

Interview with Raymond H. Bateman by Michael Aron
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Michael Aron: This is the afternoon of January the 11th, 2007; I'm Michael Aron of NJN News for the Rutgers Project on the Governor and the Brendan Byrne Archive. We're going to talk this afternoon to Ray Bateman. Ray was Republican state senator from Somerset County for many years; he was the Senate president from 1970 to '72 and he ran for governor against Brendan Byrne in 1977 in an election still talked about today.

Q: Ray, when did you first encounter Brendan Byrne?

Ray Bateman: First time I met Brendan I debated him, I guess I was in the Senate, either in the Assembly or the Senate, and he was in the prosecutor's office. I don't even remember what the issue was; it was a debate in Essex County. That's the first time I met him.

Q: How long were you in the legislature?

Bateman: Just under 20 years, 10 in each house.

Q: From what years to what year?

Bateman: I went in in 1958 in a special election, after Malcolm Forbes resigned from the Senate; Bill Ozzard resigned from the Assembly to run for the Senate and then I ran for the Assembly seat in a special election in '58 and I almost didn't win in Somerset County, that's pretty tough for a Republican.

Q: How old were you in 1958?

Bateman: I was just going to be 30. I was the youngest member of the legislature.

Q: And were you a native of Somerset County?

Bateman: Oh, yeah. Born and raised.

Q: Where?

Bateman: Somerville.

Q: Where did you go to high school?

Bateman: Somerville High School.

Q: Where did you go to college?

Bateman: Wesleyan, Connecticut.

Q: What did your parents do?

Bateman: My mother was a French teacher and my father was the publisher of the local paper, the Somerset Messenger Gazette.

Q: Publisher? Did he own the paper?

Bateman: It was owned by about 15 stockholders, he being the biggest stockholder.

Q: Did you work at the paper?

Bateman: Oh, yeah.

Q: What did you do?

Bateman: Everything. I carried newspapers on Wednesday night from the press to the collators, I sold ads, I wrote editorials for 15 years, I guess, nobody knew I was writing them, this is when I was in the legislature.

Q: You still write columns that I see.

Bateman: Yeah, I write all the time.

Q: What was Somerville like when you were growing up?

Bateman: It was a great little town. Somerville was always an ethnically mixed community and it was a great high school because of that. Back in those days we had four high schools in Somerset County; today we have 17. And Somerville was the sending district for Bridgewater and Hillsborough and Branchburg and Raritan and several other communities.

Q: What drew you into politics?

Bateman: Living around a newspaper, you know, when I was in there, the politicians always came in to sit and chat with the editor and I got to know them all. I was fascinated by them, these were kind of gregarious old guys that enticed me. And then I was a government major in college and went to the Woodrow Wilson graduate program, which I didn't like at all-- in Princeton.

Q: Why not?

Bateman: It was a relatively new program; I think I was in the second or third year and it was really aimed at civil service in Washington, you know, State Department, Bureau of the Budget type stuff; I had no interest in this.

Q: You were drawn more toward what area?

Bateman: I wanted to be a politician, yeah.

Q: Oh, this was for bureaucrats and you wanted to be an elected official?

Bateman: Or work for an elected official, which is what I did initially.

Q: Did you go right to Woodrow Wilson out of Wesleyan University?

Bateman: Yeah.

Q: And did you finish at the Woodrow Wilson School?

Bateman: No, I finished a year and a half. It was a two-year master's and my second year Malcolm Forbes hired me to work for him when he was running for the first time for the state Senate.

Q: What year would that have been?

Bateman: '51.

Q: Why did Malcolm Forbes hire you? How did you meet?

Bateman: I met him through the newspaper and through some Republican meetings and stuff like that.

Q: Running the second time for state Senate-- had he been successful the first time?

Bateman: No, no, he was running against the organization in the primary. He was running against an incumbent Republican state senator who he beat in the primary, if you can imagine that one.

Q: Who was that?

Bateman: Fries Hess, my next door neighbor, or down the street neighbor, in Somerville. And Fries was a good senator, but Malcolm went door to door in Somerset County in a little old truck, "the candidate who came to call," and he beat him in a primary.

Q: And then what happened?

Bateman: Oh, the general election was a <inaudible> and he was elected in '51 to the state Senate and a month later he went over to France to get General Eisenhower to run for president and he started a Citizens for Eisenhower. So I ran Citizens for Eisenhower in '52, in the second year. And in 1953 he ran for governor. He was in a hurry.

Q: Forbes ran in '53? Against Meyner?

Bateman: No, he ran against Paul Troast in the primary, and then against all the organizations in the state; we had the first 24 hour telethon in the history of the world, and almost beat him, I mean, he lost by about 25-or-30,000 votes in the primary and then Paul Troast lost in the general, to Meyner, and shouldn't have, but some of the things we did in the primary hurt Troast, I think.

Q: You ran Citizens for Eisenhower out of Somerville, New Jersey?

Bateman: Out of Trenton.

Q: So you were an aide to a state senator at that time. And he didn't give up his Senate seat when he ran for governor?

Bateman: No, he gave it up after his second run for governor. He ran against Meyner twice. I mean, he didn't run against Meyner, he ran against Troast and then he ran against Meyner the next four years.

Q: What was he like, Malcolm Forbes?

Bateman: Oh, he was a great guy. And he was a good legislator, and he was courageous. I mean, he-- in '55 he was up for re-election and it was that year that there was a major water supply proposal that would have put half of his biggest township, Bridgewater township, underwater in a big reservoir, Chimney Rock reservoir proposal, and he thought it was the right thing to do and he went for it, and he won by 100 and some votes. Just barely won.

Q: Was he also running Forbes magazine at this time?

Bateman: No, his father was running it. P.C. Forbes. That's who I worked for, when I went to work for Malcolm, they made me an associate editor for the magazine and the old man made me write stories, so I had to write stories during the day and work for Malcolm all night long.

Q: Was Stanley Van Ness from Somerville?

Bateman: Oh, yeah. Stanley and my wife were classmates in high school, very close friends.

Q: Of yours? In high school? Or later?

Bateman: Later. He was six years' behind me in high school.

Q: What distinguished him as a kid, do you remember?

Bateman: No, 'cause I really wasn't-- I didn't have any truck with the kids who were six years' younger than I was.

Q: Except you married one.

Bateman: That's different.

Q: Why do you think Malcolm Forbes was drawn to politics given that the family was so important in the business world?

Ray Bateman: Well, he wanted to be president of the United States. I mean, he had- it's kind of funny, his son ran for president and had no reason to run for president. Had Malcolm been elected governor, he would have been a presidential candidate in 1960. When he lost to Bob Meyner in '57, he realized that that dream was gone, so he quit the Senate and dug into the business. Really, the magazine was good but it became much stronger when he became the boss. He really built it up.

Q: You told us off camera that you babysat Steve Forbes?

Bateman: Oh, yeah, I used to go everywhere with the Forbes' family. I have some great stories. I mean, he almost killed us all-

Q: Who did?

Bateman: Malcolm, in his boat.

Q: How?

Bateman: He decided that he wanted to go into boating, so he bought a 33 foot inboard, had it taken up to Lake Champlain and then in three segments, took it from Lake Champlain up the St. Lawrence, out the St. Lawrence, out around Halifax and back in towards Boston. And my not-then wife, but my engaged wife and I and Steve and Malcolm went on the first leg. He didn't even know how to start the goddamn thing. You know, it was funny. And ship to shore didn't work; we got into the Richelieu (ph?) River and he went barreling down the river and overturned about 30 boats, rowboats that were on the side, you know, and he got to the first lock and he didn't know how to handle the boat, and so I'm kinda holding off the boat from this stone lock, and he guns it the wrong way and I went right down in-between the boat and the-- he almost killed me then. But later on in the trip, in the third lap, there's a lot of funny stories in-between, but in the third lap, he was going from Halifax, Nova Scotia, to Boston across the Bay of Fundy, with his managing editor, Bob Hineman (ph?), and a friend of mine. I couldn't go on that because I was getting married, and it was Labor Day weekend, 1953. '53? '54? '53. It was Labor Day weekend and both his engines crapped out. He's out in the middle of the Bay of Fundy, and the ship-to-shore hadn't worked

the whole time and they tried it again and they hooked up with the Coast Guard at Cape Cod and the Coast Guard said there's a hurricane one hour away, where are you? And they took Malcolm and his son and Bob Hineman and another guy off that boat as it sank. It's a great story. And from then on, he bought big boats and cruised.

Q: And would later be photographed on a motorcycle and in balloons?

Bateman: You would have loved him, Michael. He was exciting, he was interesting, he had political courage, he was the real thing.

Q: I did meet him once in the '80s and yes, he was quite colorful.

Bateman: And you know, his life changed later on, but-

Q: How do you mean his life changed later on?

Bateman: Well, after he got divorced, he was riding with the fellows, I think.

Q: Oh, that's right. And became friends with Elizabeth Taylor as well?

Bateman: I was there when he gave her a million dollars for her, I think, she was involved in-- it might have been AIDS; it was at the 75th anniversary at his house at which, to which party there were 40 helicopters flew in. I mean, he did things—

Q: Back in the fifties, you say he helped recruit Eisenhower into presidential politics. Did you encounter Eisenhower during those presidential years?

Bateman: Oh, yeah.

Q: Any memories?

Bateman: Just- nothing significant, really. I mean, I was a kid in the background most of the time.

Q: Okay. So '58, you said you-

Bateman: '58 I got elected the first time.

Q: That's when Malcolm Forbes drops out of politics and goes into business, and tell me again how you got involved?

Bateman: Well, the county committee nominated me and –

Q: Bill Ozzard took the Senate seat that Malcolm Forbes vacated, creating a vacancy and the county committee nominated you and Malcolm Forbes-- they knew you as Malcolm Forbes' aide?

Bateman: No, I had been executive director of the Republican State Committee for-- when I left Forbes. I left Forbes when I got married, in '54, and I worked for Sam LeDine (ph?) who was the state chairman, who had been the former Senate president, terrific guy, one of my real mentors. And I worked for four years in the Republican State Committee office in Trenton at the Stacy Trent Hotel, that's where we were located, which no longer exists. It was right on the corner from the State House, going east.

Q: What are your recollections of your early Assembly years?

Bateman: Oh, I was the sixteenth Republican in a house of 60, so we were really in a minority and my first speaker was Billy Hyland who ended up as attorney general and he-

Q: In a house of 60, there were only 16 Republicans?

Bateman: And 44 Democrats.

Q: So there were only 60 members of the Assembly in those days? This was pre-'66, one man, one vote.

Bateman: There was 21 senators and 60 Assembly. Bill Hyland was the speaker and I was the kid in the Assembly, they all befriended me. I was passing bills, you know, I was-- I became minority leader quite quickly, and then the Assembly turned over in '63 and so I became majority leader in '65 and I was about to be speaker of the house in '66, and '65 was Dick Hughes second election and he wiped out Wayne Dumont and wiped out the Republicans-- he brought in two-to-one majorities in both houses. That was the first time, in '66, was the first time the Democrats had ever controlled both houses of the legislature. And two years later, the Republicans won both houses three to one.

Q: Back in the '50s when you restarted, and the '60s when you were cutting your teeth, how was politics different from today?

Bateman: Oh, it was exciting, it was fun.

Q: You don't think it's exciting and fun for a young man today?

Bateman: Not as so, no. it wasn't as partisan; most of my best friends that are alive that were in the legislature were Democrats today. There were close friendships across the aisle. There were no staff in those days so legislators tended to do their homework. Legislators generally knew more about the laws they were passing then than they do today, with big staffs, because, you know, the staffs read everything and they don't. I mean, I had guys that read every word and every bill that was introduced. Al Beadleston, who was the president of the Senate after I was, Al Beadleston read every bill that was introduced.

Q: Who were the dominant figures of the '50s in New Jersey? Any names come to mind?

Bateman: Sure. Hap Farley was the most dominant Republican in the Senate; I guess Eddie O'Mara was his counterpart in the Senate.

Q: Farley was from –

Bateman: Atlantic; O'Mara was from Hudson. And then they had all kinds of guys. You've got Bobby Littell's father, Mike Littell, was an old time senator. Johnnie Lynch's father, John, was a senator. Wayne Dumont, the Senate was a very strong- the Senate I got into was a very strong body. Lot of characters, but a lot of people of character, too.

Q: 21 instead of 40 up until around '66 or '67?

Bateman: '67. It was 40 senators and I think 80 Assembly.

Q: When did you join the Senate/

Bateman: '67.

Q: So you never served as the Somerset County senator; always as the- you weren't-

Bateman: No, I was Somerset County senator in '67, yes. Somerset was still a single member district. Today of course it's divided three ways.

Q: There are three different senators representing parts of Somerset? You say you didn't have any staff in those days? You didn't have an aide?

Bateman: I'll give you a for instance. When I was president of the Senate, I had an executive director, Lou Thurston; you know Lou Thurston, two secretaries and that was it. The president of the Senate has 100 employees today.

Q: Lou Thurston would go on to be Governor Tom Kean's first chief of staff.

Bateman: Right. And Lou Thurston, when he was my executive, he was also a prime adviser to Bill Cahill when he was governor. Unpaid, but very much involved in the substance of legislation for the governor.

Q: What were the circumstances of your leaving the Assembly and running for Senate?

Bateman: Bill Ozzard went to the PUC.

Q: Public Utilities Commission.

Bateman: Bill and I-- it was unusual, we were very close when we were in the legislature. We got less close later. He and I were both majority leaders of the Senate and the house at the same time, from little Somerset, in 1965.

Q: So in '67, you move over to the Senate.

Bateman: In the election of '67; I started in '68, but I started for the first three months in the University of Pennsylvania hospital, I missed the first three months.

Q: What was wrong?

Bateman: I had endocarditis, which is an infection of the heart. And they saved my life there, but in the process two things happened: Webster Todd went into the Republican caucus and demanded that I be made assistant majority leader, in my first year and I wasn't even there, and it happened, and then I went

to the University of Pennsylvania hospital, about half way through my stay, Governor Hughes comes in to the same hospital for an eye operation, cataract-- in those days that was not a simple operation, and he was up, of course, on the seventh floor and I was down on the first floor, and every afternoon at four o'clock Betty Hughes would come down with a wheelchair and take me up to the seventh floor and we'd drink martinis to six, and that's how Dick Hughes and I became very fast friends.

Q: Webster Todd is the father of Christine Todd Whitman?

Bateman: Yes.

Q: And what enabled him to walk into the Senate in '67?

Bateman: He was a good friend. He was state chairman then.

Q: Oh, he was state Republican chairman. Who was the first governor you met?

Bateman: Al Driscoll.

Q: What can you tell us about Driscoll and the meeting.

Bateman: I love Driscoll. I used to go sit with Driscoll when he was head of the turnpike and he'd come up from, I don't know, Haddonfield, is that where he lived? And spend half a day at the turnpike almost every day. And I'd go down and he'd tell me political stories. I was kind of a son to him, I think, and some of his staff were good friends of mine. Roemer McPhee was a lawyer for him. Johnny McPhee-- you know Johnny McPhee. His brother Roemer was one of Al Driscoll's guys, and I always thought Al Driscoll was a great governor. His most famous moment was at the annual legislative correspondents' dinner in Newark when some drunk from the back of the room came up, shaking his finger at him. We were up on a raised dais, I'm sitting right next to him, and he grabs a picture of water and <whoosh> douses the guy right in the front of a thousand people.

Q: We haven't seen that in my day at the correspondents' club dinner.

Bateman: Boley Schwartz was running it then.

Q: That name I know. How about Meyner? Did you meet Meyner?

Bateman: Oh yeah, I had a lot of intercourse with Meyner.

Q: What was your impression of him?

Bateman: Very conservative guy. Tough guy to make decisions; honest. Where he and I tied in pretty heavily was when they were trying to put a jet port in our area.

Q: The Great Swamp?

Bateman: The Great Swamp. His was The Great Swamp. Dick Hughes' was the Solberg (?) and we had a huge meeting in the Assembly shortly after I-- I was just barely a freshman, barely could say my own name, and I had to take him on, he was running the meeting, and that was our first brush.

Q: What about Hughes?

Bateman: Yeah, we became very close. We did a lot together. We did a lot of substance things together. The one I remember the best was when Seton Hall came to the governor and said, "You gotta buy our medical school because we're losing our shirts on it," and of course, this was tough for him, he was Roman Catholic, and in 1954 the Catholics had beat-- had gone out because of their state med school and beat a state bond issue for a state med school. So you know there was a lot of tension around the subject, so Dick Hughes asked me to try to get everybody together to see if it could be done. I didn't think it could be done, but I said, sure, I'll do it, and about that time Mason Gross, from Rutgers, came to me and said, "I've got a plan." And his plan was if you start, if you buy the Seaton Hall med school, which is now our biggest in Newark, if you buy that, and you start at the same time a medical school program at Rutgers, it'll balance out and so, this was on a Wednesday, I'll never forget it, because I got a meeting shortly thereafter. Wednesday night he and I went to Morven and talked to Dick Hughes and he said, it's a deal, and it was a deal. They started a medical school program at Rutgers and bought Seton Hall Medical School, and therein lies one of the great mistakes I ever made in the legislature. Not the buying of it-- there was a contest, will the medical school be moved to Newark or to Morristown, and the suburban legislators were all for Morristown and of course the big city people were for Newark. It was a hell of a fight and some of us, including me, caved in and said, go ahead, have it in Newark. And that's-

Q: You think today's problems at UNMDNJ spring from that?

Bateman: I would say that if UNMDNJ, or whatever it would have been, had been in Morristown and affiliated with those hospitals out there, it would be a roaring, major success today.

Q: Of the governors that you knew in those days, who was the best campaigner?

Bateman: Oh, Dick Hughes by a hundred miles. He was great. He'd campaign anywhere, anytime, street corners. He and I always kidded ourselves because he thought he was the only person who ever campaigned in Shellpile, New Jersey. Do you know where that is? It's in Salem County on the Delaware River, and it's just a pile of shells. But it's Shellpile, New Jersey. And so I went down there just to tell him I'd campaigned there, too. He was a great campaigner. Meyner was not a particularly good campaigner. Bill Cahill was not a particularly good campaigner. Brendan became a good campaigner in his second campaign; he wasn't particularly—he didn't have to campaign, he had a boat ride. That was the first campaign in the United States after Watergate. First one. And we paid the price.

Q: Plus he was running for someone who had stood up for Nixon.

Bateman: Yeah, Sandman had stood up for him, and it was perfect for him.

Q: Did you meet Nixon?

Bateman: Oh, sure, lots of times.

Q: What were your impressions of Nixon?

Bateman: He's never been one of my favorites. Nationally I was always on the wrong side. I was a Rockefeller delegate, so, you know, Nixon wasn't my particular cup of tea. Not because of Watergate, but long before then.

Q: What other big time Republicans, national or state, from the fifties and sixties, spring to mind?

Bateman: Most of the Nixon cabinet folks would come in and out- New Jersey was fertile ground for Republicans in those days. They shy away today but they used to come through.

Q: What was the political complexion of the state?

Bateman: Well, it changed, but the Senate had always been Republican, the house was Democratic for four or five years and then became Republican in the sixties and then it went back Democrat and then came back—and so it shifted. But we had Bob Meyner, who was an accident to become governor, that should have been a Republican governor. And then you had Dick Hughes who beat the guy, the labor

leader. Jim Mitchell. Big Jim Mitchell. And then you had Bill Cahill, Brendan Byrne and Tom Kean. So it went back and forth at the gubernatorial level. But the legislature was Republican 'til '53 and then in the Nixon massacre in '52, then our massacre in '53, we lost control of the legislature, and then Tom Kean got it back.

Q: You mean '72 and '73?

Bateman: Yeah.

Q: That was a turbulent time in American in the late sixties and early seventies with Vietnam and Watergate?

Bateman: Yeah. Most of our attention in the legislature were to urban kinds of things. My first involvement was after we passed the sales tax we had no school aid formula. Almost like today. You can go back and everything that's happening now happened then. So I was chairman of the commission that developed our first urban school aid formula and it was a real urban school aid formula in every sense of the word. It was so urban that I couldn't get the suburbanites to vote for it some of it.

Q: What year was that?

Bateman: The school aid formula was either '70 or '71. But there were all kinds of urban programs that were funneling through the Republican legislature. Big time programs.

Q: Did you have a tax hike as part of your urban education program?

Bateman: Sales tax. A new sales tax. I have a distinction on that. I'm the only minority person that ever co-sponsored a broad based tax. The sales tax was sponsored by the speaker, the majority leader and me.

Q: Who were the speaker and majority leader?

Bateman: John Davis I think was the speaker and the majority leader was from Cumberland (ph?); I forget his name. Three of us.

Q: So you're the only member of a minority party-

Bateman: That sponsored a broad based tax.

Q: That's an interesting distinction-

Bateman: And you know what, I never caught any hell for it. Never. Politically or otherwise.

Q: Didn't catch up to you when you ran for governor some years later?

Bateman: No, I don't think it had an effect.

Q: Had the riots, like the Newark riots-

Bateman: '67.

Q: Had they been influential in focusing the attention of the legislature on urban questions?

Bateman: Oh yeah. And this was another Mason Gross issue. We established Livingston College, which was really designed at that moment to handle urban students. That's where it started. It's just broadened since then, but that's where it started. We had all kind of urban aid programs, as you can imagine.

Q: Did they work?

Bateman: Some of them.

Q: How about the war in Vietnam; did that filter its way into New Jersey state politics?

Bateman: Not a hell of a lot, no. You know, we were all aware of it but it didn't manifest itself in legislation or anything like that.

Q: I think there was one controversy around a Rutgers professor?

Bateman: Oh, yeah. Wayne Dumont made a Rutgers' communist professor the major issue of his campaign against Dick Hughes, Dick Hughes' second election, and Dick Hughes' just wiped him out on it. Genovese. Eugene Genovese.

Q: And why did Hughes wipe out Dumont?

Bateman: I think he made a significant stand that related to the independence of a university to hire and fire even extending to the communists. I mean, he made a good case, and Wayne Dumont never sustained his case. He didn't run a particularly good campaign either. Jeez, you get me back to things I haven't thought about for 50 years.

Q: Good. So you start out in the Senate as an assistant majority leader, thanks to Webster Todd, and within two years, you're Senate president?

Bateman: Yeah, the sequence is you're assistant majority leader one year, you're majority leader the next year, you're the president of the Senate the third year and you're the president pro tem the fourth year and you're out the fifth year. That's the way it always was. That's the way the system was, yes.

Q: But you changed that.

Bateman: Yeah, I did.

Q: You decided to stay on as Senate president?

Bateman: Well, it wasn't just me. Bill Cahill wanted me to stay on and Paul Sherwin, who was his secretary of state and very savvy political guy had four or five Senate votes in his pocket whenever he needed it, so it wasn't just me. It was-

Q: Did you like being Senate president?

Bateman: Yeah.

Q: Why?

Bateman: I always thought it was a place you could get something done and that was my-- my legislative career was getting things done.

Q: Who did you have to work most closely with to get things done? The governor? The Assembly speaker? Your caucus?

Bateman: The governor. Al Beadleston, my majority leader, he was from Monmouth County, great legislature, and my caucus. And to a degree the Assembly. But they usually went along with what we did.

Q: Who was the speaker when you were senator?

Bateman: Tom. Tom Kean. For two of the three years Tom was speaker.

Q: How did you and he hit it off?

Bateman: Pretty well. He was tough for Cahill; Cahill and he, you know- he was a boy scout to Cahill. But Tom and I got along. Always did.

Q: Although later, if my memory serves me correctly, he would run against you for the nomination in '77?

Bateman: Oh, yeah. It was- he was a late starter and a very big surprise to me when he got into it. And caused me no end of _____.

Q: How many other primary opponents did you have?

Bateman: Tom Kean, Joe Woodcock (ph?), a couple others. But to all intents and purposes, it was a two-man race.

Q: You and Kean?

Bateman: Yeah.

Q: Back in those days, how did one get into the leadership in a body like the Senate?

Bateman: Well, I told you how I got into it.

Q: Webster Todd put you into it.

Bateman: Webster Todd demanded me in it. But that was a big turnover time. The Senate had been Democratic two-to-one and it went three-to-one Republican that year. So <whoosh> there are new folks,

new faces, and so it made some sense who had been in leadership in the Assembly to be in leadership in the Senate.

Q: Did you ask Webster Todd to do that? Did you lobby for the spot?

Bateman: No. I was dying. I mean, I was not in good shape. I passed out four times in the campaign, twice while I was on the dais. The nature of endocarditis is it has little emboli that break off and go into your system and wherever they hit you, they knock you out or kill you. It was a crazy disease that usually is diagnosed in post mortem kinds of diagnoses. So I got lucky.

Q: Webster Todd was from Somerset County, your county; that's why he wanted you in there?

Bateman: Yeah, we were friends.

Q: What was he like?

Bateman: Oh, nice man. He's a very- inarticulate is not the right word, but he was kind of a shy guy and worked hard at the state chairmanship, raised a lot of money and had a lot of interests. And his wife was the national committeewoman. They were a very political family. And very Eisenhower family.

Q: Sly (ph?) was her name; is that right? Family name?

Bateman: Yeah, good for you. Eleanor Sly Todd. She was a dynamo.

Q: Is that where Christie Whitman got her-

Bateman: Yeah, she was even more so than Christie.

Q: I'm reminded that Tom Kean got to be speaker in the Assembly by making a deal with the Democrats, the Hudson County Democrats.

Bateman: With Mr. Friedland?

Q: With David Friedland who would become famous 15 years' later as a fugitive from justice, a guy who faked his own death and got captured years' later in the Maldives Islands.

Bateman: He was a colorful guy. He scared me the worst, we were in a legislative leaders convention in San Diego, and Tom was speaker and I was president of the Senate and Friedland, I don't know what he was, but he was there, and the first night we went out to dinner and he ordered \$600 bottles of wine, that made me worried.

Q: Who do you think was picking that up? The taxpayer or Mr. Friedland?

Bateman: Who the hell knows?

Q: What was your reaction to the deal Kean made to become speaker?

Bateman: I wasn't particularly happy with it at all. I wish he had made it with somebody else, let's put it that way.

Q: With some other group of Democrats rather than the Hudson Democrats?

Bateman: Yeah.

Q: Because of their reputation?

Bateman: Yeah, their reputation in those days wasn't particularly positive. But, yeah, Tom was smart enough to find some votes that would make him speaker.

Q: He was ambitious?

Bateman: Oh, he was always ambitious, sure. There's nothing wrong with that.

Q: And you don't get to be governor of New Jersey unless you're ambitious?

Bateman: No.

Q: And ironically his son ran for the U.S. Senate this year castigating a Hudson County Democrat as being corrupt. But that's off our subject.

Bateman: Yeah, that's for another day.

Q: Let's move to the gubernatorial election of '73. By '73, you had given up the Senate presidency?

Bateman: Yeah, I gave it up in '73. I gave it up in '73.

Q: You served two extra years-

Bateman: Yeah. I served three years. I could have served a fourth year, I had the votes, but it was important that Al Beadle be president of the Senate before he got out, so— and my thing was kind of Eagleton related. This was a major recommendation of Eagleton, that we have more permanent leadership, but I never thought more permanent leadership was forever. And it has been interpreted that way since.

Q: You did start a trend, we've seen Senate presidents for eight and 10 years.

Bateman: Yeah, Donnie Dee was 10 years, I think.

Q: Did you consider running for governor in '73?

Bateman: No, I was running for governor in '69.

Q: Really.

Bateman: Yeah, and Bill Cahill and I-

Q: Were you officially a candidate for governor?

Bateman: I was a candidate in the primary. And I got a lot of brochures to prove it. And I was a serious candidate in the primary. And it came down to negotiations with Bergen County, which was the big Republican county, and Cahill got it and I didn't. So I dropped out.

Q: Who was the key Republican in Bergen in those days?

Bateman: Nelson Gross.

Q: So you dropped out-

Bateman: And Walter Henry Jones. He was still there, too.

Q: You dropped out of the primary?

Bateman: I dropped out, Bill Ozzard stayed in, I think, Harry Sears stayed in, Frank McDermott stayed in and Cahill took 'em all to the cleaners.

Q: Ozzard stayed in. That means there were two Somerset County Republicans running for governor?

Bateman: Yeah.

Q: Okay. So you had gubernatorial ambitions as early as '69?

Bateman: Yeah, and I knew that was the year, too. That was the year for me. I was relatively hot in the legislature, it was the year we were all convinced the Republicans-

Q: What made you hot?

Bateman: Well, I had been involved in just about every initiative that came down the street.

Q: '73 would have been a natural year to run-- oh no, I guess it wouldn't, you would have had to challenge a sitting governor within your own party, which is what happened.

Bateman: Well, what happened was, there's a story, I don't really want to get into this, but in '72, Bill Cahill came to me in November and said, "I'm not going to run again. Nobody knows this but my family and Paul Sherwin (ph?) and I want you to run." This was November in '72 and he said you don't have to give me an answer now, talk to your wife and we'll talk right after Christmas." And so we talked it over and we said, "What the hell, let's run," so I waited, and I waited and then it came New Year, and then I knew something was wrong, so I went into see Cahill, and he said, "What I told you is true. I don't want to run, but my advisers tell me that I'm the only person that can beat Charlie Sandman in the primary," because Charlie was coming on. And I said, "Okay, I understand." And then he said, will you be my

campaign manager? So I spent the whole spring debating Charlie Sandman because Cahill never came out, he never showed.

Q: You formally debated Sandman?

Bateman: Oh yeah, all over the state.

Q: So you got good practice.

Bateman: I got a little practice, yeah.

Q: Let's go back four years. You say Cahill wiped out Ozzard and Jones and whoever else ran in-- Harry Sears. What made him so strong?

Bateman: Well, he had a combination of counties, he had a bunch of-- the Shore, South Jersey and Bergen County, parlayed them. You know, in those days, the county line was pretty significant, and it still is to a degree, but not like it used to be. So he had the preponderance of the county lines. Harry Sears had Morris, but Morris doesn't really have a county line and Bill Ozzard had one or two and Frank McDermott had Union County and they kind of split-- it's kind of like when we get to Brendan Byrne, it's kind of like Brendan Byrne's re-election campaign, which is fascinating.

Q: You were pretty much a part of that.

Bateman: Well, not the early part. The early part was five guys took him on and nobody thought he was gonna win that primary, including me.

Q: We'll get there.

Bateman: But Cahill had a boat ride really, I mean, Bob Meyner tried to come back but he didn't really have the fire in his belly like he had had it the first time.

Q: Why didn't Cahill campaign harder against Sandman?

Bateman: He didn't wanna be governor.

Q: Why not?

Bateman: Well, a lot of his friends were being indicted, the U.S. Attorney was after his good friends; every week somebody else was getting shot at by the U.S. Attorney, and it really preyed on him and it preyed on his wife and it got to the point he wouldn't even go out. I mean, he didn't-- I don't remember one major campaign stop that he made in that primary.

Q: You say that his advisors said, "You're the only one that can stop Sandman," what was important about stopping Sandman? Why did they dislike Sandman?

Bateman: Well, because he was running against him. When you're in and somebody's trying to knock you out, that's a very natural thing. And Charlie had been a pretty good legislator, but he was a lot more conservative than Bill Cahill was, and that was part of the problem, too.

Q: Sandman was a congressman at the time?

Bateman: Yeah.

Q: But he had come out of the legislature?

Bateman: Yeah, he had been president of the Senate, years back. He was a fun guy to campaign with. He really was. I enjoyed-- we debated and debated, we had a good time together.

Q: But you implied that Cahill wanted to stop him. What were their personal relations?

Bateman: I don't think they were too good. I don't really know. That's a good question that I never asked myself.

Q: Cahill had embraced the idea of an income tax during his first term. Did he pay a political price for that?

Bateman: Yeah. Paid a political price for a number of things. The income tax proposal went down quickly in flames, but he had to pass a number of taxes in order to balance things out and I think that all-- and of course we passed them for him.

Q: Was there a sales tax-

Bateman: There was a sales tax increase, yeah. I don't know if it was one cent or two. I think it was two. Because it started out 3 percent, so I think he had a 2 percent sales tax, plus some other taxes, and then he had a whole bunch of-- he was a good governor, I mean, he was a tough governor, he didn't take anything from anybody, you know, he was tough.

Q: Do you think he made a political mistake by embracing an income tax?

Bateman: Probably. Probably. We had just-- we weren't ready for the income tax, we'd just passed a sales tax four years before and--

Q: That's the one you co-sponsored?

Bateman: That's the one I co-sponsored, yeah.

Q: The first one, the very first one?

Bateman: 3 percent.

Q: Around this period of time, the Supreme Court issued the Robinson v. Cahill decision. What was your reaction to that decision?

Bateman: I thought it was a very bad decision. I thought the attorney general gave it a bad ride. You know, it was-- we had a school aid formula that fully implemented, would have met all the tests of the court. And you know, Dick Hughes was not only a friend, he was Chief Justice, and I gave him, I still have it, a letter which summarized why they shouldn't do what they did, they eventually did, and they could have mandated lots of other things. They could have said the Bateman/Tanzman (ph?) formula fully implemented would meet the test of the court. They didn't even try to do that.

Q: What was the Bateman/Tanzman formula? That was the existing school formula?

Bateman: It was- we had- when the 3 percent sales tax went on- it's funny how history is the same. We had no school aid formula to distribute the money and so we set up a commission. I was chairman of it, with Norm Tanzman, a Democrat senator. And for two years we met every week and we developed the formula that was for the first time, that was pumping aid into the urban areas that needed it. And one of the main components was a relationship to aid for dependent children distribution in a particular community. If you had a big ADC program, you got additional funds for school aid, and significant additional funds, and we were able to implement some of it, but we couldn't-- the thing that would have

met the court test was, there was a part of the formula that would have given incentives to school districts that put in special programs, special physics programs, special music programs, whatever, if you introduced better programs into your school systems, you got additional aid. I couldn't get the Republican senators to approve that. And with a little prodding from the court I think we could have gotten them to approve that. But we made one fatal mistake that I acknowledged to Hughes when I wrote him, and this is, we were pumping-- I'll give you a figure, in the first year of my school aid formula, Newark went from about \$28 million in school aid to almost \$80 million in school aid. But what happened was, back in those days, the mayors, and of course, still today, controlled what the local community was going to get, so when we increased Newark \$60 million, the then-mayor of Newark, Ken Gibson reduced the local contribution by almost \$60 million. So it all went to his tax credits.

Q: So that was a mistake in the drafting of the legislation?

Bateman: That was a mistake in the legislation; we should have provided that they couldn't do that. But we didn't think about it, you know, it was one of those mistakes-- but if we had enacted incentives for better school programs, we would have met the test, I think. I'm not a lawyer but--

Q: Did you resent the court intervening in this matter? Or they had no choice?

Bateman: I don't think they had a choice. I didn't resent them intervening as much as that they didn't know what they were doing.

Q: You're known for your support for education?

Bateman: Yeah, and NJEA came out against me when I ran against Brendan.

Q: How did you get interested in school issues and why?

Bateman: It was just-- I started early on. I was the original sponsor with Beadleston of the County College Act and I just-- just a natural thing in the early '60s. And it was an interest of mine.

Q: Why did the NJEA come out against you?

Bateman: Because I didn't support the income tax in '77, '76. After I had passed almost all their legislation for about 15 years.

Q: In retrospect did the Supreme Court focus too much on equalizing spending?

Bateman: In retrospect, they didn't understand what they were doing, and that's normal. I mean, you know, they're not educators, they're not involved in school aid formulas, and the then-attorney general was not interested in defending the Bateman school aid formula, so it got a bad rep. It wasn't just the court's doing, it was also the doing of the Byrne administration which didn't have a— for whatever reason, they weren't going to defend my school aid formula.

Q: You say it had a Democratic co-sponsor, and they didn't want to support a Republican's—

Bateman: Well, whatever. You know, administrations have a desire to do their own thing, and you know, I understand that, so they thought they could put one together and they had the same problem that we had in the '60s, they had a new tax and no way to distribute it.

Q: Would it have been better in hindsight to force a statewide property tax rather than an income tax?

Bateman: Might have been at that time, yeah.

Q: Why?

Bateman: I think that because property taxes weren't high then and I think you could have probably made a case for something like that. It's different today.

Q: Would it have been better to force countywide school districts back then? Or county-based spending formulas?

Bateman: Well, you gotta understand that back then local control was even more powerful than it is today. I had an experience at one of my commissions-- we had a lot of commissions in those days- one of my commissions was to protect and preserve the Delaware canal, and that was a lot tougher than it sounds, but we decided to make it a state park to protect it forever and in the legislation-- it was a big bill, you know-- in the legislation, we literally gave zoning powers to the Delaware Canal Commission over developments that might impinge on the canal. And thank God the guys didn't read the bill because if they'd read the bill, I'd never got it passed.

Q: Interesting.

Bateman: That was another interesting one. Johnny Lynch was my co-sponsor on all that, because the Delaware canal ended up in New Brunswick, and so John had an interest. After almost a year I got the bill on the board and sent it and half an hour before the session Johnny comes up to me and says, "I've got to pull all our support and I have to vote against the bill." He'd been working on it for two years with me. And I said, "What the hell's going on?" He said, "Well, I just realized that the Delaware canal runs underneath the area that I want to build the new route 18 Bridge across the Raritan river. And if that's a state park, I'll never get the permits to do what we have to do on the route 18 bridge." So you know what we did? We ended the canal at the Somerset County border, half a mile from where it flowed underneath- we ended the state park, I mean, at the border and so Johnny supported it.

Q: You made that accommodation right then and there?

Bateman: Definitely. And the Route 18 bridge was built and I named it the John Lynch Bridge. Or the legislature named it.

Q: After Sandman won the nomination in '73, did you feel that he had a chance at all?

Bateman: No.

Q: Why?

Bateman: I don't think anybody would have had a chance. You know, you've got to understand the atmosphere; this was the first election in the United States after Nixon's impeachment or whatever it was. Resignation. And impeachment. There was-- you could feel it, no Republican was going to win that election. I wouldn't have won that election.

Q: Was Byrne a good candidate?

Bateman: Oh, yeah, Brendan was a good candidate then. He was "the man that couldn't be bought." You know, there's some Mafia guy said that on tape, so he was perfect for that moment, you know, when we were talking about people who were doing wrong things, so yeah, it was ideal, and of course that election wiped out a lot of good senators, a lot of good legislators.

Q: Like who?

Bateman: Like Dick Stout from Monmouth County, a couple of them from Camden County. We had four Republican senators from Camden County. About five got wiped out. So it was a landslide.

Q: Given that Byrne had everything going for him in that race and had such a substantial lead over Sandman, a boat ride, as you would call it, should he have come out for a broad based tax then during the campaign, rather than say—

Bateman: Probably not. Probably-- it was-- it would have been premature for him to do that.

Q: Would he still have won the election if he had?

Bateman: I suspect he would have won the election no matter what he said. The '73 election, yeah.

Q: Did you campaign for Sandman?

Bateman: More or less. <laughs> Charlie was a good friend of mine and I could not not campaign but I didn't have my heart and soul in it.

Q: Because you knew the outcome? Or because of him?

Bateman: Because of the atmosphere, it was poison for Republicans. That was the worst year I can ever remember.

Q: Byrne's elected. And you are senator.

Bateman: I'm now in the minority.

Q: And you're now in the minority because he carried a majority in with him. What do you do during these first years of the first Byrne term?

Bateman: Well, it's kind of a cultural shock when you've been running the Senate for several years and then you're in the minority, so I didn't do, it wasn't my most productive years. But I had a lot of things going, that I had going before he got elected, and what you do, in those days, so different from today, I had some pretty significant programs and one of them was a prescription drug program for senior citizens, the first one, and it hadn't passed, so I just gave it to Joe Merlino because he was the logical Democrat to handle it. And what you do, if you have some substantive issues, in those days, you gave them to the other guys.

Q: Do you think it's different today?

Bateman: Yeah.

Q: What do you do today if you have a substantive issue? You don't get it passed?

Bateman: Or they steal it. They don't have that kind of camaraderie between the two parties.

Q: When you give it to Joe Merlino, that's almost like him stealing it unless he gives you some credit for it.

Bateman: Well, I was a co-sponsor. And he gave me credit for it. When he passed it, at the moment, he said where it came from, so, you know, it worked out.

Q: Some people have said that the legislature in '74 found the Byrne administration, the people around Byrne, like Dick Leone and Lew Kaden to be arrogant, young, brash, arrogant.

Bateman: Yeah, that is absolutely what it was.

Q: Did you find them that way?

Bateman: Yeah.

Q: What were they like?

Bateman: Well, they knew more than we did about everything. You know, but that's not unusual either. There's a lot of focus on Leone and Kaden, but usually the first guy that a governor puts in in that job doesn't make it. Lou Thurston didn't make it and Lou Thurston was a real policy wonk, you know, but he – it's a very difficult assignment to come in with a new governor and be the chief of staff or the head counsel, I mean, it really is tough for the first time. And whenever anybody gets appointed, I always wonder how long they're going to last.

Q: Yeah, we've seen all the recent first chiefs of staff going-

Bateman: I mean, you know, part of that syndrome was the fact that they were the first ones. Because they were bright guys.

Q: Did you like them?

Bateman: I liked Leone better than Kaden. Kaden was a tough guy to like.

Q: In that first year, they came up with a plan to institute an income tax and reform school funding. And it didn't pass. Why not?

Bateman: Because the school funding program was incomplete as far as a lot of people were concerned and you know, passing an income tax is never easy. Dick Hughes tried it and failed before he had his sales tax and Bill Cahill tried it and failed. So you're talking about this is the third try for an income tax so you knew it had a lot of trouble and acrimony and frankly I wasn't in any great rush to help them.

Q: Were you thinking you'd be running against them?

Bateman: Well, yeah, I was thinking about running. But it wasn't so much that as it was, you know, I'd taken, I'd taken a lot-- I'd taken my bath in broad based taxes, I sponsored one, and I wasn't anxious to be a lead player in the next one.

Q: But you told us that it didn't cost you that much to have sponsored it.

Bateman: No, but I expect it would have if I'd done the second one. I always thought it would've, I don't know if it would've or not.

Q: Was the reaction to the income tax partisan? Were the Democrats for it because the governor was pushing it and the Republicans were against it?

Bateman: It was essentially a pretty partisan issue. But there were some Democrats-- his problem was he couldn't get enough Democrats to pass the program at first.

Q: Took him two years. What eventually-

Bateman: Well, I think the pressures-- you know, the powers of the governor, the arms of the governor are pretty long and if you're a governor who knows his powers or her powers, you can persuade a lot of people over a period of time.

Q: Did Gov. Byrne know his powers?

Bateman: Yeah, I think he did.

Q: Quickly?

Bateman: Well, maybe not quick-- yeah, he knew the system pretty well; he'd been around the Hughes administration, he was no-- he wasn't naïve.

Q: How does the governor's powers work in that context? What can a governor do to put pressure on a legislator to shift a position?

Bateman: Try to find out what you as a legislator was interested in.

Q: And make a deal.

Bateman: And make a deal. It's part of what goes on.

Q: Makes the system work, doesn't it?

Bateman: Oh sure.

Q: If you say the word deal and you shudder a little bit, but that's really what it's about, isn't it?

Bateman: Oh, sure. Absolutely. Compromise is totally essential to the governmental world.

Q: By the time they passed the income tax-- I guess the court shut the schools down that summer and that also helped them get it passed?

Bateman: Oh, yeah.

Q: But you voted against it?

Bateman: I did.

Q: By that time had you formed in your mind that you were going to run against this tax-hiking governor?

Bateman: About that time, yeah. It wasn't so much tax hiking governor, when I was-- this was really the last time that I could run. I was going to leave the Senate, I'd been there 10 years or nine years and so you know if I wanted to be governor, it had to be that time. I wasn't a guy that was gonna hang around and you know, I would do something else. That became quite obvious to me if I wanted to be governor, and I wanted to be governor. I knew more about policy than anybody in the legislature, practically, and it just made sense. But it wasn't Brendan Byrne so much; it wasn't the issues so much. That was really the time. And as I told you the real time for me to run was '69. I was hot, and it didn't go together.

Q: Did you get pressured by the Byrne administration to vote for the income tax?

Bateman: Oh, yeah.

Q: By him?

Bateman: Oh, sure. He talked to me several times about it.

Q: Alone in his office?

Bateman: Yeah.

Q: He'd call you in?

Bateman: Yeah.

Q: It wasn't something you wanted?

Bateman: <laughs> Not that he could give me.

Q: You wanted to be governor?

Bateman: Yeah, that's right. But really our people say that's the reason I did what I did. That's not the reason that I did it all. I was-- I wasn't convinced he had a good spending program, but everybody'll say that's bullshit, and I wasn't about to be a candidate who would, who had made the difference in two major broad-based taxes, not one.

Q: So we're now in the summer of '76 with the November of '77 election looming. When did you start running?

Bateman: Summer at '76. I had a big party at the convention, Republican convention.

Q: Where was the convention that year?

Bateman: It was in Kansas City, wasn't it? I think it was, yeah.

Q: Who else was interested in the Republican gubernatorial nomination?

Bateman: Oh, a whole bunch of people. Joe E. Woodcock (ph?) from Bergen County, who was a good state senator, really good guy. Frank McDermott for a while, but he got out of it. And there were a couple of others. It wasn't like the Democrat primary.

Q: Well, you must have sensed a weak incumbent.

Bateman: I didn't think Brendan was going to be the candidate. That's the reason it didn't-- I was almost convinced he couldn't win a primary-- what he'd get? 28 percent of the vote?

Q: Who did you think would win the Democratic primary?

Bateman: Guy from Hudson County, what was his name? But they never got together, there were five of them running against him-

Q: Joe LaFante?

Bateman: No. no. Paul Jordan, I think it was, yeah.

<crew talk>

Bateman: He dropped out, yeah. And then Ralph De Rose was in it, a whole bunch of guys that were in it. And none of them got together. If any two of them had gotten together, they'd have won. Which quite surprised me because it was almost a set up for him. He didn't have 30 percent of the votes and he was the nominee and he was the one I was more worried about, from the start.

Q: Because he was the incumbent?

Bateman: Incumbent, yes, and because of the tax situation. Because of the homestead rebate program which was the first, which was the state's first homestead rebate program. And that turned out to be the Achilles' heel of the election.

Q: Did the first checks go out in '77 or '76?

Bateman: '77.

Q: So the first checks went out with Brendan Byrne's name on them?

Bateman: Yeah, but it wasn't just that. It wasn't the checks, it was that all the people-- all the commuters from North Jersey and from my area and from the Camden area, the Haddonfield area, they were all paying income taxes to New York and Pennsylvania. So under this first income tax, they not only didn't have to pay New York, they paid New Jersey, which was good, they also got \$500 bucks in addition. So what happened was, and if you look at the election results, you'll see it, towns like Ridgewood, Bernardsville, my Bernardsville, I used to win five to one, I just barely carried because there were rich homeowners or wealthy homeowners who were commuters who had no new tax because they were paying the same-- they were paying a higher tax in New York actually and who got \$500 bucks to boot. They weren't about to trade that in for me.

Q: Very interesting.

Bateman: Yeah, that was the election.

Q: All right, we're going to take a break. When we continue we'll really plunge into this election of '77.

Bateman: What an election.

End of Bateman (1/11/07) Side A

Q: So did you think Brendan Byrne was going to run?

Bateman: I thought he would end up not running. All along, up 'til the last month, up 'til about a month before the election, I was convinced he was not gonna make it through.

Q: A month before the primary election?

Bateman: Maybe a couple of months, yeah.

Q: Like April?

Bateman: Yeah.

Q: Why? Was the income tax so unpopular?

Bateman: Well, he was unpopular at the moment, and, you know, Democrats were jumping on him from every direction, you know, five of them.

Q: Some from his own cabinet?

<crew talk>

Bateman: Yeah, Joe, that's right. Joe was in that. It just didn't look good for him. And I kept hearing rumors from the inside that he was pretty well decided not to run, maybe this was back in March, something like that. And the longer it went on, the more it became-- I became convinced that if they all stayed in, he'd win. But about that time I was having real problems with Tommy Kean, so I wasn't looking as much as--

Q: What kind of problems?

Bateman: Well, Tommy took me on on a bunch of issues that he thought were popular: capital punishment, he was for it, I was against it; I was a right to life. And, you know, there were a whole bunch of, about half a dozen issues that he focused on, which were pretty good fight issues.

Q: Were one of you more moderate and the other more conservative?

Bateman: I think I was much more moderate than Tom. He moderated fairly well later on, but then he wasn't particularly moderate and he forced me into-- what he did for me more than anything else, or did to me, was that on the tax position, he took a very tough anti-tax position in the primary and forced me kinda to do the same thing or I probably wouldn't have sustained myself for the primary.

Q: Did you debate him?

Bateman: Oh, yeah. Oh, yeah.

Q: And several others as well?

Bateman: Yeah.

Q: Who was better known? You or Kean?

Bateman: I was. But, you know, that's all relative. You think you're better known-- nobody knows who the hell you are. That's one of the great revelations when you're president of the senate or speaker of the house, nobody knows who you are. But it's different today, because he's been, the president of the senate's been governor, and you know, he's pretty well known and pretty well liked.

Q: Who were the key people in your campaign?

Bateman: Oh, gosh. My head finance guy was Dick Sellers who was president of Johnson & Johnson; Chris Daggett worked very hard in the campaign; Bill Taggart worked very hard. A whole bunch of pretty good people worked in the campaign. Lou Thurston.

Q: How did the Republican primary end up? We know you won, but was it close?

Bateman: No.

Q: What did you get and what did Kean get?

Bateman: I think I beat him two to one, something like that, two hundred and some thousand to a hundred thousand, something like that. He got whipped pretty good. But right in the middle of the primary, right in the middle of April, early May, I thought it was close, I really did. I thought he-- because, you know, we were playing to Republican audiences and he had some issues that resonated better with Republicans than my issues.

Q: Like capital punishment.

Bateman: Like capital punishment.

Q: Okay. So you win the primary and Brendan Byrne miraculously wins his primary. You said a few minutes ago that you feared him more than anybody else?

Bateman: Oh, yeah.

Q: Why?

Bateman: Because he was, one, he was governor, and the power of the incumbency is something I knew a little bit about, and two, I never thought I could handle him on the tax issue.

Q: Really?

Bateman: Never thought.

Q: That flies in the face of conventional logic which says that you should have had the inside track because he hiked the tax—

Bateman: Except the homestead rebates played a huge-- much larger role in that election than any other election, because this was the first one. The first rebate.

Q: When did it go out? What month?

Bateman: Well, the first check went out, I think they went out in July, something like that. July or August, right in that period. But I kept hearing rumors that something was happening in the treasury and that I should go down and demand to know what they were doing at night. This was about two weeks before the open election.

Q: What was that all about?

Bateman: Well, Brendan and I campaigned together on election day, which was pouring rain. We went to two or three different places, you know, he'd be there or I'd be there. I went home about two o'clock in the afternoon because it was just absolutely a downpour for 48 hours. I sat down and right at the top of my pile of stuff in the kitchen-- I sat down and my wife gave me my martini and we were saying, "Thank God, we're here," you know—

Q: Meaning, Thank God, it's over?

Bateman: Yeah. And right at the top of the pile was a letter, a "Dear Homeowner" letter from Brendan saying that "We're happy that you got your homestead rebate and your next rebate will be in March of next year." The treasury department had sent one of those to everybody in the state of New Jersey, every homeowner.

Q: Really. How interesting.

Bateman: That was, no matter-- when all the bullshit is done, that was the election, the homestead rebate, and I don't even know who brought that on. Somebody told me it was the guy who ran the assembly, from Trenton.

<crew talk>

Bateman: No, no. before Jeff. I'll think of his name. But, in any case, it was a stroke of genius because all of the Republicans who commuted to New York City were getting a free five hundred bucks and they didn't get any tax, because they were already paying the income tax.

Q: How did you handle the tax issue after the primary? You say Kean forced you to be against it.

Bateman: No, he didn't force me to be against it. His tough opposition made-- I had to kinda parrot what he said. I wasn't forced into it, but I was worried about losing the primary, frankly.

Q: So in the primary, you're a hard, anti-income tax guy?

Bateman: Yeah.

Q: And then it was Dick Coffee's idea?

Bateman: I heard it was Dick Coffee's idea; I don't know whose idea it was, but it was brilliant. It was brilliant at that moment. And neither Brendan nor I, because we talked about it, realized how important it was.

Q: So you're up against Brendan, he's hiked the income tax-

Bateman: Up against Brendan, and we start right out a week after the primary in our first debate. We had 13 debates. And we had a big debate at Princeton and I never told him this, but they had a house-- the Princeton gym was filled, 1,500 people, something like that, and my father was dying in Somerset Medical Center at the time and I should have never gone to the debate because by the time I got home he was dead, and I was- that was a very- it was the worse moment of my life, I think, my political life. I didn't wanna go, my heart wasn't in it, and-

Q: You felt you couldn't cancel?

Bateman: That's what my advisers told me, "You can't cancel."

Q: Was it a mistake to have so many debates?

Bateman: No, I think it was good. That didn't bother me. We had 13, he probably won eight and I probably won five, something like that.

Q: About half way in the election season, I believe, correct me if I'm wrong, you called a press conference and announced your economic plan. The Bateman/Simon plan. How important was Bill Simon in your campaign?

Bateman: He and Chris Daggett did that particular piece. They worked on the tax issue and-

Q: Simon had been U.S. Treasury Secretary.

Bateman: He'd been secretary of the treasury and at that time he was a high level kind of a-

Q: Well known.

Bateman: Well known and kinda respected; he was a tough treasury secretary and, you know, it's a lot of-- Brendan typically made it the "B.S." plan, which was wonderful really when you think about it. But that really didn't have any effect on it.

Q: No?

Bateman: No.

Q: Because when his people tell the story, they think that had a big effect.

Bateman: No, I think the big effect was the homestead rebate.

Q: They don't talk about that.

Bateman: Well, if you look at the election results, if you go back and read those election results, I had more votes in the cities than any Republican had ever had before, but I got wiped out in Ridgewood, Bernardsville, Morristown--

Q: Commuter towns?

Bateman: Commuter towns. Wiped out.

Q: How phony was your plan?

Bateman: It wasn't phony, but it-- it wasn't phony at all except it depended upon doing away with the homestead rebates, that's the only way I could make it work.

Q: Of course again, the way the Democratic people from that time portray it is, "Well, the numbers just didn't add up."

Bateman: Well, they didn't add up only because I endorsed an increase in the sales tax, that was part of the plan, a one cent increase in the sales tax, and the other unwritten part of the plan was to do away with the homestead rebates.

Q: That was unwritten?

Bateman: Well, we didn't brag about it but it was part of the plan. Let's say we downplayed it.

Q: Do you recall whether the media coverage of the tax issue worked to Byrne's advantage?

Bateman: Well, I think the-- at that time in September, the general opinion was that he was behind and I was ahead. I never really took that very seriously because nobody knew me, even then. But his ability to

focus on a "B.S." plan attracted the press; they liked that. You can't blame 'em for that; if I'd been writing I'd have found that quite fun to write about.

Q: Often the press subtly favors a governor or a president or whatever who makes the tough decision, who's willing to hike the tax. Did you sense that in the New Jersey media?

Bateman: Yeah, but I had very good, close relationships with the guys who wrote. I mean, I grew up in the press, I knew them all, I always got treated fairly. To a degree I got treated unfairly on that issue, but you know, it's something that I deserved. I always had a great-- I had great rapport with the press, good respect. I had two reporters that would constantly write stories about things I said that I never said, but I had confidence that they'd say it right, so I wasn't-- I have nothing but good feelings about the press in those days.

Q: When you say you had two reporters who would make up a quote for you, they just understood where you were coming from?

Bateman: Absolutely. John Davies being one. Boley (ph?) Schwartz being another. They just wrote-- they knew how I thought about issues and they'd quote me. <laughs> Didn't bother me.

Q: Because they got it right.

Bateman: They usually got it right, yes.

Q: What were your own polls showing during the campaign?

Bateman: About what the public polls were showing, that I was somewhat less ahead in September than the public polls were and then I slid from there, then I started recovering and then I got sick for a week, right in the gut of the campaign.

Q: In October?

Bateman: The last week in October. I had a fever of 103 for the whole week. That really took me out. I mean, I campaigned, but I really couldn't campaign.

Q: That's bad luck.

Bateman: Yeah, it happens. Shit happens, you know. But when I read Brendan's letter on the afternoon before the election, I sat and wrote my speech--

Q: Your concession speech? You knew that--

Bateman: That's why it was such a good speech, it was written ahead of time. One of the better speeches I made in the whole campaign, my concession speech.

Q: Did you buy television commercial time in those days?

Bateman: Oh, yeah; oh, yeah. Used TV; I got less than I had hoped for from my television advisers, they didn't do a good job, and probably it was because of me, but they didn't do a good job.

Q: You didn't like the commercials--

Bateman: I didn't particularly like the commercials and, you know, my problem was I had run a bunch of campaigns, and I did too much trying to run my own campaign instead of being the campaigner.

Q: They say that a candidate should never run his own campaign; is that true?

Bateman: I think that's true, yeah. I know it is true.

Q: You tried to micromanage your own campaign?

Bateman: Yeah, and you know, I'd run several campaigns, so I knew a little bit about it.

Q: Is there anything in hindsight that you would have done differently?

Bateman: Yeah.

Q: What?

Bateman: I tend to say what I think, I always did and that was part of my success with legislators, but I could have ridden out the campaign, I could have said I have to see what the composition of the

legislature that gets elected in this election to see what I might be able to do with the next legislature, without taking a specific position. I felt obligated to take a specific position because in June I said I was gonna.

Q: On taxes?

Bateman: Yeah.

Q: You could've danced around it?

Bateman: I could've ducked through it, yeah. I think I could've. Brendan would have been hounding me, but I think I could have made it through. But having said that, I don't think I could have survived the homestead rebates, I really don't. And see, they've never been that significant since because that was the only time in history when people had been paying to another state and then they turned and paid to New Jersey, so, you know, there was no impact on the income tax on two or three hundred thousand people.

Q: What did you say in your concession speech that you got so much extra time to write?

Bateman: Just said, you know, I tried and I lost and I think Brendan will be a good governor in the second term and it turns out that he was a better governor, and some of that was from that election, I think.

Q: How so? Explain.

Bateman: I think he was more thoughtful on issues in his second term. I think he was much more productive as a governor in his second term. Obviously, you get confidence in the re-election; to that extent, I gave him a lot of confidence. You know, he was "one-term, Byrne" when I was running and I made him, "two-term, Byrne."

Q: What was the margin of victory; do you recall?

Bateman: A couple hundred thousand, I think, two fifty, something like that. It wasn't close.

Q: Did you enjoy the campaign?

Bateman: Oh, I loved it. I had a better campaign than he did. I mean, I had people all around me, we had a ball, we had all kinds of volunteers, but you know, there's a real challenge running against an incumbent, let me tell you. I'd do things like, you know, everybody goes in the summertime to the Sussex horse show and I went up there on a Thursday, got there at seven o'clock in the morning, had a breakfast meeting with a lot of people, shook hands all day long, all day long. Left there about seven o'clock that night, totally wiped out but very satisfied. The next morning Brendan gets in a state helicopter, flies up to the Sussex horse show and signs a bill making the horse the New Jersey state animal. Now, who won that battle? I mean, you know, this campaigning is hard against an incumbent administration that knows what they're doing.

Q: Did you and Brendan Byrne manage to stay cordial and friendly during that campaign?

Bateman: Oh, yeah. Yep. Yes, we did. We had several instances-- you know, we had some fiery moments in debates and stuff like that, but we never, I never tried to take him down in anyway but properly and vice versa.

Q: Did you like one another?

Bateman: Yeah.

Q: You think you did, both of you?

Bateman: Yeah. I like Brendan.

Q: I know you like him today. Did you like him then?

Bateman: Yeah, I liked him then. Yeah.

Q: Have you seen much of one another over the years?

Bateman: Yeah. When I taught my Rutgers class, he came every year after he was governor and he offered me a cabinet job after the election.

Q: Did he really?

Bateman: Nobody knows that.

Q: What?

Bateman: Education.

Q: Why'd you turn it down?

Bateman: Didn't really have-- it was not my cup of tea. I wanted to be governor and when I didn't win, I figured I'd logically do something else.

Q: Did Brendan do anything in the '77 campaign that you thought was unfair or resented?

Bateman: Well, of course I resented the homestead rebate, but that's not unfair, that was a tactic, and a good one. No, no, campaign-wise, no. You know, the people around him did things and the people around me did things probably that one or the other would judge as pushing the envelope-

Q: Anything come to mind?

Bateman: Well, we had a Bateman train; some guy in South River or someplace had a truck that looked like a train and made it with horns, whistles and bells and you could put a lot of people in it and my kids used to take that train and follow Brendan's schedule around and it used to tee off the people around Brendan, I don't think it really got to him much.

Q: Your kids, one of whom is in the legislature now?

Bateman: Is about to announce for the Senate in the next few days.

Q: Is he? For Walter Kavanaugh's seat? The governor dominates the political scene in New Jersey.

Bateman: Absolutely.

Q: Is that good or bad.

Bateman: That's good.

Q: Why?

Bateman: Well, I think one person-- you know, we only elect one person. A lot of states elect different kinds of folks, attorney generals, lieutenant governors, comptrollers and you get a lot of elected officials-- I think having the responsibility basically on one person puts, you know, it's good for focus, it's good for-- if you're a good governor, you can get a lot of things done because of it. It puts a premium, of course, on the kind of people you bring into your administration. But basically I like the idea of one statewide official.

Q: We're going to get a lieutenant governor.

Bateman: Yeah, but they're elected together, so it won't be as much-- it's not an independent election, I don't think.

Q: There was a proposal for an elected state comptroller; it's now become an appointed state comptroller in Trenton currently; Are you in favor of an elected state comptroller or an appointed?

Bateman: No. I'm not. You know, the administration should have all the responsibility of running the executive branch of government and you know, elected cross checks never have been very attractive to me.

<crew talk>

End of Bateman (1/11/07) Side B