



Oral History Interview of Molly Hurley (OH-046)

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Oral History Interview of Molly Hurley

Interview Date: March 10, 2005

Interviewed by: Laura Muller, Suffolk University student from History 364: Oral History

Citation: Hurley, Molly. Interviewed by Laura Muller. John Joseph Moakley Oral History Project OH-046. 10 March 2005. Transcript and audio available. John Joseph Moakley Archive and Institute, Suffolk University, Boston, MA.

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Interview Summary

Margaret “Molly” Hurley, a member of Congressman John Joseph Moakley’s district staff from 1977 to 2001, reflects on her years working for the Congressman. She discusses her job responsibilities; Moakley’s relationships with his staff members; Moakley’s commitment to constituent service; her own feelings towards Moakley; and Moakley’s reputation as a kind and committed legislator. She concludes by discussing the work that she did as a member of Congressman Stephen Lynch’s district staff.

Subject Headings

Hurley, Margaret "Molly"

Moakley, John Joseph, 1927-2001

South Boston (Boston, Mass.)

Table of Contents

Introduction and experiences working with Congressman Moakley	p. 3 (00:05)
Moakley’s congressional career and issues that were important to him	p. 9 (12:31)
Moakley’s illness and final reflections	p. 19 (35:20)

Interview transcript begins on next page

Interview Transcript

LAURA MULLER: Today is March 10, 2005 and I am here in the Suffolk University Law School Library, and I'm here with Molly Hurley. Can you just say a little bit about yourself?

MOLLY HURLEY: Okay, I worked for Joe Moakley from 1977 until he passed away in 2001, and had a great time. Enjoyed every minute of it. Very interesting. Great guy to work for.

MULLER: So you said you started in 1977?

HURLEY: Right.

MULLER: And what were your responsibilities working for him?

HURLEY: I think I was almost just like an office—answering telephones—an office receptionist, starting out, and then I got involved in other case work mostly.

MULLER: What was the extent of your interactions with Joe? Did you see him on a daily basis?

HURLEY: When he was in Boston, yeah. He'd come out and talk to us a lot. And he was in—in those days he was in Washington a lot, and he'd come up, say, Friday morning after—if Congress went into Friday, and would be back to leave Monday afternoon to be back in session Tuesday. That was on a regular norm. If it was something special he would of course come and go earlier and later, but then we'd see him a lot. He'd be in the office most of the time unless it was an outside meeting or something else he had to go to.

MULLER: So you said you did case work. What did that entail?

HURLEY: Mostly housing—in those days, housing. Let's see, and just information requests, tours, flag requests, anything people would call in on the telephone. I used to answer the phone

most of the time, and Joe had a regular executive type secretary, Doris Keating¹ who was with him the first day that he ever ran for office. She was with him nineteen years when she had to leave.

MULLER: Was the office always located in the same place?

HURLEY: When I went he was in the JFK Federal Building, right on the nineteenth floor. It was a great office—beautiful. Window view of the airport, the ocean, and it was great. Great office. And from there we went to the World Trade Center. I was up at the JFK with them for ten years—went to the JFK for ten years, ten or eleven, either one. And then we went to the World Trade Center, and from the World Trade you could look out the windows over where he built the courthouse.²

MULLER: Did he like that?

HURLEY: Oh, he loved it. He would just sit there—and then when we moved in [to the courthouse], he was just ecstatic being there, he just loved it. And he picked the third floor because when you looked out the window, you didn't see anybody walking on the grounds. You just saw water, so it was like we were in the water. So it was wonderful. It was a beautiful office, and he loved it. They were all mostly judges' offices in there, so he picked the third floor. We could've had the top floor, but he just liked the third floor, so that's where we were.

MULLER: So you said there was another—Doris?

HURLEY: Doris. She's passed away since that time. But she left when she got ill. But she was with Joe since the first day he ever got into office. She used to type papers before he ever got elected to anything, so she was friends with him for years and worked for him for years. And she was really the secretary par excellence. She was great.

¹ Doris Keating was Moakley's secretary from 1973 to 1989.

² Ms. Hurley is referring to the John Joseph Moakley United States Courthouse, located on Boston's Fan Pier.

MULLER: Was there anyone else on the staff that you remember that was significant during these years?

HURLEY: Yeah, Roger Kineavy³ was with Joe. He worked for him—he was a campaign worker. And when Joe made Congress, I think Joe—Roger worked for Joe when he was in city hall as city councilor and he worked for him at the state house when he was senator, and I think Roger was with him for almost the first two—but when Joe ran for Congress and was elected, he picked Roger to run the Boston office.

MULLER: And did everyone like working with Joe?

HURLEY: Yes, everybody loved it. Nobody ever left the office on their own, and I don't recall him ever firing anybody either. If they left it was—and they stayed for years, like I was there forever, Doris was there forever, Roger was thirty years with him, so that was since his first time being elected. And a couple of the girls that were in there, they went on and got married and had children and left. And then the other kids—the kids—well they're kids to me. Let's see, Marty Foster⁴ was a lawyer and he went on to his own business. Jimmy O'Leary,⁵ who is now—he's a lawyer. Great renown. Marty Foster—I said Marty. I'm trying to think. (pauses) Joe Donovan⁶ is a big lawyer in Canton. There are a couple of others.

We always had a nice time. We had a good time. It was a good run office. And I think we're very good too in our constituent service. We really were very good. That's why we used to get—people from way out of our district would call us, and they would just say they don't get any assistance from—or do it as fast as we would. Joe was always very adamant about answering the phone on time, not letting it ring, and to call people back, and if you couldn't do it, to tell them, just don't keep them hanging.

MULLER: So do you think his work with his constituents was one of his central goals?

³ Roger Kineavy was Moakley's district manager from 1973 to 1994.

⁴ Martin Foster was Moakley's staff assistant from 1978 to 1981 and his legal counsel from 1982 to 1984.

⁵ James O'Leary was Moakley's West Roxbury branch manager in 1974, his assistant district manager from 1975 to 1976, and his legal counsel from 1977 to 1978.

⁶ Joseph Donovan was Moakley's mobile office assistant from 1978 to 1980 and his legislative assistant in 1981.

HURLEY: Oh yes, yeah. Especially here in Boston. He had to be because he was a person who stayed local with the community and his district, and he saw everybody. I mean, everybody—if he was out at Castle Island—he was always out there—and any affairs he went to, which he went to a lot, everybody saw him there and everybody had a problem when they saw him. And he'd just say, "Call Roger or call Molly." And I always got in at seven-thirty, and he would say, "Call Molly. She's in at seven-thirty." So I got plenty of phone calls right for him right when he came in. But that was a big thing with him, yeah.

MULLER: Was he involved with his neighborhood like outside of the political world? Was he just the kind of guy that was around and if you wanted him—

HURLEY: If different things were going on in the town, they'd call him for either his input, financially, or just to come to a meeting just to be seen or just to say that he was supporting them. He always did that. Yeah, he always did that.

MULLER: So his constituents liked him, basically.

HURLEY: Oh God, they loved him. They really and truly—everybody felt that they knew him personally. Everyone called him Joe. Very few people called him Congressman, and everyone called him Joe, and just ring him at home all the time. And he'd always pick up the phone at home.

MULLER: And he liked being called Joe rather than Congressman?

HURLEY: Yes, really. Yeah, although I don't know if he would've preferred Congressman, but nobody did—not out of disrespect; it's just that they felt like they knew him on a personal basis. But that's how he affected people. I think he came on very personally, and he never forgot a name. Never, ever forgot a name.

MULLER: Where did you live during your—

HURLEY: South Boston.

MULLER: You lived in South Boston?

HURLEY: Yeah, I lived a couple streets away from him. He lived right on the beach, and I lived a couple of streets back that way.

MULLER: So did you see him out in the neighborhood?

HURLEY: I'd see him shopping. He would do errands. I'd see him out at the local store and the local pharmacy. He was always on Castle Island. He'd be sitting in his car reading the paper, early in the morning.

MULLER: Just to go back to his office—what was a typical day working with him? What time did you get there? What were your duties like throughout the day?

HURLEY: Well, of course everybody was mostly on time. We always handled housing, veterans, military case work. And everyone was—in those days, everyone was assigned to a different subject, like, in other words, —not too many legal matters, but social security was a big item, housing was a very big item, employment, and the VA [Veterans Affairs]—veterans, military casework, people who wanted their discharges upgraded or get transferred, or if someone died, to get home in a hurry, something like that. He always managed to do it for them too, which was a nice thing.

So anyway, it was all phones; phone never stopped ringing. Phones were crazy, and everyone would say the same thing, “The phones are crazy.” We always had a phone here and a phone there. Everyone had their own desk and phone, and then the phones in rooms we weren't in, like the back room where the file cabinets were, so you wouldn't have to run far to answer the phone.

MULLER: So how many people were there answering phones?

HURLEY: I think we had seven or eight people. Immigration was another big item, and I'm sure today it's twice what it is, because things have changed. James Woodard⁷ handled that, Jim was very smart. He worked for the State Department one time in the Supreme Court, and he came to work for Joe when Joe first got elected to Congress. He handled the Roxbury office. We had an office in Roxbury at that time, and he handled the Roxbury office. Then when they closed it, because I guess they weren't getting as many people in there, wasn't worth keeping it open, he—Joe brought him into the Boston office. He was great, a godsend to Joe really, because he knew what he was doing in immigration matters, which is very complicated.

MULLER: Do you think the people who worked for him sort of carried what they learned from him on to their other jobs if they moved on? Do you think he had an impact on that?

HURLEY: I think so, and I think they would call back if they needed his assistance or something or, "Would you know who we would contact for this?" But I do, I think we all carried it on.

MULLER: Did you know his wife at all?

HURLEY: Oh yeah, I knew Evelyn.⁸ She was very nice. Wouldn't come in the office, only on maybe a weekend or two. If she came in three or four times a year, that was it. And you could always tell when she had been in because she'd move pictures, (inaudible) and a plant. I'd come in on Monday nights [thinking], "Ahh, she was here this week." But that's all. She just moved things around the way she wanted, where she thought they should be. She thought she was like an interior decorator, which she was very good at it. She really wasn't, but she thought she was, because she did a beautiful job with her home.

MULLER: So she sort of stayed out of the limelight?

⁷ James Woodard was a member of Moakley's district staff from 1973 to 2001.

⁸ Evelyn (Duffy) Moakley (1927-1996) and Congressman Moakley married in 1957.

HURLEY: She did, and I think it was the same in Washington. I don't know that for definite sure, but they would say she wasn't in the office all the time, you know, a lot. She would come in and out when there was something going on and she had to be there.

MULLER: So how often did you say he traveled to Washington?

HURLEY: Oh, every week unless they were out of session. In the summer they'd have a long vacation, but he was down there all the time. At the end of our term—at the end of the time when he got sick and we went to the courthouse, that is when he would go only when he really had to because he loved the courthouse. He was more in the courthouse, but then he was pretty sick at that time, but he still went down there all the time. He'd come back and forth, sometimes the same day.

MULLER: Do you think he was typical of the sort of South Boston neighborhood type of person? Do you think part of who he was came from the fact that he grew up in that neighborhood?

HURLEY: I do, and I don't think he ever changed either. He was still the same, even though he was, you know, important. He never felt, I think, that he was important or a big congressman or something, but he was still a regular guy. That's why everybody really loved him.

MULLER: So he had a very sort of simple ideology about the way he did things.

HURLEY: Yeah.

MULLER: Do you think he was the kind of person you would become friends with outside?

HURLEY: I was friends—we were friends with him outside, my husband John and I. We'd see them out. We didn't see them socially, but if things were going on in town we were at, we'd be there and we'd see them.

MULLER: What do you think politicians today could learn from him?

HURLEY: I don't know. I really wouldn't know how to say that. He really cared about people. He cared more for people that were more down and out and more the regular type of person, just everyday people that you meet in the Stop & Shop [Supermarket]. He'd stand in there and listen to them. We had this little lady that came in to complain about something one time, and she was elderly, and he kept her—she stayed in that office with him like at least forty-five minutes. And I went in once to say to him—just to say, “Do you want another appointment to come in?” or something. And he said, “No, this is fine. I'll talk to her for another while.” And he just stayed with her talking.

And that's how I think El Salvador came about. We used to do post office meetings in the spring and in the summer in all the different towns, and mostly, if I remember rightly, Saturdays definitely at the local post office in, say, South Boston, then he'd go to Jamaica Plain. He'd do the city one week, two or three days in one week. I hope I'm getting this right. And then they'd do the towns—they'd take a town, and go in the morning to, say, Canton, and next would be Dedham in the afternoon. He might even squeeze in Westwood at four o'clock if it didn't get too crowded. But I think in the Jamaica Plain office, five El Salvadorans came in to complain about—I think it was they had a temporary status that was being taken away from them. I think that's how that went. But he sat and listened to them, and that's what started the whole El Salvador rigmarole.⁹ He got someone to investigate them, and that's how it all started, just sitting down and listening to them, and I think a couple of them couldn't even speak English, they had interpreters. They just walked in off the street and waited to be heard and sat down. So that's how all that started.

MULLER: And it was a genuine interest, not just—?

⁹ Starting in 1983, Congressman Moakley introduced legislation to protect Salvadorans in the U.S. using the “Extended Voluntary Departure” provision that allowed a temporary stay of deportation and work authorization. Moakley was finally able to pass legislation that granted Temporary Protected Status (TPS) to Salvadorans in the Immigration Act of 1990 (PL. 101-649). TPS grants temporary legal residency and work authorization to immigrants fleeing civil wars, natural disasters or other conditions in their home country for a set period of time. In El Salvador's case, TPS has been extended several times since 1990. The TPS designation has been used by other countries experiencing civil unrest and is administered by the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS). (See <http://www.uscis.gov>.)

HURLEY: Oh no, it was genuine, it really was. He wouldn't deal with anyone that wasn't, I think, honest and aboveboard. Not honest and aboveboard, but regular and sincere is what I'm looking for.

MULLER: Do you know anything about his involvement in some of the other issues like the Harbor Islands and the—?

HURLEY: Well I don't know too much about it. I know he was interested in the harbor cleanup. And then he had—oh yeah, because he had that bill passed, the Harbor Island bill.¹⁰ And they kicked Castle Island out of the Harbor Island because they didn't want to get involved with the federal government because they take—the Castle Island people, they take care of it themselves. They call themselves the CIA, the Castle Island Associates. (laughs) But they do, they do a great job. But he did that too, and Ellen¹¹ in Washington handled all the Boston Harbor Islands. Yeah, she was great at that. What else was there?

Let's see. He did so much for Boston. These huge buildings that go up—the Moakley Bridge. He did—every high rise in Boston, he had something to do with. It's really amazing.

MULLER: What about historical preservation? Did he do some stuff with that?

HURLEY: Oh, he did a lot with that. He worked with the National Park Service to get things taken care of, so they'd be—as a national historic site. He actually did that with Dorchester Heights; he made that a national historic site. He did that mostly—he worked with the harbor, with John Burchill and the National Park Service, and they worked on them a long time and he was very involved with that.¹² Anything to do with the community, to make things better for the community, he really worked on it. I wish you knew him.

¹⁰ Moakley introduced legislation in Congress that ultimately led to the establishment, in 1996, of the Boston Harbor Islands National Recreation Area, which is part of the National Park Service.

¹¹ Ellen Harrington was a member of Moakley's Washington staff from 1986 to 2001.

¹² Moakley co-sponsored legislation that, in 1974, created the Boston National Historical Park, which includes eight historic sites in Boston. This park is also part of the National Park Service. John Burchill, who passed away in 2002, was the superintendent of the National Park Service, and was also Ms. Hurley's cousin.

MULLER: Yeah, I do too.

HURLEY: Yeah.

MULLER: Do you still talk to any of the staff members that you worked with?

HURLEY: Oh yeah, I do, I talk to Karen,¹³ I talk to Fred.¹⁴ Karen is a personal friend of mine and so isn't Sheila, we gab all the time.¹⁵ And I see Joe Moynihan,¹⁶ [who] worked in the office, Fred Clark, Sean¹⁷ I still see, and talk to all of them. And some of the ones in Washington, I still talk with; Kevin¹⁸ works in the D.C. office for Congressman Lynch.¹⁹ I worked for Congressman Lynch for two years.

MULLER: So do you think it's because of Joe that you had such close relationships with these people?

HURLEY: Well I think it was a nice little friendly office, I really do; everyone got along. I don't think he would want us not to get along; he wouldn't want that. We just kind of got along anyway. Joe was always in the middle of everything. He always wanted to know what you were doing, what your kids were doing, what you were involved in and all those things. He was very good, would do anything you asked him.

MULLER: If we could, just go back to the Harbor Islands for a second?

HURLEY: Sure.

¹³ Karen Harraghy was a member of Moakley's district staff from 1983 to 2001.

¹⁴ Fred Clark was a member of Moakley's district staff from 1986 to 2001. OH-020 and OH-061 in the Moakley Oral History Project are interviews with Mr. Clark.

¹⁵ Sheila Hill was a member of Moakley's district staff from 1997 to 1999.

¹⁶ Joseph Moynihan was a member of Moakley's district staff from 1993 to 2001.

¹⁷ Sean Ryan was a member of Moakley's district staff from 1993 to 2001.

¹⁸ Kevin Ryan was a member of Moakley's Washington staff from 1997 to 2000.

¹⁹ Stephen F. Lynch (1955-), a Democrat, has represented Massachusetts' Ninth Congressional District in the U.S. House of Representatives since Moakley's death in 2001.

MULLER: What was the Harbor Islands bill that was passed?

HURLEY: Let's see, I should've brushed up on some of this.

MULLER: I don't know too much about it.

HURLEY: I don't either, to be honest. I don't—you could pull it up on the computer. Ellen did most of the work on that, she would come up and go to these meetings with him.

MULLER: So who is—

HURLEY: Ellen Harrington. I don't think she still works—she works somewhere in Washington, but I don't know where. But she did a ton of work on it, which you have to do to get the bill passed. (pauses) I'm just trying to think of what else.

MULLER: How did he feel when the whole El Salvador thing came up? I know he wasn't too involved in foreign policy. Was he hesitant?

HURLEY: No, he wasn't. I think he just felt like these people were really getting a bad deal, and then of course there was the government, the army and then the military. And then our own government was involved, not the way they should be. They were sending funds down there to the wrong people and he was just furious. He went down to El Salvador two or three times and then when the priests were murdered, and the housekeeper and the child, he was really so angry.²⁰ So he did his damndest and, you know, he did all that.

We went down to a banquet that the Jesuits had for him in Washington and it was just so crowded, and President Clinton came. They named—did they name something for him? He got

²⁰ 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.

an award from them; I think they must have a diploma from that university down there.²¹ And it was just wonderful.

MULLER: I guess now, we can just talk a little bit about his legacy and what you will remember the most about him. It's hard I know, because there's so much, but is there anything, specifically that you remember about him?

HURLEY: I just think he was so good to anybody, everybody really. And I think, even if you were kind of, not an enemy to him, but voted against him or something like that, he would be the one that would do you the biggest favor, if you had called and he would make sure—he would never hold a grudge. He was just very kind and compassionate, a very caring person. He really wasn't that outward with it, but he was inside, a very compassionate man and very kind. And that's how I will always remember Joe Moakley, really wanted to help somebody.

MULLER: Now, he ran as an independent for one of his elections—

HURLEY: Yes, he lost the first time he ran for Congress, and what was the first time? Louise Day Hicks beat him, which was a horrible thing which is something I really don't want to talk about.²² Then he ran as an independent the next term and he won, so it was a nuisance and he won every year after that. That was a tough time of course. I really don't know that much about it when he was involved, because I came to work there in '77, and I really didn't know what the office was involved in. I was never really involved in politics at all; my husband was, but I wasn't.

²¹ Moakley received an honorary law degree from the University of Central American in San Salvador, El Salvador, in February of 1994.

²² 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, which helped her gain support in South Boston. 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.

I just met him—how did I get in there? Roger [Kineavy] called me up one night—and I never worked because I had seven kids, and I was home. And they were moving from one office on the same floor of Kennedy [the JFK Building] from that corner office over to this one and they just needed someone to help with the filing. So when I said to Roger, “What will I do?,” and he said, “Oh, just file,” and I said, “Oh, okay, I can do that.” I went to work the next day, it was a Friday, February ninth. I’m still there, and I was only supposed to work like a couple of—they used to call them like thirty-day appointments; it’d be like six weeks. I stayed there till May, and then I left because they used to bring in at that time, trained kids, almost like interns, but they’d be paid like internships for five or six weeks. But then the girl that was working with me, the secretary at the time, Roger’s secretary, left. So I was home about two weeks, and he called me and asked me if I wanted to go back and work there, so I said, “Yeah, sure.” So there I was forever, forever. So that’s how it worked out.

MULLER: So your husband knew Joe too?

HURLEY: Yes, he worked in campaigns with him, that’s how he knew him, so they were friendly.

MULLER: Well, I guess we can start to wrap it up a little bit, is there anything else you want to—

HURLEY: You know, one time I said to him—we had been to some sort of retirement banquet for somebody, and this guy was really—the person that was retiring, I thought, Oh God, I don’t want to say that out loud, [but he was] a loser.” But Joe had said the nicest things about him. The next day, I said, “You said some real nice things about so and so”, and he said, “Well, you know, it doesn’t cost anything to say something nice about a person.” And I said, “No, it doesn’t,” but you know, I never thought of it that way; I just wouldn’t say anything. But he was really very nice to him. I don’t think that he was a person that voted for Joe or anything like that, but see Joe was very kind to people like that, and that kind of makes them feel worse I think, after he was kind to them. He was a great guy.

MULLER: So he had supporters, or not necessarily supporters, but respect from both sides?

HURLEY: Yes, he certainly did, yeah.

MULLER: Do you know anything about the way people in Washington felt about him?

HURLEY: Oh, he was very well-liked in Washington, very well-liked. You could see it just by people who would call him when things were going on. He was in the Rules Committee there for a while,²³ so [when] they were up for some seat or they wanted to get on some board, or committee, they would call Joe and ask and he would be very gracious to them and talk to them. He wouldn't just fluff them off either. I think he was very well-liked. Well, you could see like when we went down there to anything, banquets that they would have—I don't think they called them banquets, but it was that type of affair—but everybody would be there, every congressman you can think of, the president often showed up. Gosh, even when he died, it was like President [George W.] Bush, President Clinton, and Gore, I mean everybody was there. It was amazing. I don't think he knew he was that popular. When we were down at the White House, he'd go out when they signed the—I guess they had passed a bill to name the courthouse after him,²⁴ and so we went down in the Rose Garden and President Bush signed the paper up there, so there were all kinds of people there. It was just wonderful. It was very nice, very personal.

MULLER: So the courthouse is named after him?

HURLEY: Yes, and he was thrilled to pieces to get that, thrilled. Because he really worked so hard on that to get it there. There was nothing ever there but dirt and rubble, nothing else. It was being wasted land.

MULLER: Why did he want a courthouse to go there?

²³ Congressman Moakley was a member of the House Rules Committee from 1975 to 2001 and served as its chairman from 1989 to 1995.

²⁴ 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.

HURLEY: I don't know; I just think he pictured it. They needed another federal courthouse in Boston and I just think he envisioned it. He'd look out that window, you know, and he'd be like, Well, it'd be where you are, that's where his desk was and this massive window here. And that was in the Trade Center, and he'd look way down and he'd say, "That's where it's going to go." He was just thrilled, just thrilled. And then you know, he never had any intentions of moving in there till one day, and he said this to me in his office, and he said, "You know what? I should really get an office in there. I put that place up." And I just said "Yeah, I really guess you should." (laughs) So he did, he went and got one, because this was a judge's office we were in, and they gave it to him, so he was just thrilled.

MULLER: Was he at all extravagant in his tastes for his office?

HURLEY: No. We had a very nice office. He would let us mostly do picking out of furniture. He did pick out his own desk, and the red leather chair, I think he bought that himself. I think it was in the display downstairs here one time, the desk and the chair.²⁵ But other than that, everything—let me just tell you, of course you couldn't spend too much with the government; GSA [General Services Administration] and stuff like that would check everything. We'd have to call and ask how much money we had left to—could we spend this, and was that too much to spend that? Then they'd send you a booklet of their furniture, where they would buy it, what they would pick out. You'd have to pick from their book. If not, then I think you had to use your own money or spend something—I don't really know the ins and outs of all that, but that's how we used to do it anyway. But we had a nice office, but he really wasn't extravagant, I'll have to say that, but we had a very nice office. It was pretty. We enjoyed it.

MULLER: Did you visit his house at all, where he lived in South Boston? How long—did he live in the same house?

HURLEY: Yeah, he lived in it, I think—where'd they first live? They lived—I think it was before he went into politics and he bought this—no, he didn't buy this house. He lived on the

²⁵ *Joe Moakley: In Service to his Country* was an exhibit presented by the Moakley Archive and Institute that opened at Suffolk University's Adams Gallery on November 28, 2001. The exhibit included a display of Moakley's desk and chair from his office at the Moakley Courthouse.

beach, Columbia Road, and he rented there. He rented there—on the second floor, they lived. And the landlord lived on the first floor, then that person, he died, but his wife was still alive. So they lived there a while, then she got very sick and she had to go to a nursing home, so he bought the house then. I don't think they had family, I'm not sure though. But that's when they lived there; they had a nice home.

Then Evelyn decided to do it all over, so they gutted the whole house top to bottom, made it a single, and oh, God, it was just beautiful, just beautiful. And then he—at Christmas the Labouré Center²⁶ has homes at Christmas in South Boston; it's a regular tour they do with buses and stuff—and his house was on the tour. And I'll tell you, there were lines way down the block, and he took everybody's pictures. They'd come in and—it was Polaroid—he gave them a picture, and a Christmas ball for the tree; it was white, with a printing of his house on it. It just said Christmas—I don't know if it said Moakley on it—and the year. And I think he did that two or three years in a row, but it was so crowded. But he was thrilled.

His wife had passed away before then—

MULLER: When did she pass away?

HURLEY: She died, let me see, maybe five years before? Could be five years before, I really don't know.²⁷ She was very sick. She was fine, [then] she had cancer. She had a horrible death, poor thing. But anyway, I think it was about five years before he passed on—I'm not sure about that, you'd have to check the dates if you need them.

But they really had a beautiful home, she was very nice. They went to Pier 4; he liked Pier 4, and he liked Anthony, and Anthony liked him.²⁸ But they'd kind of hold court there when they went because of course everyone would come up to their table, and the telephone would be there, (laughs) so it was fun. I really didn't go to lunch or supper with him, but we'd have fundraisers

²⁶ The Labouré Center is a community service organization in South Boston that is part of the Catholic Charities of Boston.

²⁷ Evelyn Moakley passed away on March 16, 1996.

²⁸ Anthony's Pier 4 was a restaurant on the Boston waterfront owned by Antony Athanas.

over there. He'd take us out there for lunch every once in a while, the whole bunch of us would go from the office. That was when we were in the Trade Center, I don't ever think we did that in the courthouse. (pauses) So that's that.

MULLER: Do you think the attention ever bothered him? Like when he was out, would he want to be just left alone?

HURLEY: No, I think he liked people coming up and talking to him, I really do. I really think he did, and I think he liked people asking him to do things, because I'm almost sure he thought he could do them, and he pretty well did, most of them. But I think he really liked people coming up and telling him (laughter; words inaudible), but he didn't mind. He was very good. Yeah, I think he really liked attention. Even when he was out on the island, he'd sit in his car reading the paper, and people would come right up to the window, talk to him, and he'd talk back to them, so he really liked all that.

MULLER: Yeah, I've heard that he would sit out where he knew people would see him and wait for them.

HURLEY: Yeah, wait for them to come and see him. No, he never minded them.

MULLER: Do you think he ever thought of leaving South Boston?

HURLEY: No. Oh God no, no one would ever leave South Boston, I have to tell you that now. (laughter) Although all my kids did because they couldn't afford South Boston; it's too expensive.

MULLER: Did that bother him at all when—did he deal with that kind of—?

HURLEY: I don't think that was—I think that happened right after he died, although it started to come up. And he'd say to me, "What do you think I'd get for my house?" and I said "Oh, probably a million because you're on the water." And he'd tell me what he thought I'd get for

my house, and I said “I know, but I’m not going anywhere. Where would I go?” And that was that. But that didn’t really come in until after he passed away, the prices really skyrocketing. But no, I don’t think he ever thought about leaving South Boston. Of course he had Washington, anyway. But towards the end he’d come back all the time. Once in a while he’d stay down there, but I don’t think too often.

MULLER: It’s the kind of place where—

HURLEY: Well, it’s kind of hectic, and not that many know you unless you’re in the Capitol Building. And it’s hectic, it’s like a city in itself.

MULLER: But did he like Washington?

HURLEY: Yeah, he did, and he would fly back and forth. That’s when he was sick; I think it was the year before he died. He had to go for radiation for like six weeks. Every day, he would fly back and forth because he’d have to come up early in the morning and get it done and fly right back because they were in session and he didn’t want to miss any of the votes. So I said, “Boy, you’re brave; I couldn’t do that.” I know he was feeling rotten. He was really a very dedicated man. He was the right man—the perfect man for the perfect job. He just said he always loved the job he had and wanted to stay there till he died, which he did.

MULLER: So he was committed, even when he got sick.

HURLEY: Yes, oh yeah.

MULLER: When did he first get sick?

HURLEY: Oh, he had a couple things wrong with him, big, serious things. He had his liver replaced and then he had something else—whatever they did when they took the liver out, and he got sick the next time, that’s what kind of—he shouldn’t have done this and he did that.

MULLER: Did things change a lot once he got sick?

HURLEY: No, everything stayed the same. He was very good about that. You just knew he was sick. One day I came in as he was coming in, and he was in a wheelchair and I just couldn't believe it; it was hard to look at him like that. Because he was always big, you know, tall and statuesque. Anyway, that was near the end, but he always came to the office because that was really his home, his second home, because there was no one at the house but him. At least in the office, there was always somebody there. The guys were always great to him. Fred [Clark], and Joe Moynihan was there, and Sean [Ryan], and they'd work either late, or they'd be doing their work—so he'd be always there. They'd take him out doing some different things he had to do, or go out to supper, or do things, go somewhere.

MULLER: Was there any reaction from his constituents when he got sick?

HURLEY: No, he kept it kind of quiet for a long time, really quiet, and we didn't say anything. I don't know if we were ever told not to, that I don't know, but nobody ever did say anything. Once in a while you'd see a blurb in the paper about him not being—that he was at the Mass. General [Hospital] for this, but no one ever picked it up, and no one ever called on it. I think everyone respected his privacy, which was nice.

MULLER: So it sort of went without saying.

HURLEY: Yeah, and then when he really got sick, I think it was just out, you kind of knew, and that was at the very end too that people—I hope I'm right in saying that, because I could just be very closeted in and not remember all this stuff that went on. It was a mad week; it was a crazy week when he died, it really was.

MULLER: How did you find out?

HURLEY: Well, I knew they had gone to Washington. He was down in the—I think it was Walter Reed—no, he was down in the University of Virginia hospital. I knew they were flying

down; Fred and Sheila went, and his brothers. They were flying down because he was pretty bad and Sheila just said to me, “Do you want to come? Will you come with me?” And I said no. I said, “What would I do there? I can’t do anything for him.” And you just sit around all day and you haven’t got a —it’s in the hospital; you’re not going to get a room.

We were doing the funeral arrangements, that’s how much we thought he was done. We were making lists of people who would come and where they would sit at the church. But you know, before he died, he set up his own funeral arrangements. I had to call to see which was the largest church in South Boston, to see which held the most seats, and I found that out, and then we had to get the priest, what priest would say it, and the Cardinal had so much to say and all this. But he made his own arrangements. But he even made a joke about it one day: it takes three months to plan a funeral, he was lucky he had the time. So it was nice.

MULLER: What church was the funeral at?

HURLEY: St. Brigid’s, that was his parish church. So it was nice. It was crowded, just mobbed.

MULLER: What kind of memorials and things did they have for him after he died?

HURLEY: Let me see. I don’t know, that was kind of a blur to me. I never watched the tape of the funeral. Somebody gave it to me the day of the funeral and I never watched it because I figured, what good would it do me to see it now? And I’m sure—they just dedicated a big building in the Boston Medical Center, for him, a Moakley cancer [treatment facility].²⁹ I know there’s several things named after him, but I can’t think of him, to be honest, I can’t.

MULLER: This law library is named after him.

²⁹ The Moakley Building at Boston Medical Center is a centralized cancer and ambulatory care facility that opened in 2004.

HURLEY: Well yeah, I know that, that goes without saying. (laughter) And the Bridgewater technology center, Moakley Tech Center.³⁰ That was done though when he was alive. That was done maybe fifteen, twenty years ago, but it's magnificent. I'm trying to think. I know there's a couple other things; it'll come to me when I'm home, I'm sorry to say. (laughter)

MULLER: Oh, that's okay.

HURLEY: I know they did want to name a lot of things after him, but some of the things, you just wouldn't do that. You just want something nice. And he's got the courthouse, that's all he ever wanted. Governor [William] Weld asked if they could do—I think it was Governor Weld, and Lieutenant Governor [Paul] Cellucci, asked if they could do the bridge after his wife, Evelyn, and he thought that was wonderful, he really did. They used to have a billboard right outside the building with her picture on it, Moakley Bridge. I don't know what the saying was on it, but it was her, and I said, "I wondered if she really would've liked that," because I don't think she would've wanted to be out front, everyone looking at her. I don't know if she would've liked that, but she was gone; she had no choice. But there is a plaque on it at the other end with her face on it. Not her face, but a bronze plaque, which is nice too.³¹

MULLER: I forgot about the Bridgewater State thing—

HURLEY: Oh yeah, that's just magnificent.

MULLER: It's a technological center?

HURLEY: Yeah.

MULLER: Why did he get involved in that?

³⁰ The John Joseph Moakley Center for Technological Applications at Bridgewater State College in Bridgewater, Mass., opened in 1995 to provide the school with state-of-the-art technological resources.

³¹ The Evelyn Moakley Bridge, which opened in October of 1996, spans the Fort Point Channel to connect downtown Boston and South Boston.

HURLEY: Because Fred came from Bridgewater, he went to Bridgewater State. He was on the alumni—he was actually, a couple years later, a trustee. He [Moakley] got the money for it; it was ten million dollars to build it. And another fellow in our office, David Carreiro,³² he went to Bridgewater too, and they really worked hard on that and they thought it was a good idea ‘cause it was the only one down in that area, a technology center, and it’s magnificent. So they got that and it was dedicated. I wish I could think of whatever else there is around.

MULLER: I know the courthouse, the bridge, here—

HURLEY: And Bridgewater.

MULLER: Yeah.

HURLEY: And I think honestly—and the medical center, that was just done last year. Again, Sheila might remember.

MULLER: Could you just clarify who Fred—

HURLEY: Oh, Fred Clark was our district director. And who else? David worked in our office, David Carreiro, he worked on legislative things.

MULLER: And Sheila—

HURLEY: Sheila Hill. Sheila was our fundraiser, and a great one at that.

MULLER: Well, that’s what’s important.

HURLEY: It is, oh God, she is most important. She was; she still is.

³² David Carreiro was a member of Moakley’s district staff from 1991 to 1996 and his Washington staff from 1997 to 2001.

MULLER: So is there any last—

HURLEY: I don't know. I hope there isn't. I was trying to think this morning, I was thinking, "What would I tell her?" I don't know. I just figured—I don't know what else. I'm sure there's a million things that I can't think of. But when Steve called me the other day and I said, "Oh God, what would I say?" (laughter) And he said, "Oh, she'll ask you questions."

MULLER: So what is your overall—

HURLEY: Feeling about Joe Moakley?

MULLER: Yeah, feeling about Joe Moakley.

HURLEY: He was a great guy. I told you he was a very compassionate person. Cared a lot about people, and he really cared about them. He didn't care if they had a dime or a million bucks; he liked them all the same. You could ask him anything and he'd really do the best he could for you, and I know he always did it. And sometimes I shake my head at him and say, "Are you really going to help him out?" and he'd say, "Sure, why not?" (laughter) Sometimes I used to get mad at myself.

But other times he'd be on the island and he'd say to me, "Oh, listen, I ran into," say, "Mary Smith," and he said, "She tells me you got her brother-in-law a big check or something from the VA." I said, "Oh yeah, I did. I didn't know she got the check," and he said, "Oh, yeah." But he had already known I was working on it, but he never said a word to you, he'd just tell you. And if there was something you did wrong too, he'd tell you. (laughter) But he was really very nice. I really liked Joe.

My last year there, on my birthday—and I always said I'd never tell my birthday because I just couldn't stand it. But he was in that day and he called me into—we had a little kitchen, and they had a birthday cake and I said, "Who told you?" And he said, "I met your friend this morning," my friend Ellie, she has the same birthday as I do—at the corner store as he was leaving the

house, and she told him it was my birthday so he picked up a cake. And I said, "I can't believe you'd do this." And he asked me how old I was, and I told him. And he said, "Would you stay till the end?" And I said, "I wasn't planning on going anywhere anyway." (laughter) I didn't want to say, "Not till you're gone," but he lasted for two years after that I think. No, I think he died that next year. I forget; time goes so fast now. Time really went fast, all the time I was with him.

Actually I worked—I left there—I think we had to leave in October or something, yeah, it was around October, and I went on a cruise and I came back and Steve Lynch had called me [and asked], would I go to work for him. I think I was off work a month and I went back in the office and started over again. But it's so different. No people that I have ever met. I knew Steve because I was friends with him, he was friends with my son Patrick, and I said to him one day, "You're the only one I could see that could take his place," because he was from Southie and just a go-getter type of guy.

But anyway, I only stayed there two years. I really only stayed a year and a half because I got sick and I had to leave. Other than that, Kevin Ryan is running the Washington office with Steve and he was with Joe for years. He was with Joe for over twenty years. I don't know how many years it is now, maybe twenty-three, but Kevin runs the office down in Washington now. He's a great guy. So that's that. I don't know if I told you anything at all.

MULLER: Oh, you did.

HURLEY: I hope so. But ask Sheila about a few things. Well, she says, "I wasn't there." I said, "Sure you were." She said, "No, I wasn't there." I guess Sheila wasn't there that long either; it's just that I'm so friendly with her.

MULLER: Hill? Sheila Hill.

HURLEY: Sheila Hill. She was with me when I came in. Now what are you doing this? As a paper for school?

MULLER: It's for an oral history class. I did another interview with someone on the busing issue.

HURLEY: Oh good, I'm glad you didn't ask me about that. (laughter) I asked Steve, I said, "Please, I don't want to get into that," because it was such a tacky thing. It was terrible. And Joe—people in South Boston—don't put this down.³³ People in South Boston didn't think he was doing what he should do, and they were angry at him. And he was doing—he voted against every busing bill he should've voted against, he did all the right things. They just thought he wasn't vocal enough. People on the street corner hollering. It was crazy; that was a crazy time in South Boston. And I don't like the memories of it, because I have a son we sent to California, because he was in high school; we sent him out there to go to school. So, anyway, that's that, well, Laura?

MULLER: Yes.

HURLEY: It's nice to meet you.

MULLER: You too, thank you.

HURLEY: I hope I told you something.

END OF INTERVIEW

³³ Please note that Ms. Hurley did not request that this portion of the interview be removed from the transcript.