state champions were dressed in ties and shirts and jackets and shoes, [and] honored at Fenway Park on the field. Joe was instrumental in that coming to fruition.

Also in working with Lady Bird Johnson on urban beautification, Joe was helpful in beautifying the parks, not just of South Boston, but in other areas, as well. Also, through 1970, through Claire Ruth, who was with us at that time, and she didn't pass until 1978,⁷ Joe was very instrumental with that, as well. And Ted Kennedy, Senator Kennedy,⁸ in 1982—Joe's office called me in Frederick, Maryland, when the South Boston Babe Ruth League made it to the World Series, which was quite a unique thing because if you get to the World Series once, that league, once in their lifetime—and Babe Ruth has been around since 1952. Joe called my office in Frederick, Maryland, and said that Senator Kennedy would like to take the boys from South

⁷ Claire Ruth, the second wife of baseball player George Herman "Babe" Ruth, actually passed away in 1976.

⁸ Edward Moore "Ted" Kennedy (1932-), a Democrat, has represented Massachusetts in the United States Senate since 1962.

Boston, the Babe Ruth team, over to his home and have a pool party and a cookout, which went over great at that time.

Senator Kennedy and Joe Moakley, by the way, they did as much as any two people in the history of our government to help out, not just District Nine and the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, but all of the—there were fourteen districts in the Congress in Massachusetts up until 1960. Through a census taking we lost a seat in 1960, 1970, 1980, 1990. We lost four seats. I bring that up because instead of having sixteen votes in Congress, with the two senators and fourteen in Congress [in the House of Representatives], we went from the sixteen over a period of years, down to twelve, ten in the Congress [in the House of Representatives], and two in the Senate.

And having a person prior to Joe Moakley, like Speaker McCormack, and Tip O’Neill,⁹ very instrumental in the entire commonwealth, and Senator Ted Kennedy—incidentally, at Joe’s Silver Jubilee which was held at the Copley Fairmont Plaza [Fairmont Copley Plaza Hotel], approximately seven years ago, there was a video put on there, Christian, and it showed a number of things that Joe was a part of, and Teddy was a part of, the entire delegation.

But when Joe did something, he did it for everybody because everybody benefited, whether you lived in the Berkshires or whether you lived in the North Shore or the Cape, if you lived in northern Vermont or New York. Because as you had mentioned earlier about being a meat and potatoes guy, yes, he was a blue collar guy as well. But everybody was comfortable in being in Joe Moakley’s presence. He walked with kings and queens. And he was with the common man as well.

But those are some of the things that, personally, I go back with Joe over the respective years, through Babe Ruth baseball. I got to know him through the original days of just getting involved in politics because I couldn’t vote until I was twenty-one. But I’m now fifty-nine, and I’ve never missed a vote. My mother is eighty-five years young, and she’s never missed a vote.

⁹ 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.

When you grow up in South Boston, you value your right to vote and your civic duty. You learn that in school. And you learn it at home from your mother and dad. And you value that. I've passed it on to my three sons as well. Even when they were in college, they voted by absentee ballot. You should always exercise your right to vote. But that sums up some of the things that I worked on with Joe in regards to personally through Babe Ruth baseball and softball over the decades, and some personal things. But Joe thrived on doing what was best for all concerned.

ENGLER: Now how were you able to obtain him as a legal advisor?

LALLY: He stepped up to the plate. At that time, Bob Curran was involved with the Babe Ruth League. And Joe Trahey(?) was our first president. And again, it was something that needed to be done. Assistance, when you're organizing a new program, [and] having legal advice are important. Joe took care of the paperwork, and so on. He was instrumental and valuable over the years.

In 1964, the City came through Columbus Park, and dug up right field. Joe stepped up to the plate and says, "You ain't taking the land belonged to the baseball there for Babe Ruth." [The City] says, "Well, we've got to put a sewer line in." And he says, "You just don't—" They told us we could play ball without having a right field. Don't hit the ball to right field.

But Joe saved our land. Not only that point, but three years later, we expanded. We had another field built through the helpfulness of Joe Moakley and others, and everybody stepping up to the plate. We expanded the program, six to ten teams. Joe became involved because there was a need. He saw a need, and he stepped up to the plate, as he had done on many issues.

ENGLER: So he offered his services? How did he hear about the Babe Ruth organization, the team? Was it just an interest in athletics and baseball? Or did it come by listening to his constituents saying, "I want to be—;" how did he first hear about—

LALLY: A lot of things were by word of mouth.

ENGLER: Word of mouth?

LALLY: The local newspapers, his constituents, people that he knew. Southie is a community of around thirty thousand or so. And at times everybody knows everybody. The bottom line is there was a need. And he wanted to help out.

ENGLER: Now, with your friendship with him, did it branch off into other areas besides being the legal advisor?

LALLY: Oh, yes. It's not only Babe Ruth baseball, but it's dealing with the everyday issues, as I mentioned earlier, making sure the roads are fixed, the street lights are on, making sure that the federal programs are working, and that if anybody needs assistance of any nature, unemployment benefits getting extended. And he does that for his constituents in South Boston or District Nine, throughout Stoughton, and Medfield, and Norwood, and Canton, and Walpole, and Westwood, and most of the city of Boston.

He's doing that for the commonwealth. He's doing that for New England. He's doing it for this nation. Just recently, the Democrats had to put some pressure on the Republicans and Congress to take care of these—we're spending billions of dollars on the war with Iraq. But we need to take care of the people that have been laid off in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. People have been laid off out in Washington State. They're laid off in Missouri. So extending unemployment benefits. Those are important things, not just for the local area, but for the nation.

ENGLER: Now, there was a menu, you said, that you had—here it is—that you went to Washington. Tell us a little bit more about this one.

LALLY: Well, I wrote to Joe. My wife Donna and I, we were married up in Jim McGovern's area there, in the town of Oxford, Massachusetts, April 26, 1975. And the following year, we

spent our first anniversary. And Donna wanted to go to D.C. and see the various archives and the Smithsonian, and so on.

I wrote to Joe, and he wrote me back, and he got us tickets. And incidentally, Senator Brooke¹⁰ was in at the time, and he got us in to see a debate in the United State Senate, which was really quite interesting at the time, on housing, on HUD [Housing and Urban Development]. Joe took us to lunch because his birthday was that particular day, April twenty-seventh. And we always had crisscrossed cards with that as well, our anniversary and Joe's birthday.

But an interesting point, Christian, is that, during lunch, there's a marquee there, and your number flashes, and Joe's number nine saying come up there, which his favorite ballplayer was Teddy Williams. Joe left us at least four times to get up and go and vote. He valued his right to vote from a youngster in South Boston to the halls of Congress. Didn't miss a vote. Shows the dedication that he has for his constituents, for his extended family. Evelyn and him—his lovely wife, Evelyn—didn't have children. But yet, in reality, his children were those not only of the Ninth District, but elsewhere.

A side note is that if somebody came into his office and saw Fred Clark or Roger Kineavy¹¹ about a particular issue, and they say—well, it didn't matter where he lived, if he lived in the Ninth District, or if he lived in Delahunt's¹² district, down in District Eight, Joe took care of him, took care of the situation, if he needed veteran's benefits, or assistance at the veterans' hospital in West Roxbury, or Brockton, or Chelsea, Joe took care of him. It didn't matter where he lived.

But in showing how that trip to Washington was quite memorable for us, Joe took the time, made the effort. My wife, Donna, was very impressed and thrilled that the Congressman would—and we lived just up the street from him on Farragut Road [in South Boston]. He did that a number of times. That was just a great thing that we've treasured to this day. We had the picture taken on the Capitol steps, which we have hanging in our living room as well.

¹⁰ Edward W. Brooke III (1919-), a Republican, represented Massachusetts in the U.S. Senate from 1967 to 1979.

¹¹ Roger Kineavy served as Moakley's district director from 1973 to 1994.

¹² William D. Delahunt (1941-), a Democrat, has represented Massachusetts' Tenth Congressional District in the U.S. House of Representatives since 1997.

Another side note: there's a Mrs. Peskovich(??) on Prospect Street in Norwood that asked me—I was a town coordinator in Norwood and a regional coordinator for part of the district. We had three regional coordinators, and out of the 635,000 people, we each had 210,000-plus there. But she was going to Washington, DC, with her son—her husband, Pesky, he was called for short, for Peskovich, and she wanted to go into Congress and to see them in session. And I dropped a note to Joe. And she got the note back and the ticket. They went down there. And she was thrilled. This was a major thing to Mrs. Peskovich. And it's something that Joe does all the time. Again, the little things in life are what life is all about.

ENGLER: Did you find that other political figures at that time, and even up to his death, that they didn't have that sort of intuition, I guess, to go out there, and to really be one-on-one with their constituents? Do you find that that's something that's—I don't want to say lacking so much with our political figures today, but it's something that's disappearing as opposed to—

LALLY: Joe is unique in that he would shop at Flanagan's Supermarket on Broadway [in South Boston]. And he knew the price of groceries. President [Ronald] Reagan, with all due respect, didn't know the price of groceries, didn't shop. Joe would be down Brigham's [Restaurant] on Broadway having an ice cream with his constituents. He'd be up Sunday morning at Castle Island or at the P Street Diner having breakfast, chewing the fat with his constituents, seeing what's going on, what's happening. Castle Island is like a meeting place. We have people that come in from Quincy, and Milton, and Marshfield, and so on, and other places, that take their walk or do their jog. And Joe was down there having his morning tea with the morning paper.

People could tell. They can tell if you're genuine, if you're sincere, if you're dedicated, and if you really believe in something. There's a Roger Walsh in Norwood that his wife dedicated her liver prior to passing on. And, Roger was a great supporter of Joe and the federal program dealing with the shunts, I think with (inaudible) years back. And in turn, as you know, Joe had a liver transplant himself. And that was, I believe, seven years [ago].¹³ And they had something in common, a bond. And the liver transplant was something that Joe really treasured.

¹³ Moakley received a liver transplant in 1995.

And you know, there's hundreds of thousands of people that because of that seven years Joe got, that became better people that had something done for them through Joe. Joe is still helping people to this day, as he looks down upon us, whatever, and he's still looking down. Because the things that he said at places and the things that he did, whether it be in Congress or in Boston, those things are still going on, they're still happening. And they'll go on for years to come. Not just the fact that the federal courthouse is the John Joseph Moakley Courthouse, but it's what he did, what's in place.

He was walking down Washington Street in Norwood a few years ago, and saying hello to people. He recognized them, they recognized him. Joe remembered the situation with a family member or a friend that was—being interrelated, stopping at Perk's Coffee Shop there.

Joe is a down to earth guy, level-headed, good common sense. The key, Christian, is that he's genuine. He's just someone that you take a liking to because he doesn't put the air on. Like I said, he's been with people from all walks of life, all nationalities, races and creeds, or various backgrounds.

ENGLER: One isn't on top of the other.

LALLY: No. He's most well-rounded. We take a lot of courses in college to be well-rounded. Joe was street smart as well. You can't teach someone that. They've got to learn it and go through the school of hard knocks. Joe just was, like I say, well-rounded. The key thing with him is that he's—people can tell if someone is a phony. And Joe certainly is one of the most genuine people that God ever created.

ENGLER: Carol Pryor of the Jamaica Plain Committee told me that she really knew him as sort of a meat-and-potatoes politician. And when she met with him to discuss a lot of the atrocities that were going on in El Salvador, she said that she was really surprised that he went to Jim

McGovern, and he said, “Look into this,” or he followed Congressman Studds¹⁴ on it. Being that he was, in her eyes, very confined to the local politics and his constituents, in the time that you knew him, were you surprised how he branched out into the international area, just being that, in its own right, the subject matter is, I think, something that a lot of politicians wouldn’t want to tackle just because of its unpleasantness in general?

Even though that you knew what type of man he was, were you surprised that he branched out in that area, as you said, before that he even risked his own life to go down there? Is that something that—

LALLY: No, not surprised at all. And it’s not that he branched out. Joe was already branched out. When he went into the service, the United States of America, he branched out at age fifteen, not at age forty-five in Congress. He was already around the world seeing injustices in Germany and other foreign countries, well before El Salvador. Whether there was an injustice at P and 5th Street in South Boston or an injustice in El Salvador, they were both wrong. Joe, from an early age to a middle age to a senior citizen age, was there to see that the injustice was taken care of.

ENGLER: That’s very interesting. We never really looked at it from that point of view. I guess when you’re young and you’re traveling around the world, you’re very impressionable of the wrongs, that you see them when you’re out there.

LALLY: Joe was also instrumental in helping the situation in Ireland.

ENGLER: In Ireland, really?

LALLY: Certainly. President Clinton, Joe was very close to him. And, they worked on trying to resolve the situation that has existed in Ireland for a number of years. So that—it doesn’t matter, again, where the injustice is, whether they’re terrorists or murderers, any of those

¹⁴ Gerald R. Studds (1937-2006), a Democrat, represented Massachusetts’ Tenth Congressional District in the U.S. House of Representatives from 1973 to 1997.

adjectives, the bottom line is you eradicate it, and try to do your best to see that things are done the right way.

ENGLER: What other experiences had you had with Congressman Moakley?

LALLY: Well Joe is a person that people, I think, enjoy being with and being around. We've played softball together.

ENGLER: Really?

LALLY: Against the Delahunt teams. The softball, it was a good camaraderie with Delahunt and Moakley, with their volunteers and staff people, having a fun day with a cookout, and just enjoy Mother Nature's sunshine, and good competitive rivalry there.

Some of the other things, Christian, that—doing with Joe—that he needed two thousand signatures in order to get on the ballot for Congress. And Joe needed ten thousand to get on for governor(?). But Joe went out to get twenty-five thousand signatures in the signature drive. He couldn't have been any prouder than a peacock with that. That was done on a continual basis to let people know that he loved being your congressman, and wanted to continue to be your congressman, and that he was working for you all the time. And this was something that happened every two years.

At one point he said to me in Washington, D.C., in 1976 is that, "It's so short a time, George. There's so much time you spend on the campaign. I'd rather be using that time and those hours with my constituents, and running the business of the country." They thought about getting six-year terms, four-year terms for Congress, but it always stays two so that you have that rotation that our forefathers put up.

But in the Moakley organization, I've had the opportunity to work with so many dedicated and talented people over the various years and the campaigns. And the key thing is, with Joe, we

considered it fun to sell, fun to promote, and fun to market Joe Moakley because Joe made it easy because of how he treated people with respect and dignity.

Another point going back to international relations, that Joe took a stand on Cuba which wasn't all that fashionable among some people. But President Clinton asked him if he would take a trip over there. He saw, I believe, President [Edward F.] DeGraan of the Gillette Company, and got some razors and blades, and so on, to bring as gifts over there. And the Red Sox—he got a jacket and a cap to bring over to Fidel [Castro] because Fidel, as you know, could have been a major league baseball player, could have, almost was. Didn't quite make it. But who knows what the world's situation would have been in the sixties there with President Kennedy if Fidel was pitching for the Boston Red Sox. He did give us Louis Tiant, but we could have used Fidel as well.

But Joe brought gifts over there and sat down, and they became good friends. Fidel and Joe hit it off. The key part was to try to improve the human relations with Cuba and their people, to treat them decent and with respect, which is what Joe's middle name was, decency and respect. He certainly brought the blades and the foamy [shaving cream] from Gillette, and the things from the Red Sox, to improve trade. Trade, economically, can help out their country, as well as our country, as well as the world.

But Joe came back—and we talked about kings and queens earlier—and Joe came back feeling ten feet tall when he got home to 1812 Columbia Road. He was telling his lovely wife, Evelyn, about the trip. Joe said Evelyn had a way of not letting him get too caught up with himself and the heads of state. And she said, “That's great that things went so wonderful there with Fidel and all,” she says, “but, now you're back home. I'm the queen here. So you take the trash out.” (laughter) And he says Evelyn had a way of bringing him back to earth.

When he grew his beard, he was down Flanagan's Supermarket one particular morning. He's up and down the milk aisle, and the cheese, and the spaghetti, and the fresh fruit and produce. And people are saying, “Oh Joe, your beard looks good.” “Joe, oh, you look too old with your beard.” “Joe, get rid of your beard.” And he says, “Time I get out of the store,” he says, “the

vote was ten for it and four against.” So he says, “I can keep the beard. That was my constituent survey.”

Joe’s favorite bird was the crane. When Joe took his U.S. Airways frequent flights from Logan Airport to Washington, D.C., there, when he came back into Boston, he would see the crane [referring to construction cranes] flying over Boston. Crane here and a crane there. And under those cranes that were up in the air flying, there was constituents from all over the commonwealth and New England. They were working. The men and women were having jobs, the blue collar workers. They’re underneath those cranes working. And that’s what it was. The crane was his favorite bird because they created the work on the ground, those people that work and support their families, to pay their mortgages, to pay their car payments, to send their kids to college, and various things like that, all those things. Joe joked about that, but along with that, they were building not only courthouses, but hotels, and bridges, and roadways, restaurants, schools. The list is endless. We showed that at his Silver Jubilee there at the Copley Fairmont Plaza.

Joe listened to the people upstairs, downstairs, and over the back fence. “Over the back fence,” as he said, because they were his extended family. And when you think about it, upstairs, downstairs, over the back fence includes everybody, includes everybody. Joe had the ability to meet people from all walks of life, all nationalities, races and creeds, and various backgrounds, and to come away leaving those people feeling good, that the best thing is going to be done, and the effort, and the time, and the energy would be put into it.

In Norwood, we had some of our workers, we call them the shock troops. The purpose of that is that if something had to be done on the spur of the moment, whether it be a Sunday morning, there would be a number of people who would go over and do a flyer drop, as I showed you earlier, getting the word out to the constituents on a door-to-door basis. That’s what local politics is. As Tip O’Neill said, “All politics is local.” Joe always did the flyer drop, and was very instrumental, and put out the various issues, whether they were health and medical issues, whether they were the Medicaid or Medicare, issues of Social Security, all the various things that

really affect all of us. Whether we're making twenty thousand dollars a year or 200,000 dollars a year, all those things affect us in some way, shape or form.

And those were the things that Joe worked on over the years. A number of the kids worked as interns with him. In turn, a number of people went into politics, become statesmen and women because of having had the opportunity to intern for Joe over the years.

ENGLER: So he really tried to instill within young people as well just the love for—not necessarily activism, but to get involved. And this affects you. Everything that is around you is affecting you. You may act like you're not aware of it, but you really—you have to be.

LALLY: You're absolutely right, Christian. Joe worked both sides of the aisle in Congress. He was put on the Rules Committee¹⁵ initially by Tip O'Neill, Speaker of the House. I'd always say to a person, whether they were Democrat or Republican or Independent or Libertarian, whatever their party would be, I'd say, "Certainly, anyone has the right to run against anybody. There's not a harder worker out there than Joe Moakley."

Joe was on the Rules Committee. And for a number of years, Joe was chairman of the Rules Committee. When you stop to think that every bill in this United States of America that has to go out of committee, to be debated, to become law, to be signed by the president, has to go over Joe Moakley's desk. Joe was instrumental in that. And for the people that he represents, not just the 635,000 people in the Ninth District of Massachusetts, but people all over the country are similar; he's doing things for the people in all the fifty states. They're all benefiting.

And when Joe moves a bill out of committee from the Rules Committee, that's a positive thing and a favorable thing. You know that the average American is going to get a fair shot with Joe Moakley in Congress. And they always did. I says, "Why run against Joe Moakley for what he

¹⁵ 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.

does and has done, all those things, as a rep, as a senator, as a councilor, and as a congressman?" They'd say, "George, I really never looked at it that way."

But Joe was a fun guy as well. He loved parades. Fourth of July or July third, we'd do the Needham parade. The Fourth of July, the next morning, we'd be doing the Randolph parade. Then early afternoon, we're over to Stoughton. The grand finale, as he called it, the command performance was in Norwood at five o'clock that night. It's a tough day, tough two days. Whether Joe was in his thirties or in his seventies, he did it. He loved doing it. And he says, "George, you know, it's a heck of a lot warmer today than it is in South Boston on St. Patrick's Evacuation Day [March seventeenth]." (laughter) He says, "That's a great one as well, and a command performance." But he says, "It's a bit of a chilly day."

But Joe could diffuse—Joe could go into a room that was—they were rabble rousers, and they were at each other's throats. But he had a way to diffuse a volatile situation, whether it was Beacon Hill, Capitol Hill, or in a foreign land, whether it be Cuba or wherever.

ENGLER: That's a very good thing. I was going to ask—in the time that you knew him, were there any moments where he made comments like, "Am I getting in over my head? Is this a volatile thing that I'm getting involved in? How will it affect my family or those around me? Would it be better for me to, say, not go to El Salvador or not go to Cuba? Or would it be better for me to stay here?" Were there ever concerns that he raised himself regarding his own safety? Or would he just plunge forward and sort of look at the bigger picture of all this?

LALLY: Joe never had a doubt about doing anything like that, Christian. He'd kid about it. And he had a great sense of dry humor. He'd kid about that. But he never had a second thought about not doing what he did do, and how he did do it. He would take the total scope and picture as to what went on, what is going on. How do we make things right for everybody, for all concerned?

He used to kid about going to a foreign land. The first foreign land he ever went to was East Boston, when he crossed the bridge over the Mystic [River]. But he certainly had no

reservations, no qualms about going to—be it Cuba, or El Salvador, or East Boston, it didn't matter.

ENGLER: He had a job to do, and he was going to do it.

LALLY: He was going to do it. He loved life. He loved people. As Barbra Streisand said, "People, people who need people, we're the luckiest people in the world." And as Joe Moakley looked upon it, he was fortunate to have the opportunity to be elected by his peers and by his constituents over the years, over the decades. And, as I say, Barbra Streisand couldn't have said it any better than the lucky people who love people are the luckiest people in the world.

ENGLER: So in your overall assessment, which I know is positive, are there traits of Congressman Moakley that you just don't find anymore? Or was it something very distinct and unique only with him? Or are you hoping that maybe somewhere down the road there may be another Congressman Moakley out there?

LALLY: There was only one Joe Moakley. There was only one Tip O'Neill. There was only one John W. McCormack. The era that Joe grew up in, the period of time in our nation's history—and actually, every period is a key period. But Joe had a great family life. And I think that's instrumental with his mother and father, and his brothers, Tom and Bob—that when you have that, you got a leg up on people.

Today, to be philosophical, the family structure isn't, if I may say, what it used to be. We're a more mobile society. We're a more different society of wanting tangible things. I've done a lot of speaking over the various years in different states, and at Babe Ruth Baseball Word Series, to the parents and to those families, and so on. I tell them one good thing that you can give your sons and your daughters is your time, T-I-M-E. Give them your time. You can give them the tangible things of nice clothing, and a nice home, and a television in their room, and a telephone in their room, and all the various things like that.

But give them your love, your time, your attention. Listen to them. Talk to them. That's what Joe learned at a young age. Joe carried that on all of his life. Will there be another person like Joe? I certainly hope so. But as far as how he could make people work for the benefit of all men and women, that's a unique trait. You have to work at it. And you can't get it from going to college, and from just wishing you had it, or just working in the various occupations. It's something you work at everyday. I hope that answers the question to a degree there.

But basically I think family life was a big part of it, always has been, always will be. Our most precious commodity is our children. How they grow up and how they turn out is attributed to the mother and father, and the schoolteacher as well, but the schoolteacher can't do it if the mother and father don't do it. If the mother and father aren't putting the time in with their kids, the schoolteacher has a much tougher job.

ENGLER: Now the last question. Were you born in South Boston?

LALLY: Yes.

ENGLER: Now, in the time that Moakley was the congressman for your district, and now in the time that he's passed, has the environment changed? Or has his legacy still kind of pushed on the values?

LALLY: His legacy, Christian, continues. The fact that there's a Joe Moakley baseball park, the fact that there's a Joe Moakley courthouse, and the Evelyn Moakley Bridge, named after his lovely wife, Evelyn, those tangible things are there. But the many things that he did to help people—a lifetime. They're like storytellers; they're passed on from the father to his son, to son to daughter, and so on.

In other words, his name is there at a park for what he did for the average person. It's something that you talk about. And like I said earlier, word of mouth, no matter where you go, to

Congress—Stephen Lynch¹⁶ now, our new congressman, when he's in the halls of Congress, [people] say, "Oh you took Joe Moakley's place," so that they remember Joe. He's not gone. He's not forgotten.

Because again, what he learned in South Boston he brought to the halls of Congress. And he's very highly thought of. And his memory is quite great in Congress as well as in South Boston, Cuba, Ireland, El Salvador, wherever he had the opportunity to step foot on soil.

END OF INTERVIEW

¹⁶ Stephen F. Lynch (1955-), a Democrat, has represented Massachusetts' Ninth Congressional District in the U.S. House of Representatives since Congressman Moakley's death in 2001.

OH-012 Attachments

Attachment A

O'Malley, Pdraig, *John Joseph Moakley: A Profile*. Boston: John W. McCormack Institute of Public Affairs of the University of Massachusetts Boston, 1993.