

RECORDED INTERVIEW OF BARBARA MEE  
ORAL HISTORY 2014-19 PART 2  
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TED STEVENS PAPERS PROJECT JUKEBOX

KAREN BREWSTER: Okay. I had a question on the military things you were talking about. Were you asked by Senator Stevens to go to all these events and represent him and his office or you wanted -- you went on your own?

BARBARA MEE: Yeah, I think it was kind of assumed that I would do -- I mean the senator would be invited to functions and so you would always ask the, you know, whoever did the inviting he can't be here, do you want a representative? Well, nine times out of ten they did. So if they did, it was me. And the reason it was me and I always love to explain that one because everybody said, well, you know, Barb always got the fun stuff. Barb paid for it out of her own pocket because there wasn't a fund for it. So if I went to dinner or lunch or breakfast, it was out of my pocket. But I didn't mind. My kids had grown up then and, you know, I just -- I am not saying I didn't need the money, but I wanted to be there, you know, whether it was Commonwealth North or the Chamber. And I always felt that if I were there and they said anything, you can bet your bottom dollar they knew it was going to get back to Senator Stevens whether they wanted it to or not. I mean it was, you know, cause I would always -- I would always go back to the office and type up a report, you know. I was just here and so and so said such and such. And it is important I think that all the delegation have representatives at these events. And like I said I did it number one cause I wanted to and because I could afford it and the other kids in the office really couldn't and so I got the fun.

KAREN BREWSTER: And what was Senator Stevens' connections with the military and the issues he worked on for them?

BARBARA MEE: Well, of course, he was on military appropriations for many years and I am sorry I don't have all those figures in my head, but, you know, he was on Appropriations Committee and he and Senator Byrd, you know, went back and forth. One would be chairman and when the Democrats were in and one would be chairman when the Republicans were in. And then on Defense Appropriations Subcommittee Stevens and Inouye changed the hat and they, of course, as you know, they considered each other brother. So I mean if the Dems were in it was Inouye. If the Republicans were in, it was Stevens. But, you know, he was -- he was dealing with the military on a real high level and getting them, you know, getting the equipment they needed and it was very instrumental. We were telling the story just the other day. The Air Force had decided that they wanted to dissolve itself of the Rescue Unit. You know so many missions and whatever and they were going to divorce themselves from that. Well, the senator wouldn't hear of that and he got the wherewithal so that the unit was then taken over by the National Guard. Stevens was very instrumental in the growth of the Alaska National Guard. Anytime there was, you know, something that they needed that they could help the mission Stevens was there to get it for them and dealt well with all of the governors and with the governor whoever was in charge in power and whoever the AG was. And, you know, the Rescue Unit to this day is, you know, powerful stuff. They are the ones

that, you know, of course brought the senator's body off the mountain after the plane crash so.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right. We have been talking about some of the fun parts of your job and were there challenges that you faced in the job?

BARBARA MEE: Well, I think, you know, back then too being a woman, you know, I think they always thought even back then and I really -- I dislike it to this day when you have to say women for so and so -- women, you know. It ought to be people for, you know. I am kind of a -- I guess I get that from my mother. You know, she -- she never thought of herself as a woman woman and I always figured I was just doing the job. But I think a lot of times it does take a guy to go into a smoke filled room, otherwise, you know, it did in those days anyway.

But and then the challenges, of course, when -- when they had the plane -- when the plane crashed in -- in '78 and Ann was killed. That was, you know, that was devastating. Ann was very young and, you know, Susan was going to get married that year and that was a real challenge, you know. It just -- the senator just, like I said, you know, he talked about how you couldn't, you know, you got boxes and your memory, you know, shuts this off or it shuts that off and capsulizes it and so that you won't think about this for a while and you move onto something else. And I guess it is really true because, you know, he bounced back from that crash. He and Tony Motley, of course, survived that crash. And Tony Motley went on to become Ambassador to Portugal. But Tony Motley was -- when I first met Tony Motley, he was the aide-de-camp to General Brightweizer (phonetic) here at Elmendorf and that was my first connection with the military -- Tony Motley, aide-e-damp. I mean he did for the general what I was doing for the senator. But anyway that plane crash and the senator at the time was -- I don't know if you actually say he was running for, but, you know, to be the senator pro tem or whatever it was in DC. And so he wanted the DC bunch to know he was still functioning, but I tell the story that Edie Opinski and I had gone out to the hospital that night of the plane crash. And, of course, it happened like at 4:30 in the afternoon and I'd seen enough TV that I really thought that they probably had all been killed, but that they wouldn't release any information until all the family had been notified. So I really thought maybe, you know, that the senator hadn't made it. But he did and they did let us know, of course, that Ann had perished. And so Gloria and Edie and I called the children to let them know what had happened. And then Edie and I -- Edie came home and stayed with me and then that morning we went out to Providence and he -- he called cause he wanted us out there. Like 7:30 in the morning, you know, cause he had to dictate all these letters. And I thought, my God, my God, you know, what's happening? But it was, you know, like he said, you know, we'll think about that later, you know, got to do this now. And, of course, Joe Rudd was killed in that crash and his wife, you know. It was just devastating. It was devastating.

So those kind of challenges, but -- and I don't know if that is the kind of challenges you meant, but --

KAREN BREWSTER: Whatever -- however you want to interpret it.

BARBARA MEE: Yeah.

KAREN BREWSTER: But it does lead to the -- it sounds very much like it wasn't just a job.

BARBARA MEE: Oh, no.

KAREN BREWSTER: You and Senator Stevens and Ann and then probably Catherine, you were family and friends. It wasn't just a job.

BARBARA MEE: Well, that is it. I -- in fact, I told the story at our -- at my retirement. I had a great retirement. Boy, they just really put on the dog for old Barb. But I did say that and it is true. I was with Senator Stevens longer than I was with three husbands -- when you, you know, at the time when you add it all up. You know, people say you have been married 50 years, well, I was with Stevens for 35 and a half years and I had never been with anybody else that long. And he admitted -- he said the same thing that outside of his family that he had probably spent more time with me. When you think about that, 35 years that you are spending with someone and it wasn't money and it wasn't prestige. It wasn't anything.

It was, like I said, he -- all he ever wanted to be was a US senator and my golly, he was, you know. He was the best that there was and I was telling the story the other day about when Ann and some senate wives were in California and they were riding up the elevator at this function and the movie star Rory Calhoun got on the elevator and all these senate wives just twittered, you know. They were more excited about a movie star than they were their own husbands who have all this power. And I don't know that we ever really realized how much power Stevens had.

Well, I mean we knew it, but, you know, when they had his memorial service at the Kennedy Center, after burial at Arlington, and that went on for almost two hours I think it was. And there wasn't anything repeated of all of Stevens' accomplishments, but it was all outside of Alaska stuff, you know. And Alaskans get very possessive, you know, they want their guys to do this and, you know, don't think about that. All these people whether it was, you know, and my husband loves to talk about Title 9 because he is the father of four girls. You know, I didn't look at Title 9 as being all that big of deal, but it was and Olympians like, you know, Donna de Varona stood up and talked about Stevens and the Olympics and, you know, what he had done for them. And, of course, the guy that opened the ceremony at the Kennedy Center said, you know, the Kennedy Center, of course, was named for Ted Kennedy, but when they needed money, they went to Ted Stevens because, you know, he al -- you know, he had the money and, you know, the Appropriations Committee. The powerful committee and it funds a lot of things. The National Endowment for the Arts and, of course, you know, Catherine was very big in that and, yeah, it is a powerful thing.

KAREN BREWSTER: So you being here in Anchorage running his office and his life so to speak, you were sort of the equivalent to Delyn (phonetic) the time she was working she was doing that for him in DC and you were doing it for him --

BARBARA MEE: Exactly.

KAREN BREWSTER: In Anchorage?

BARBARA MEE: Exactly. The first Delyn was Cecelia Neeme (phonetic) and Cecelia had worked for Gruening when he was senator and we call her Cees worked for the senator for quite a few years and then he got another little private secretary named Kathy Brown, a little girl from Wyoming and then I think Delyn came after that. But then he also had Kathy Brightenbough (phonetic). She is in Anchorage now, but she was his scheduler in DC and scheduling is a big deal. I mean it was tough -- a lot of work in Anchorage. You can imagine what it was like in Washington. I mean when they are there full time and you

got high rollers wanting to see the boss and, you know, sometimes I am sure that they had to fly by the seat of their pants figuring out how they are going to work all that in, but they always managed to do it. I know people would say they would go in to see the senator and they couldn't believe it, you know. He would, you know, he always had something in his mouth and he was signing mail and doing this and watching TV and said go on, go on, but he would do it. It could multitask. He didn't need to have -- you didn't to have his full attention. He heard everything that you were saying.

KAREN BREWSTER: But I should say it was Delyn Henry.

BARBARA MEE: Yes.

KAREN BREWSTER: I didn't use her last name.

BARBARA MEE: Right, yeah.

KAREN BREWSTER: For people who might not know.

BARBARA MEE: And Delyn was with -- Delyn Henry was with the senator, you know, to the end.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

BARBARA MEE: She was still working for him.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

BARBARA MEE: And I think she might still be doing some stuff for the Foundation. I am not sure, but.

KAREN BREWSTER: When Senator Stevens came to Alaska, he often went to rural communities. Did you join him on any of those trips?

BARBARA MEE: The only trip I remember taking was up to Wainwright and it was -- that was actually an election -- an election year and that is why I got to go. I mean if -- if he was going out in the bush, he really needed staffers that did bush issues, you know, whether it was health issues or sewage and water and, you know public works issues and things like that. So I didn't do that much bush travel, but the one trip that we took to Wainwright was -- it was wonderful. It was absolutely great. We visited -- we actually stayed with Mattie and Waldo Bobfish and Mattie was probably was probably my height, probably five foot, but she was also about five foot wide. And she was baking bread and she bent over without bending her knees and touched the oven and the senator said they are just built that way, Barbara. That was so funny. And Waldo was out in the yard lifting up -- he was six foot two and he lifted up this snowmachine and worked on it with the other hand, powerful man. Just, you know, and it just -- people really should go out to rural Alaska to see what it is like. I mean to see what it is truly like out there and, of course, Oliver Levitt and the people up in Barrow. Ann was a great person to go out there. They would take her whaling and there was great pictures of Ann whaling and she had a great time. She just -- she loved that and they loved her.

KAREN BREWSTER: Well, he -- Senator Stevens was very popular in rural Alaska --

BARBARA MEE: Yes.

KAREN BREWSTER: For sure.

BARBARA MEE: Well, I think a lot of it too is that, you know, like we talked earlier about the communications and the health issues and, you know, he just knew that -- that -- a lot of us look at it, oh, it costs so much money, you know. And I think the boss always knew you had to -- you had to just make an effort to try to make life livable for people out there, so.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah.

BARBARA MEE: He did love it.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah. We had been talking before about constituents and interacting with them and you mentioned press releases. So I wanted to ask about the press and dealing with the media and how the press covered Senator Stevens and his issues and did that change over time?

BARBARA MEE: I don't know that it did. I -- and, you know, you really have to interview the press people. Press people are different and I don't mean any -- any disparaging remarks on anybody, but we -- we busted, you know, our tail to get the senator around to as many media outlets as possible. We would have press conferences and everybody would sit around the table and he was always open. There was no closed things. Anytime you wanted to ask question or whatever and he was available for it. The papers used to have things that they would call editorial board meetings and so on and they would invite him out and literally spend a couple of hours -- of hours in that day he was in Anchorage is a lot of time you can understand that and he would do it and he would sit there. And then the next couple of days nothing in the paper and you would wonder why did we do that? Why did we take the time to do that? But, you know, press people will tell you well you got to do that because, you know, because they are the press and they will either write about you or they won't. Well, but if they are not going to write about you, why do you want to take that time? But that is a non-press person's, you know, outlook on it. But he was always available for the press and I don't think that they -- well, you know, after all the tragedy started too, they were so quick to just, you know, print stuff just that really wasn't true. None of it had been substantiated and every time they would bring it up we always laugh about -- nothing to laugh about, we don't like it, you know. Like if an Air Force person gets in trouble they say so and so was from the Air Force instead of just saying John Jones. So every time something happened they would dredge up the whole Stevens thing again and I think they still do that. And my skin is a little thin on that issue. The senator, as you know, said there is no rearview mirrors in his life. Well, there are in mine and I am getting old and I can feel that way I think.

KAREN BREWSTER: Well and you have your right -- right to your own opinion.

BARBARA MEE: There we go. There we go.

KAREN BREWSTER: You said you and the senator didn't always agree on things.

BARBARA MEE: That is right. I always said you don't -- we may never always agree. You may not always be right, but you are always boss.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah, I am sure you may have had some moments where sparks flew between the two of you.

BARBARA MEE: Yeah, we did. We did, but he was never -- he was never mean. He was never vindictive. And when you ask why would you work for someone, you know, that long? Cause he wasn't vindictive. We went through some times, you know, labor -- labor is a funny animal and I got a lot of labor friends and I have a Teamster pension myself so I am not saying anything against them, but the senator would just -- and the senator was really a blue collar worker even though he was a lawyer. I mean he really fought for the working guy and in the early days you would come home and you would try to get labor's vote and they had the big labor convention in September, you know. And Stevens would come back and just, you know, bust his tail trying to, you know, be there and

answer any questions and so on, but they would always endorse the Democrat and never the Republican. And so he came back to the office -- the senator was infamous, you know, for his handwritten notes and he thanked everybody and wrote everybody letters and so on. So he dictated this letter to the head of the labor organization. I won't bother to say his name. I think it is in the book, but anyway he said, you know, I think I did up the letter, you know. It was nice seeing you at the blah, blah, blah and he took the letter and he wrote at the bottom x's and also sorts of marks and just said file this away. He didn't want to -- he didn't want to admit to the guy that -- how mad he was that he didn't get the vote and yet -- that was, you know, that happened a couple of years and then, of course, even labor came around and realized what Stevens was doing that, you know, that he deserved the vote so. But yeah, we had a lot of fun times like that.

KAREN BREWSTER: Because you guys were such good friends I am wondering if you have any special story or special memory that you would like to share that people might not know about him?

BARBARA MEE: I think Stevens' life was pretty much an open book. Like I said, I do and I have written the book and I mentioned it in the book, but I -- when he lost that election in '68, I think he really thought that he was going to beat Elmer -- Elmer Rasmuson and when he didn't, he was really devastated. And I know we were cleaning out the hotel, you know, it had the big hoop-la down there and we were cleaning all the stuff out of the room and stuff and I can remember him sitting in that chair and he was so dejected. He said all I ever wanted to be was a US Senator. And, you know, like I said, I was in my twenties. I didn't realize what a US Senator was and how important it was, but can you imagine that he always wanted to be one. And he had been defeated twice and for him to be so dejected and, of course, you know, I just thought he was a star, why -- how could people not vote for him. And, you know, that is what I said, I am quick to anger a lot about things, but he really did want that. So, like I said, when he -- when he got -- he and Ann then, you know, had left and they went to -- I think it was Puerto Rico for a little pre-Christmas vacation. And when he got the call from Wally Hickel about, you know, being named to -- it must have been the happiest day of his life, just must have been. He deserved it.

KAREN BREWSTER: Why I say you have been a very devoted friend and employee to him for sure. I can tell it is very important to you.

BARBARA MEE: Well, it is and it is so important that we can see what you are doing up here. We were here a couple of years ago and saw Elsie and when we walked into that room and there was one of the note cards there and he had written a p.s. on it or something and he did the famous exclamation points, you know, in that big fat pen and I said my gosh he is here. He is here.

KAREN BREWSTER: I think it is very neat how you focus on that he always wrote letters.

BARBARA MEE: Oh, I have saved a lot of cards and, you know, I am sure -- my grandson says, who is now what thirty so, he said, now you don't have to save that stuff grandma like he didn't want it. Well, I will tell you what they can burn it up with me when they cremate me, but I probably have more note cards than you can shake a stick at. He, yeah, I got one that he and Ann had sent from their trip to China and the mail was delayed, of course, coming from China and I got that after she died in the plane crash, you know, hello, that is pretty tough. I got one that, you know, when he had the plane crash and left

the state and he was going to take the kids and they were all going to go on vacation. And, you know, he and I, you know, our nerves were really raw when Ann was killed. And I think we probably had sharp words or something and he wrote a note and said, you know, we'll get over this, yeah. Sorry about that.

KAREN BREWSTER: That is okay, no, it shows how important that he was to you.

BARBARA MEE: Yeah.

KAREN BREWSTER: You had mentioned that he wasn't mean or vindictive and I wanted to follow-up with that. In the public persona, his hulk (inaudible) that he has -- he had that reputation of having a temper. Can you talk about that?

BARBARA MEE: Well and, of course, that was mainly in Washington, you know, I mean on the floor of the senate and so on and, of course, you know, he met -- he met the hulk personally too which I think -- must have been a great story. It is not one I know. But I think -- I think he just had to show that temper some time. I felt bad when he had to show it because I don't think that it wasn't the true Stevens. We laugh about it a lot when the senator would -- we can still picture him standing in front of his desk and saying they just don't understand. And you can imagine when his mind is thinking, you know, a million miles an hour that he can't explain things to people. And the Railroad Act was a prime example. I mean they literally walked the bill from the house over to the senate and down the well and that is kind of legislator he was. I mean he just, you know, old expression balls to the wall. He really was and they accomplished so much, but he had to lose his temper a lot I think to get people to listen.

Senator Murkowski is such a neat gal and I just love her, but I don't think there is anybody back there that is doing that. The pounding the table and saying, look, we are Alaska. We have got oil and gas and resources and, you know, take care of our people. And, you know, they are all so worried about -- and I am very conservative, you know, in my old age, very conservative. And I know a lot of people well, we can't be spending money, you know. We got to save money. Well, we do, but we also, you know, Alaska is such a new state and that was -- that was his hardest thing was infrastructure. We know we didn't have -- we didn't have a highway system, you know. And that is why we got the ferry system, you know, to come under the highway system. Things like that that we were lacking and I think he just had to pretend to lose his temper.

KAREN BREWSTER: So he never --

BARBARA MEE: Oh, I bet he walked off that floor so many times and just said that ought to get them, you know. He did that to me a lot of times, you know, by God, that ought to, you know, hold them for a while, you know.

KAREN BREWSTER: He wasn't that way with his staff?

BARBARA MEE: Oh, God, no. Oh, no, no, no. We laugh about that. There was one of our staffers -- I think I mention him in the book when somebody would say well, how did you know when it was time to quit? In fact, you just asked me a little bit ago and the staffer said, when I had the uncontrollable urge to reach across the desk and strangle his neck. He could be very frustrating, you know, like, you know, I love Sean O'Keefe. He is one of my favorite staff people and he said, you know, he said the chief would have us down there frying fish and doing whatever, you know, cause that is what Ted had us all doing. I mean we were mowing lawns and, you know, we just did stuff like that. You can't do it now because then you are breaking the law. But, you know, so people would get a little

perturbed probably, you know. He is asking us to do too much, but somebody had to do it, you know. I -- I think we had some great staff people and I don't think anybody -- I don't think anybody left under bad circumstances or had a heart attack.

I also tell the story. I was making a trip to DC and this one young staffer -- I hadn't met him and I came up and said, hi, I'm Barb and he said, hi, I'm Phil, I'm fired. Well, I don't know that he was fired, but he had been let go because he wasn't quite doing the job like he should have been doing, but I don't -- and if anybody did leave, I think they probably blamed some other staff person, but never Ted -- but never the senator.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah, I was wondering about there were some of you who worked for him for so very long, but there must have been lots of other people who were short termers --

BARBARA MEE: Oh --

KAREN BREWSTER: And what the difference was? Why somebody would last and somebody else might not?

BARBARA MEE: The senator was very good about getting guys in and out. I mean, you know, he really insisted the fact that everybody go to law school and I appreciate that. Lawyers talk differently. They think differently and I think it was easier for senator if he had people that thought like he did. You know, Bill Phillips, Greg Chapados, Andrew Lundquist. He encouraged all those guys and gals to go to school and get their law degree. And, you know, and they did it at my retirement. They did a spoof on me that I never liked these young men. Well, that is not true and he knew it, but they had fun making fun of me about it. I always thought that they didn't work as hard as they could have and there again is cause I micromanage. And the senator always said Barbara, I can't afford to pay them what they are worth. This legal mind again. I can't, you know, and so if they can -- if they can take advantage of anything by being here in my office or whatever, I want them to do so. See, how he was? And, you know, all of them went on to be really either good lawyers or good lobbyists or what have you. The gals too -- some didn't go to law school, but the senator -- keep in mind, the senator came from the era where the man should make more money than the woman because she is just like kind of like doing it for fun, you know. And that got -- that got turned around pretty quick because he had some really high-powered gals and a couple of them became AA's which is, you know, chief of staff. It is the highest position back there. So I mean, you know, like I said, he -- I think Catherine called him a chauvinist -- the chauvinist pig, you know. They bought him the tie the chauvinist pig. And I -- like I said, I never really worried about that so much because I figured I, like I said, maybe it was a family thing or whatever, but I never really felt put upon cause I always knew, you know, that I could stand up on my feet too and say, you know, this isn't working out. I just -- I just had a good time. I felt I was where I was supposed to be.

KAREN BREWSTER: Well, it sounds like he definitely relied on you when he was in Anchorage. He needed you so that --

BARBARA MEE: I think so.

KAREN BREWSTER: Would be important?

BARBARA MEE: I think so. And, you know when you are needed and you know when you are appreciated, let's put it that way. And, like I said, if you didn't -- if there might have been fireworks or something, here would come that little yellow note, you know, little manila

note, you know. Thanks for a great trip or, you know, I know it was rough, but, you know, got to hang in this together and yeah, you know, things like that mean an awful lot.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah. As you said you know you stayed with him for so long for your own reasons, but you must have been doing a good job because he never fired you?

BARBARA MEE: It is very true and I hoard stuff, you know, even after I wrote the book I have got files and copies of letters and stuff and people, you know, they would send the letter to the boss, the senator, and thank him for having medias and, you know, that I had done a good job for him and I -- I know that I am feisty too. I learned that from my mother. I can remember back in the early days, you know, I had somebody who was having a hard time getting their patent -- their homestead patent, and the senator really wanted to help them because he was very sick and in the hospital. So I called up the BLM and I said, yeah, I used to type up a lot of stuff, you know, deeds and deed of trust packages and so on. Could I come up and help him maybe type that up and get -- well, we got it. We got it that next day and I think the guy got it before he died of cancer, but it was things like that, you know, and that same BLM guy, you know, send a letter to the senator saying thank you, God, you got Barb there.

KAREN BREWSTER: Well, just meeting you today and talking to you I can feel that you would be very effective at picking up the phone and getting something done.

BARBARA MEE: Well, we always try and we talk about it in the military too you never call somebody and say the general wants this or the senator wants this, you know, you just don't do that, but if you call and you say, you know, I was talking to the boss and, you know, he asked could you maybe think about doing this. Never be -- never be pushy or presumptive, but just, you know, say is there a chance -- what are the chances are, you know, could we do this? And, you know, you'd get it done because number one, they didn't want to disappoint the senator. I remember one time I had one of the ALCOM generals call. They were having some hearings back in DC and the general called me and he said, Barbara, the senator is not asking the right questions. You got to tell him to ask this. He said that is where it was effective for me to be there because he didn't want to call Stevens in DC and say that, but he knew he could call Barb and that Barb would make sure that the word got there and I did and it was effective, you know. Things like that.

KAREN BREWSTER: Very much so. An important role for sure.

BARBARA MEE: It was fun. It was fun.

KAREN BREWSTER: I have a quick question about the office structure in Alaska because you at the Anchorage office, but at what point did you open the other offices? You had one in Fairbanks and where else?

BARBARA MEE: We had one in Fairbanks and Kenai and Ketchikan. I think that is -- we had one in Kodiak for a while. Fran Ionne (phonetic) was our gal in Kodiak and, of course, you know when the Valdez oil spill. Oh, my goodness, the gal in Kenai and I am trying to think if that is when Becky Halberg (phonetic) was down there. I think she might have been, you know, remember the Valdez oil spill and the faxes were just humming. You would come in in the morning and there would just be reams of paper that people had all these ideas on how to clean up the oil spill. But, yeah, those offices grew then, but mainly in Fairbanks they had Mike Felton (phonetic) here for a while. He had Wally Burnett's mother who was the mayor of Fairbanks for a while.

KAREN BREWSTER: Ruth.

BARBARA MEE: Yeah, Ruth -- Ruth Burnett.

MARY ANNE HAMBLÉN: Did you have a Juneau office?

BARBARA MEE: And a Juneau office, right. That was one of the first ones that we had, yeah, Mary -- Mary Jo and Don Dickey's wife Jan. Goodness gracious. Kind of tax my memory here a bit.

KAREN BREWSTER: So what was the relationship between those offices? Were you the lead and were you independent or?

BARBARA MEE: Kind of -- kind of independent, but it was really helpful if Stevens was going to go down to any or, you know, to those areas then you could work with them and say, you know, meet him at the airport and, you know, remind him of the things that had to be done. And, of course, he went to Juneau, you know, several times because of meeting with the legislature and so on. But they mainly operated independent. You know, we would probably make a visit to them out of Anchorage every now and then, but they knew their area. You didn't have to tell them what to do and they were good about getting the information to DC when it was needed to. And, of course, as the communications improved, you know, it was a lot easier.

KAREN BREWSTER: Well, I was wondering about when they started. So '69 you started the office in Anchorage.

BARBARA MEE: Right.

KAREN BREWSTER: When did what -- was Fairbanks the next?

BARBARA MEE: Fairbanks -- well, Juneau probably would have been the second and then Fairbanks, so those were the three main offices and then we got Ketchikan and then Kenai and then Kodiak for a while. I don't know that Kodiak stayed all that long so we had --

KAREN BREWSTER: So those were the early days. How did you communicate with those offices?

BARBARA MEE: Mainly by phone and fax.

KAREN BREWSTER: Uh-huh.

BARBARA MEE: Fax was terrible, oh.

KAREN BREWSTER: You had fax? When did we first get faxes?

BARBARA MEE: Well, I am trying to think. On the Nixon trip that we talked about earlier. This was so funny it was just almost sad. When the president's visit, they have an advance team, of course, that comes up and so Nixon's advance team came up and they are sitting in our office in the old Federal Building which is the old Federal Building, 4<sup>th</sup> and G. And these young Turks from Nixon's office, you know, and our fax was just -- it was terrible. I mean, you know, it would just be scratchy and you know just all crappy looking stuff, you know. But on top of that the phone system between Anchorage and Elmendorf, which is only about what six miles apart, you'd call out there and sometimes it would ring and sometimes it wouldn't. And Edie Opinski, the sweet little gal that told the senator we are just doing our best to make you look good, she looked at this guy from DC and she said, you've got to dial real slow. This is the rotary phones. You got to dial real -- he looked at us and I am sure he is thinking we are bringing the President of the United States up here, but it all worked out. That is why I say, you know, when you think about it. I gave a speech once in the early 80's I think it was to the Secretary's Association in

Anchorage and they couldn't believe how the communications had, you know, I mean from the days of everything by shorthand, you know, and the teletype and the telefax and, you know, now we are and tweeting and twisting and tweeting and iPhones and all this stuff, you know. And the computer, when we got a new computer it was in the new Federal Building so it had to be '79 or '80 and we were getting into the computer age and I talked about that. I had the computer here and it wasn't even a PC. It was one of the other ones, you know, and had the modem on the floor and I am trying to reach this and that and I said I knew how Rosemary Woods, you know, erased that 18 minutes of that tape because when you are sprawled out like that, but we transcribed words at 300 bodes and now it goes what thousands -- thousands of bodes a minutes. You know, I mean it is just instant. When I use my computer at home, you know, and going on the Internet. It is just unbelievable. I don't know if it is a good thing or a bad thing.

KAREN BREWSTER: I don't know.

BARBARA MEE: Gives you a chance to think of what you really want t say when you dial real slow. (Laughter).

KAREN BREWSTER: Just sort of in conclusion, what would you say you think are Senator -- were Senator Stevens' biggest accomplishments?

BARBARA MEE: Boy, that --

KAREN BREWSTER: Or his successes?

BARBARA MEE: That is so hard to -- that is so hard for me to say. You know, naturally, you know, the pipeline. I mean when you go back. He did the pipeline, the 200 Mile Limit. You know D2 and Native Land Claims are just -- they were horrendous. The senator on the other side was, of course, on the other side and it was an uphill battle. It was really tough for Stevens to go through the D2 days like that because he didn't have the help he should have. He did with Congressman Young, but not the other senator.

KAREN BREWSTER: You are referring to Senator Gravel?

BARBARA MEE: Yes and the young man who was working the issue back in DC with the senator said Barb, it is like walking down the hall and you never know when he is going to step out with a baseball bat and hit you in the head. We would wake up and even his office, you know, in Anchorage, I would come in on a morning and I would say what, you know, it would be big headlines completely adverse to what Stevens was trying to accomplish and his sweet little secretary or whatever she was called would say I don't know Barb, I don't know. We always called him, you know, the show horse and the work horse, you know and Stevens was just working all the time and the other one was showing, you know, whatever.

KAREN BREWSTER: So that was very frustrating for Senator Stevens?

BARBARA MEE: Oh, terribly frustrating, terribly frustrating and D2 and you talked earlier about the press when that issue was going on and God knows it was so complex. I don't pretend to know legislation, but D2, you know, they were locking us up. I mean and Stevens always said people might have been complaining about the Native Land Claims, but at least we were getting the property -- real estate out of government hands and into Native hands and then D2 was locking it all up again. But so that was, you know, a really important issue and the fisheries, you know, the Magnuson Stevens and there again, that showed how Stevens could reach across the aisle and work with the other side. He worked with Scoop Jackson and Warren Magnuson out of the state of Washington, you

know, and they accomplished these things that were beneficial. You know, remember, well, no, you are too young, but, you know, everything was run out, you know, for Alaska was run out of the state of Washington. So, but -- but Ted got them to work -- Senator Stevens got them to work with us and they accomplished that.

I would imagine communications has got to be one of his biggest things and I hate to think that, you know, that I would even be able to answer a question like that because some of these kids -- staffers worked so hard on so much legislation and like I said, my fluff didn't really deal with that, but when you talk about Title 9, you talk about, you know, the Olympics Committee, if you had a dog in that site you would know that was the important -- most important issue for you. Me, it was just kind of all going, you know, all going. To this day, you know, I can remember the thousands of calls we got on the Panama Canal. I don't even remember which issue -- why they were so mad or why they were, you know, we always said we stole it fair and square. That is how much I know about the Panama Canal. But when you think about communications and public works projects, the -- somebody was going to give the senator I think it was probably the municipal public works department was going to give the senator a plaque or something and they said could you get from DC kind of list of things that Stevens has done on public works? They sent me books that thick -- notebooks all public works stuff, you know. So when you think about that, every little water project out in the bush and that had to be discouraging too, you know. You work so hard to get them going and then something would go wrong and, you know, you would have to start all over again, but, yeah, but communications I would think.

I think military. I really do. I think military was very important to the senator. Billy Mitchell -- Billy Mitchell made the statement he who controls Alaska air space, controls the world and that is it in a nutshell. You have got a great guy up here. In fact, we are going to have dinner with him tonight, Pat Gamble, who is now the university president. But I remember when he was the head of ALCOM down in Anchorage and he said -- made that statement to me that this is the only place in the country where you can train in the numbers that they will have to fight. In other words, whole units can train up here. You know a lot of -- we talk about the blue water admirals. They would rather be in Hawaii then up here. Stevens did try to get Navy up here, but, you know, they didn't want to come -- too cold up there in Alaska. Bob Atwood used to always say that they thought they were going to fall off the end of the earth if they came to Fairbanks -- to Alaska. But, you know, it is true, air space up here is just, you know, anyway.

KAREN BREWSTER: I was thinking also the other side of accomplishments is something that disappointed him or frustrated him and --

BARBARA MEE: Never getting ANWR open.

KAREN BREWSTER: That is what I was going to ask you.

BARBARA MEE: Oh, my God, think about it, yeah, think about it.

KAREN BREWSTER: He worked on that for so long.

BARBARA MEE: And Lisa has been working on it and Young has been working on it.

KAREN BREWSTER: But that must have been difficult for him.

BARBARA MEE: It has got to be frustrating and I don't understand it. I just don't understand it. But I mentioned that to somebody, you know. We watch a lot of National News and they hardly mention Alaska. I think we are pretty important. I would think that they should

mention us a lot more than they do. And if nothing else for the natural resources. That had to be one of his disappointments.

KAREN BREWSTER: And you mentioned Senator Gravel and I just want to go back to that because --

BARBARA MEE: He is still alive. He is still alive.

KAREN BREWSTER: And I have interviewed him.

BARBARA MEE: Okay.

KAREN BREWSTER: So and talked to him about his relationship with Senator Stevens and you know as time passes things get mellowed out perhaps and he didn't really talk about it that much, but I am bringing it up because of the bipartisan working across the aisle Stevens had that reputation of being so good at it and somehow with Senator Gravel he couldn't make that happen.

BARBARA MEE: Senator Gravel was crying on the steps of the White House reading the Pentagon Papers. Somebody said where is Stevens? Somebody else said he is probably in the White House and that was the thing, you know. Gravel just wanted the show. I'm sorry and I know he is still alive and, you know, Mike whatever, but he just was not for the total picture. And I -- Stevens was a global thinker, you know, until the day he died he was thinking globally. And I think Mike probably was thinking about his next election all the time. I had a good friend in the Teamsters say, you know, Barbara, just forget about it. Mike is going to be there as long as he wants. Well, he wasn't, was he, you know? We --

KAREN BREWSTER: He was only there one term.

BARBARA MEE: No, I think he might have been there two, but, you know, that is why they changed the election laws so that we couldn't -- we had to have a closed primary, but that is what we did. And I say we -- it wasn't me, but, you know, Gruening ran against him and everybody crossed the line and voted for Gruening.

KAREN BREWSTER: Uh-huh.

BARBARA MEE: And Gruening beat Gravel and then we all crossed back over the line and voted for Murkowski. That is how it happened.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right. What I ask about it because certainly when you go back into the press of that time period there is lots of stories about this fiery relationship between the two senators and you wonder was that really true or is this being --

BARBARA MEE: No.

KAREN BREWSTER: Being exaggerated by the press, but it really was that way.

BARBARA MEE: I think it was true and I think -- I think -- I shouldn't put what words or thoughts in Stevens' mouth, but I remember how bad it was when Ann was killed in that plane crash. I think Stevens figured if -- if they could have solved the problems, he wouldn't have been in Juneau for that event -- (inaudible) or lands or whatever it was. And I am not saying that he blamed Mike Gravel for Ann's death, but I am saying, you know, in his mind I am sure he was thinking that event or that thing should have been solved and he wouldn't have been there, they wouldn't have had to have a charter plane to get in and out and what have you. I -- that was really tough. That was a -- and, you know, like I said, Stevens can get along with anybody, but that one was tough. And he worked with Nick Begich.

KAREN BREWSTER: Uh-huh.

BARBARA MEE: You know. Nick was back there when Stevens was appointed and Nick was a feisty little guy, you know, he was a representative. And I can remember taking the boss to the airport and Nick would be laying there on the seat you know waiting for the plane just trying to catch an hour sleep. He was like Ted back and forth and back and forth. I don't think those genes were passed on to his son, but, you know, who am I to say. But anyway, Nick was a fighter and I think Ted worked with him as much as he could in the house.

KAREN BREWSTER: And also certainly things have changed in politics and in congress from the 60's to now and how people did work across the aisle more.

BARBARA MEE: I don't know why.

KAREN BREWSTER: Then they do perhaps now.

BARBARA MEE: I don't know.

KAREN BREWSTER: And I don't know why either, but times change. You get iPhones when you used to have fax and you --

BARBARA MEE: Uh-huh.

KAREN BREWSTER: And everything changes.

BARBARA MEE: Yeah. That is true. Instant communication. That is what I say it will probably be the death of us. You know, you don't have a chance to think should I say that or what the hell send it, you know, pardon me. Do you know and we do, we send it.

KAREN BREWSTER: I would like to mention your wedding.

BARBARA MEE: Oh, yeah.

KAREN BREWSTER: That Senator Stevens officiated at your wedding. That must have been pretty special.

BARBARA MEE: It was very special. Vince had been -- my husband had been back in Florida. His uncle was very sick and we are both golf nuts and Vince had been back in Florida and he went to play golf that morning and they said well, you are going to have to wait because you have to wait for, you know, you can't play by yourself. And he said, well, if Barb and were married we'd be here and we would be out playing golf. He came home and he literally got down -- I was sick as a dog and he literally got down on one knee and proposed to me and he had the whole plan. He said and in Alaska you can have some designate to perform the marriage. He said we will get married on Elmendorf at the golf course at Eagleleglen and we will get married on the 18<sup>th</sup> tee he said and we will have Senator Stevens perform the ceremony and then we will have our reception at the officer's club because he is retired military and I have got all my buddies there. The only thing we changed was the 9<sup>th</sup> green instead of the 18<sup>th</sup> because -- oh, and we had a golf tournament first and then the only thing on the golf tournament was that we knew we were going to win, see and that it was a shotgun start and that was the only thing about our marriage was that the shotgun was the start of the term. But Father Elliott showed up from the Episcopal Church because he wanted to make sure it was legal and then we got married on the 9<sup>th</sup> green and it was lovely. It is a good place and we always talked about senator's weather and I am sure other people have talked about that. It was raining cats and dogs that morning at six o'clock and I thought, oh, you know, what is going to happen? Well, by the time the tournament started the sun was out and it was beautiful and the reason even we got married on the 9<sup>th</sup> was because we got a lot of old friends even then and they were able to drive their golf carts out, you know, and watch us and then we

had the reception then in the officer's club. I was telling someone just the other day that we were standing out greeting everybody and the senator came in and he says, get in there. He says people want to eat and go home he says. So, but why not -- my wedding, but you are right boss. So we quit shaking hands and went in there.

KAREN BREWSTER: He was still the boss.

BARBARA MEE: He was still the boss.

KAREN BREWSTER: Well, just to conclude we talked about his public accomplishments and I don't know if you can talk about this or not. It may be difficult, but what his legacy -- how do you think he should be remembered? What is important for us to remember about him outside of that public what he accomplished as a senator?

BARBARA MEE: I think that is the most important thing. Like I said, when we walked in and saw the papers that you have, you know, Stevens' papers. I am so proud that they are here. I really am. I am just -- this is, you know, I'm an Anchorage rite person, but when I have seen what you are doing here it is absolutely great. And I think it is so important that he be remembered -- that, you know, people forget World War II. They forget the, you know, they forget the concentration camps. I think, oh, my goodness; we can't forget everything that Stevens did. I mean he was just a -- he was a great guy, but think of all he accomplished. I mean when we go back and we look at Gruening and Bartlett and Bill Egan they were great guys, but look what Stevens accomplished. And we really ought to have a transcript. Maybe you do have here the transcript from the -- after the memorial service down at the Kennedy Center. I mean when they all stood up there and talked about the things that Stevens had done and our local governor said I didn't know Ted had done all that. That's criminal. I mean I don't know all he has done either, but people that are leading our state ought to know and I want them to know and I want you guys here to do this great job you are doing. It is just so important. It is so important.

KAREN BREWSTER: From talking to you today I feel coming from you a great pride in having been part of all of that.

BARBARA MEE: You don't know the half of it, yeah. I really and people say get on -- the words we hate today. Three words we hate today. Get over it. I'll never get over it. I'll never, you know.

KAREN BREWSTER: It sounds like you were very lucky to have been in the right place at the right time.

BARBARA MEE: Well, we know that.

KAREN BREWSTER: Be where you were and did what you did and the people you met.

BARBARA MEE: Yeah and we know that. Everything happens for a reason and, you know, whoever said it would be fair and whoever said it would be right, but just do it anyway, you know. And God we were lucky to have been where we were, yeah. Thank you for what you are doing.

KAREN BREWSTER: Well, thank you for your time this afternoon, both of you.

BARBARA MEE: Thank you.

KAREN BREWSTER: We appreciate it.