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John Joseph Moakley Oral History Project

Oral History Interview with

Frederick W. Clark

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Interview Summary

In this interview, Fred Clark, who was a member of Congressman John Joseph Moakley's district staff from 1984 to 2001, reflects on the congressman's contributions to historic preservation in Boston. He discusses Moakley's work with the National Park Service and its late superintendent, John Burchill; some of the specific historic sites for which Moakley helped secure funding, including Faneuil Hall, the Old State House, the Old South Meeting House, and Dorchester Heights; the economic impact of preserving Boston's historic sites; and the appropriations request process in the House of Representatives. He also comments on his experiences working for Moakley and Moakley's reputation as a straightforward, honest politician.

Subject Headings

Clark, Jr., Frederick W.

Historic preservation -- United States

Moakley, John Joseph, 1927-2001

National parks and reserves Massachusetts

South Boston (Boston, Mass.)

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LAURA MULLER: Today is October 6, 2005, and we are here at Suffolk University Law School Library. My name is Laura Muller and I'm here with Fred Clark. Could you tell me a little bit about yourself? Your background and what you do?

FRED CLARK: I'm the executive officer for the State College Council of Presidents; I've been there for three years. Prior to that, I was with Congressman Joe Moakley for eighteen years in different capacities, ending with my role as district director. Graduate of Bridgewater State College, undergrad, and Suffolk Law School, obviously for a law degree, and married with three kids.

MULLER: When did you first meet Joe Moakley?

CLARK: I met Joe Moakley in 1982. In 1982, they had just redistricted the Ninth Congressional District and prior to that time, I think the furthest Joe Moakley's district had extended itself was probably the Norwood area. And in 1982, we lost a congressional seat and they combined two districts, Barney Frank¹ and Margaret Heckler,² so everybody's districts grew. My town—my hometown of Easton became part of the Ninth Congressional District, and Bridgewater also became part of the Ninth Congressional District. And I had just run a guy's campaign for state rep. and he finished second in the primary and was out, and I met Joe Moakley's people actually at a Democratic Town Committee meeting. One thing led to another and I just became very active in his campaign. But it was '82.

MULLER: What was the first job you held for him?

CLARK: Well, as a volunteer, I was his college coordinator for the Ninth Congressional District, and what I basically did was flyer every car at every college parking lot in the Ninth

¹ Barnett "Barney" Frank (1940-), a Democrat, has represented Massachusetts' Fourth Congressional District in the U.S. House of Representatives since 1981.

² Margaret Heckler (1931-), a Republican, represented Massachusetts' Tenth Congressional District in the U.S. House of Representatives from 1967 to 1983.

District, which were quite a few cars actually, and also recruited students to help with the campaign. We had signs [on] early mornings, and also spoke to Democratic clubs at different campuses and such. That was my first role with the congressman.

MULLER: And then after that?

CLARK: After that I interned for him. He offered me an internship in Washington, a Lyndon Baines Johnson Fellowship, and I spent the summer of '83 actually down in Washington, working in his Washington office, and that was a paid internship. Prior to that actually—I'm out of order here—prior to that I actually interned in his Taunton office as well in earlier '83. So early '83 I did the Taunton internship with Karen Harraghy,³ Karen Pacheco at the time, and then the Washington internship. And then after that, I joined his congressional campaign in '84 and I ran that campaign, and then became part of the congressional staff the same year and stayed on the staff until the last day.

MULLER: What was it like working with him?

CLARK: He was a great man. He was—for me, being with him for so long and spending so much time with him, he was kind of like a second father. He was more than just an employer. So I consider myself to be not only an employee but a friend. He was unique, I think, in that he was absolutely devoted to the average, everyday citizen in the Ninth Congressional District and was incredibly motivated to help people on an individual and collective basis. The other remarkable thing about him is he was always the same person behind the scenes, in front of the scenes, no matter what the audience; he'd be speaking to the president of the United States one minute, and Mrs. Mary O'Malley down the street the next minute, and he handled each the same way, with the same level of respect and diligence. And I find that remarkable. He was a very, very honest politician and lived his life really as a great example to other people to follow. Never once let me or anybody around him down in terms of his behavior or positions or what have you, just a remarkable man.

³ Karen Harraghy was Moakley's congressional assistant at his Taunton office from 1983 to 2001. OH-009 in the Moakley Oral History Project is an interview with Ms. Harraghy.

MULLER: So to get to more of the technical stuff, I guess you'd say—I'm writing my thesis on his work with historical preservation. So I was wondering if you know anything just in general—I'd like to get some ideas. I have some more specific stuff but—

CLARK: He really was probably brought to the historic preservation issue by John Burchill, who's passed away since; he was the superintendent of the National Park Service in Boston. And John, actually, was related to Molly Hurley;⁴ I think they were cousins. Molly was his office manager; I think you know Molly.

MULLER: Yup.

CLARK: But John was a very effective advocate for park service issues. And I give him the credit for bringing all of the park service projects forward to Joe Moakley's attention, all of which Joe, one at a time, got funded. I was involved in several of them, as a staff person. I think the first one he did was some funding for the Freedom Trail.⁵ That wasn't probably a major amount of money, but Joe was really there in the very beginning of the Freedom Trail to provide some funds for it. And then he moved—the next, much higher profile historic preservation project he worked on was Faneuil Hall and the Old State House. And he worked on those simultaneously. Honestly I don't remember the years; it was in the 1980s.

But for Faneuil Hall—Faneuil Hall is owned by a city trust, and there were just numerous meetings that were held in the attic of Faneuil Hall with city representatives, myself, representing Joe, and the Ancient and Honorable Artillery Company of Massachusetts, who occupy the top floor of Faneuil Hall. You should go up there sometime. It's a good space. You've probably seen it. And anyway, there were very, very—obviously John Burchill and the other National Park Service people that have a great interest in Faneuil Hall and the Old State House, and the

⁴ Molly Hurley was Congressman Moakley's district office secretary from 1977 to 2001. OH-046 in the Moakley Oral History Project is an interview with Ms. Hurley.

⁵ Incorporated in 1958, the Freedom Trail is a two-and-a-half-mile path, marked by a painted red line, that connects sixteen of Boston's most significant historic sites, including the Old State House, Faneuil Hall and the Old South Meeting House. It experienced a major revitalization after 1974, when seven of its sites were incorporated into the Boston National Historical Park, making them eligible to receive federal funds.

construction needs, the preservation needs of both of those buildings, were presented simultaneously. It was very clear that the brickwork was in dire need of upgrading and that actually some of the underpinnings of the building, in both cases, were dangerously in need of repair. The window casings were in very bad shape at the time. So the total need was documented and an earmark to the National Park Service budget was obtained by Congressman Moakley, and others of course; he never did anything alone.

But he was very proud of those two particular projects, because they were obviously highlights in terms of historic structures and historic preservation. Both of those projects went almost simultaneously to bring them to the condition they're at today. I think the Old State House project also included some funding for the National Park Service Visitor Center that's there, so that was all kind of done at the same time. And then the gold leafing and all of those wonderful additions—restorations is the right word—for the Old State House.

So Joe worked on that. He also worked on—I'm kind of going in chronological order I think—he also worked on funding for the Old South [Meeting House] and again, working with principally with the park service—but I think the Old South [Meeting House] has a group, maybe through the city too, but it's a separate group that kind of oversees it—and federal funds were obtained again through the Congressman's lobbying efforts to renovate that structure completely and successfully. Do you know where that is? It's right down the street.

MULLER: Yup.

CLARK: He also got funding for the African Meeting House, and I didn't have much to do with that one, that was another National Park Service priority. Jim Woodard,⁶ Joe Moakley's assistant district director, was a little more involved in that one. But that was done around the same time as Old South. And then the last one I think he did was funding for Dorchester Heights in South Boston, and that's the last one I remember him getting funds for. I think shortly after that they [the Democratic party] lost control of the Congress; the House shifted parties. So I think that was the last one. I may have missed one in there, but I'm not recollecting.

⁶ James Woodard was Congressman Moakley's assistant district director from 1973 to 2001.

MULLER: What about the [USS] *Constitution* at Charlestown?

CLARK: There may have been some general funds for the [Charlestown] Navy Yard, but I'm not remembering. That was not his district, so no funds to the *Constitution*. There may have been something there for the Commandant's House. I'm sure he supported it. He wouldn't have called it his own though, because that—at the time, that was somebody else's district, still is to this day.

So the only other thing I'd say on that is, it's remarkable that he was able to get funds along those lines because Boston had always been the odd man out in terms of congressional funding for park service projects because we were competing with Yellowstone, competing with some of the largest parks in the country and with powerful delegations in their own right. So almost single-handedly on the House side, and obviously in combination with Senator Kennedy⁷ on the Senate side, they were able to almost wrest away funds. It's hard to say they added funds to it, but in this case, they probably wrested it away because of the dire need for historic preservation, the seed of liberty in this country. So Joe was always very proud of that. I think we had put a figure, a total figure on the historic renovations projects in some of our campaign material of fifty million dollars, total.

MULLER: That's impressive.

CLARK: I think that's the number we had utilized during some of the campaigns that we did, as was one of the things he was proudest of.

MULLER: Do you know anything about the Historic Preservation Tax Incentives Act?⁸ I've

⁷ Edward Moore "Ted" Kennedy (1932-), a Democrat, has represented Massachusetts in the United States Senate since 1961.

⁸ The Federal Historic Preservation Tax Incentives program has been administered by the National Park Service and the Internal Revenue Service since 1976, when the Tax Reform Act of 1976 established a tax incentive for the preservation of historic buildings. The current tax incentives for historic preservation were established in the Tax Reform Act of 1986 (see the Historic Preservation Tax Incentives page on the National Park Service website at <http://www.nps.gov/hps/tps/tax/brochure1.htm>). Congressman Moakley co-sponsored the Historic Homeownership Assistance Act, the purpose of which was, "To amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to provide a credit against income tax to individuals who rehabilitate historic homes or who are the first purchasers of rehabilitated historic

been doing a little bit of research on it, and it's somewhat related, but I'm not really sure if that was really a big thing that he was involved in.

CLARK: I don't remember him—I'm sure he wrote a letter on it. It probably was—I'm sure he would've supported that, but that would've been a D.C.-focused kind of thing. I couldn't tell you if he was on that or not. Depending upon the year, John Weinfurter,⁹ Kevin Ryan,¹⁰ chiefs of staff, they'd take your phone call, either one of them, and they could answer that question for you. I don't remember him pushing it back up in the district, anyway.

MULLER: Did he ever talk about any specific reasons for being involved in these things or was it just in general, he likes the city and wants to—?

CLARK: No, I think he felt there was an economic reason to support historic preservation because there's a sense that tourists that come to this city, come here for the history of the city. The Freedom Trail is very important in taking them around, and I think his sense was that it would boost tourism, and by boosting tourism, you're lifting the economy of the region. So I think that was really—I think that was his principle motivator, as it was in many other instances. The common denominator of almost everything he did, in terms of funding for different projects in Boston, Massachusetts, the common denominator was jobs. No matter what the project was, if it translated to jobs, he was all over it.

The other thing I wanted to point out on historic preservation, he didn't just work on historic preservation in Boston. He helped with historic landmark status for different projects around the district too, and one of them which comes to mind is in Easton, there's a Frederick Law Olmstead rockery there, and also some [Frank] Lloyd Wright buildings that he helped get designation as historic places; they put them on the [National] Register of Historic Places. There's no real funding attached to these types of things, but he would help wherever he could elsewhere in the district as well.

homes for use as a principal residence" (see text of H.R. 1662). The act has been reintroduced several times since 1986, but has not been passed.

⁹ John Weinfurter was a member of Congressman Moakley's Washington staff from 1981 to 1996.

¹⁰ Kevin Ryan was Congressman Moakley's Washington chief of staff from 1997 to 2000.

MULLER: What about the centennial communities? I found a few press releases about him saying, “Canton is a centennial city,” or whatever. Is that something that he worked on too? I’m not really sure how that works.

CLARK: Honestly, I’m not sure what benefits accrued, except there may have been just a designation or some kind of honor, national honor for the hundred-year anniversaries of those communities. But I’m not really remembering anything along those lines, so that may have been before my time.

MULLER: Yeah. Did any of his constituents ever bring historical preservation issues to him or was it more just the big things?

CLARK: I think individual constituents probably, to the degree they knew about his efforts, were appreciative of it. But in responding to constituents, it was really more the elected officials, the mayor of Boston at the time, or leaders within the community. For example, in South Boston, for Dorchester Heights it would’ve been some of the civic organizations that are very plentiful in South Boston, that he would’ve worked with. I’m trying to think if there was anything for Castle Island that he did. I don’t remember any funding for Castle Island, but there might’ve been something there. But the civic organizations, particularly Dorchester Heights, were really very important motivators. For the other projects that I mentioned, outside of South Boston, it was really more of the elected officials and the park service itself.

MULLER: Do you think Dorchester Heights had sentimental reasons too since it was in South Boston and he was from South Boston?

CLARK: I’m sure that was true, although I don’t ever remember him expressing it—you know, “I used to play up here as a kid” kind of comments or anything. I don’t ever remember him expressing it, but it is a symbol of South Boston; it’s clearly almost a beacon, like a lighthouse type. I remember when they did renovate it, Dorchester Heights hadn’t been lit—I don’t think the building itself had been lit externally for many years—and I had driven with Joe thousands of

times—but I do remember when we would come up Day Boulevard coming off the expressway and you'd look up and you'd see Dorchester Heights, all renovated and lit in the night. He would comment as to the wonder of it, the beauty of it. So he was absolutely very proud of it, and I'm sure anything he could do for his home community of South Boston probably would be a source of great pride for him.

MULLER: I know you already mentioned this a few minutes ago, but about his constituents, do you know of any reaction that they ever gave to his work?

CLARK: Well, I mean he was obviously at the dedications or the rededications of all the buildings and such, but going back to Dorchester Heights—I'm not remembering the exact year, but he was ill, he was very ill the day that Dorchester Heights was rededicated.¹¹ And this was—I don't remember if this was a kidney issue or if it was the beginning of his liver—it was very late in his career though, Dorchester Heights. And it was very well-attended; he had a standing ovation, he spoke and all that. He was just—I remember him being particularly very proud.

MULLER: You mentioned before, the economic reasons and boosting the tourism and everything like that; was that also part of it behind the Harbor Islands? Was that a tourism issue too?

CLARK: In terms of—not in terms of historic preservation, but he originally got involved with the Harbor Islands issue back in the 1960s because they wanted to have the World's Fair in Boston. You know all this?

MULLER: Yeah, I've read about it.

CLARK: Yeah, so I mean—and actually the neighborhood was very opposed to that for a variety of reasons, probably that relate to traffic; I'm not sure. But he's the author of the Harbor

¹¹ Dorchester Heights was rededicated on June 21, 1997, after two years of extensive repairs.

Islands bill that put it into state park status. And then working with Gerry Studds,¹² it seemed to make sense later on—it seemed to make sense to add to its designation and make it a national park, although it's a unique model because it's kind of a quasi-national park. But in this case, it was almost anti-economic because they wanted to put a World's Fair out there that would've developed the islands, and in this case I think he felt that it wouldn't have helped Boston; it probably would've hurt in the long term and the short term and maybe in that case, preservation was the way to go. It was probably more preservation that drove him on that particular issue, especially at the national park level, but also at the national park level, to attract federal resources to the islands which really hadn't gone there. There really hadn't been any federal resources up to that point.

MULLER: Did he—I know he was involved in all these sites that are part of the Boston National Historic Park; do you know when the park itself was founded and if he had any part in the development of that?

CLARK: That was probably before my time, because the Freedom Trail, that concept, was already kind of underway. When I was working on it, the National Park Service was very well established already, so I don't know; I'm not sure when they really took hold. That could have preceded him too, in terms of his—unless it happened during the seventies, but we never referenced it from any of our materials. I don't ever remember him referencing it, so I'm not sure.

MULLER: And you said that you worked with the African Meeting House; I'm a little bit confused about all of the African American things, because there's the Museum of Afro-American history and the Abiel Smith School; are those part of that, do you know? I know that some of them are separate, and some of them are—

CLARK: No, the African American Meeting House, I think is a—there may be the museum attached to it; I've never been there, to be honest with you, so I don't really know. Jim Woodard

¹² Gerry Studds (1937-2006), a Democrat, represented Massachusetts' Tenth Congressional District in the U.S. House of Representatives from 1973 to 1997.

worked on that. But you're right, there may be different components of that one project there. I can't really help you on that one.

MULLER: Okay.

CLARK: But Byron Rushing,¹³ if you're going to talk to Byron Rushing, will have a very good sense of that too.

MULLER: Yeah, I'm hoping to get in contact with him.

CLARK: But if you don't get a clear answer, then Jim Woodard—I'll give you his contact information if you want it.

MULLER: Okay. I'm kind of running out of things to talk about. So we've mentioned all the sites that I have listed. Let's see. I asked you about the Historic Preservation Tax Incentives Act. Was there any other specific legislation that had a more widespread focus? That was getting funding for a major thing?

CLARK: You mean historic preservation-related?

MULLER: Yeah, because I know there's a variety of little HR [House Resolution] this, HR that. I haven't found too much on anything major, so it could be that there wasn't.

CLARK: Yeah, I'm not remembering it, but depending upon when that tax bill went through, I'm sure you could find—but you'd have to go through the Rules Committee¹⁴ to find it—the debate within the Rules Committee on that bill. Every bill had to go through Rules before it got

¹³ OH-062 in the John Joseph Moakley Oral History Project is an interview of Byron Rushing, a member of the Massachusetts State House of Representatives since 1983. In 1970, Mr. Rushing co-founded Boston's Museum of Afro-American History and served as its first director until 1982.

¹⁴ 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.

to the floor, and if it went through Rules, if it was an act of any time after like '76, he would've sat on it and commented on it and had some involvement. If he was the chair at the time—the chair of the Rules Committee at the time, then you'll see a whole bunch more on that in terms of—and if he didn't support and it wasn't a priority of the Speaker at the time, it would've never got out of Rules.

MULLER: Yeah, because the Historic Preservation Tax Incentives Act was—it's not really related to what I'm looking at, but—

CLARK: That's really more for private developers, to preserve like the facades—

MULLER: Yeah, like making condos in a historic building or something like that, which I guess still is relevant, but I'm looking more at the sites in Boston.

Okay, well is there any last comments you want to make or maybe just about his character in general? I mean, I know a lot, but it's good to hear it and get it reinforced because it—

CLARK: He was a very hardworking person and he didn't like to let people down. He didn't like to say no. I know we say that all the time. If somebody came to him with a project, like a John Burchill, he would really—if he felt it benefited the district, there was a jobs component particularly, and if it would enhance the district or the city of Boston in some way, he was all over it. And once he was all over an issue, whether it was in the public limelight or not, he would never let go, never. It's amazing. You don't see that too often. You see a lot of politicians kind of jump around from issue to issue, especially if they're in the media that particular day or whatever, but then as soon as it's not in the media, they lose their interest. He was very different that way because he would grab hold of an issue, and El Salvador is a great example.¹⁵ I know you've heard that story. But there wasn't any kind of positive publicity. Nobody was really paying attention to it. There wasn't any reason for the normal, self-absorbed, advancing-to-the-

¹⁵ In December of 1989, Speaker of the House Thomas S. Foley appointed Moakley as chairman of a committee to investigate violence in El Salvador, specifically the November 16, 1989, murder of six Jesuit priests, their housekeeper and her daughter at the University of Central America in San Salvador. The committee is commonly referred to as the Speaker's Task Force on El Salvador or the Moakley Commission.

next-level politician to stay with it. But he's the anti of that type of politician, and he wouldn't let go until he won. It was remarkable.

And not just on the big projects, like the Big Dig or funding for historic preservation, but it was on the little small issues, and when I say little small, I'm talking about Mrs. O'Malley's social security check or whatever. If he was on it—and these people would call him at his house, and he would return the call. If you called him at his house, he'd take the information down and he'd come into the office the next day and he'd give it to me and we'd work on it on the staff level, and generally, he'd keep some kind of a mental checklist of all the things he gave us to do and he'd call us in the morning, "Fred, how you doing with Mrs. O'Malley?" And he'd go right down the checklist. "Put me on to Molly. Molly, how are you doing with—?" And he wasn't referring to notes; it was just a mental checklist, "Woody! Get Woody on the phone." And he'd go through every staff person, everything they were working on that he had given them to work on, and he wouldn't let go until it was done.

That's why he was so, I think, beloved, I think is the term, and why so many people came out to say goodbye to him at the end. (cell phone rings) They were happy to do it because he had done something almost on an individual basis for them, never looking for anything in return, and he never did. I find him remarkable from that perspective. It shouldn't probably be remarkable because we all think that's what all elected officials should be, but at the same time, when you're in politics, you see the wrong people in office and then you see some of the right people, and in his case, he was the best of the bunch. I'm saying that as objectively as I can. I could've left there a thousand times. I had my law degree. Congressional staff didn't make a lot of money. But he was very, very special and it was just a great honor to be with him. How's that?

MULLER: That's good. I think we're all set.

CLARK: If you have any other questions, don't hesitate to call me, and I can pick up any—if there's something else. I think that everything we ever did on historic preservation should be in the archives some place, particularly in the Washington files in terms of the appropriation requests, (cell phone beeps) but while the thing is running there—the tape is running—

appropriation requests, the way that works—you're not going to find a big, long paper trail on it because if there was funding for Faneuil Hall, the way that works is, the Democrats are in charge of the House at the time; Joe Moakley's probably the chair of the Rules Committee, or he's the number two person on Rules. If he has an appropriations request, he's going to send a letter to the Appropriations Committee. There's an Appropriations Committee, but then there'll be a sub-committee, and a sub-committee on interior, I think was the sub-committee. And he would send a letter to, I think it was Sidney Yates,¹⁶ at the time; he's send a letter to Sidney Yates—that's his official, "Sidney, here are my priorities for my district, and whatever you can do." Well, that's all you're ever going to see in writing, and the rest of it is, Sidney's on the floor of the House, Joe's on the floor of the House, "Sidney, I really need that money for Faneuil Hall. What can you do for me?" "Joe, I can do that, but I need something for this bill that's coming before the Rules Committee."

There was a lot of horse trading. That's the way it is today. And because of his position on Rules, committee chairs, sub-committee chairs wanted to do Joe Moakley a favor; it really benefited the district, really. That's the part you'll never see in the *Congressional Record*, or in anybody's file, but that's how things moved up on the priority list, and that's just how—the way the world works. You could use it for good reason like historic preservation, or you could use it for questionable earmarks that people wonder, Why did they ever fund that? But in Joe's case, I can't think of anything that was ever funded that we didn't think was a good project, but anyway.

Sidney Yates, I don't know if he's still alive. I don't think he's in Congress anymore. There's another good person to talk to, if you ever can track him down. He's the person that got all the calls from Joe. (laughs)

MULLER: You probably don't know anything about this, but do you know if there were any congressmen at the time, in other states, doing the same kind of thing he was doing?

CLARK: I'm sure. You'd have to think some of the people from Philadelphia were trying to get

¹⁶ Sidney Richard Yates (1909-2000), a Democrat, represented Illinois's Ninth Congressional District in the U.S. House of Representatives from 1949 to 1963 and from 1965 to 1999. He served as chair of the House

some funds for Independence Hall down there. I can't think of too much up in New Hampshire or Maine or any of the New England states that really come to mind for historic preservation reasons, but I'm sure they all were, especially if they saw that funds were being earmarked for that purpose. They pay very close attention to those things; and it's still the case today, but nobody else really comes to mind.

MULLER: Yeah, I figured, but I figured I'd ask anyway.

CLARK: In other parts of Massachusetts, by the way, you'd probably find some other examples of this. You know who would be a good person to talk to, if you want to keep going with this, is Barbara Siliotis. Barbara Siliotis—I think it's S-I-L-I-O-T-I-S—she's the state director for Ted Kennedy's office. She's been there forever. She'd be a good person to talk to. She was there during all those years, and she could give you the senator's perspective on how they worked together on historic preservation. She may be able to give you some ideas for other parts of the state too. Okay, more than you needed?

MULLER: I think I got some good stuff, so thank you very much.

CLARK: Oh, you're welcome.

END OF INTERVIEW