

Michael Aron: It's the morning of February 23rd, 2009. We're at the Eagleton Institute of Politics at Rutgers University in New Brunswick. We're here for the Thomas H. Kean archive of the Rutgers program on the governor. I'm Michael Aron of NJN news. This morning we're going to talk to Tony Cicatiello. Tony goes way back with Tom Kean, perhaps 35, 36 years. He was a close advisor to the governor in his early runs for office. He's long been considered part of Kean's kitchen cabinet. He never actually served in the Kean administration, but was always close to the center of the Kean action, or so it appeared. We'll find out what the reality is. Tony where are you from?

Anthony Cicatiello: From Youngstown, Ohio.

Michael Aron: And how did you get to New Jersey? And when?

Anthony Cicatiello: Actually, I went Ohio State University, got a scholarship to go to Ohio State. And went down there and actually ran a campaign in between my undergraduate and graduate school program. Then I went on for me PMA-- or what is it? Public Administration degree. Masters degree in Public Administration from-- actually at that time it was at the business school. So you had the benefit of business programs with the government programs, and it was very, very good. But I wanted to go to Washington. So I went down and interviewed at OMB [ph?]. And I actually had two interviews, one in the health area and one in the transportation area. And I was basically going to in one of those departments for OMB, but not sooner had I took some time to just relax after graduate school, never having a vacation all that time, took a little trip around the country, they put a freeze on. So I lost my job at OMB. And a friend of mine asked me if I'd come work for him. And it was at-- it was a lobbyist for Grocery Manufacturers of America. And so I became a lobbyist for a period of time. And I was very good at it.

Michael Aron: In Washington?

Anthony Cicatiello: In Washington, D.C. Huge trade association. Represented 13% of the GNP. But I got frustrated because you--

Michael Aron: Did you say you were very good at it?

Anthony Cicatiello: I was good at lobbying. They liked me. And they were-- they pushed me and gave me incentives to stay and all this sort of stuff. But I would get frustrated

because no sooner had I put in four changes to a piece of legislation, than there were four more added that were worse than the four I had taken out. So I got frustrated. And a friend of mine called me and said-- just when I was at my frustrated peak--

Michael Aron: What year?

Anthony Cicatiello: This was 1974. And he said, "I have a guy in New Jersey I want you to meet. He's running for Congress." And I said, "Yeah, just get me a plane ticket. I'm ready to go." I didn't even know who it was. So I came up, and I met this guy named Tom Kean. And we talked for like three hours. He liked me. And I liked him. I liked his philosophy. And he was supposed to have an uncontested primary, and fairly safe congressional seat. But this was 1974. This was just at the peak of the Watergate scandal. So I decided to quit my job in Washington and come up and work with Tom. No sooner had I got up here, which was about six weeks before the primary, Millicent Fenwick got in the race. So now I had a contested primary and one where she had a majority of the district. And Kean was in a very small part of the district. So I decided to stay and-- I had no choice, actually, because I quit my job in Washington. I came up here and ran his campaign for Congress. And we lost by 76 votes.

Michael Aron: Let's go back a second. You say you ran a campaign back in Ohio. A congressional campaign?

Anthony Cicatiello: No, it was a gubernatorial campaign. I was the scheduler, actually. It was one of these campaigns that-- it was very uncharacteristic of Ohio because they usually-- they had a very strong Republican party. And they usually picked the candidate. But it was coming after eight years of Jim Rhodes. And they decided-- this was 1970. They decided to open it up. And so there were five candidates. And my candidate ended up winning the primary. But then there was this huge scandal that occurred back then. It had to do with sinking fund problem. And the Cleveland Plain Dealer just went crazy on the issue and created a sort a negative environment. But I ended up staying through the whole Congressional-- the whole gubernatorial campaign. And that's where I got initiated into politics. Had never any idea that I was going to be in politics, at all. I really want-- I liked government. And I knew I wanted to work in government. But I ended up doing the campaigns as opposed to going into government.

Michael Aron: Republican candidate?

Anthony Cicatiello: Yeah, I worked for Robert Kennedy, believe it or not, in 1968. And I had-- that's when you were in college and you were very altruistic. I then sort of went

through a mental-- just evaluation. What I liked, what I didn't like. And also, just the people I met in the Republican Party were just exceptional. The people that I talked with, the people that I worked with were exceptional. And they had more of an influence on me than a lot of real hard party politics.

Michael Aron: You said that when you were Washington a friend of yours called and said there's someone I want you to meet up in New Jersey. Who was the friend?

Anthony Cicatiello: It was Mark Harroff [ph?] who had a firm in Washington named Smith and Harroff who did campaigns. And he, periodically, would call me. He says, "You've got to more campaigns. You know, you're good at that." All this sort of stuff. Just wanting to get me to do a campaign because he had a campaign that needed a campaign manager. But he caught me in a time when I was very frustrated with Washington and all that was going on there. And I decided to sort of take a leap of faith. Came up and met Tom Kean. I just liked him and decided to come.

Michael Aron: You said you liked his philosophy?

Anthony Cicatiello: Yeah.

Michael Aron: What was his philosophy at the time? What did you like?

Anthony Cicatiello: Well, he was unique in terms of the politics back then. He was very much into the issues. And the period of the time, the economic problems that were going on, the-- I mean at that time Nixon was trying just about everything. Price controls, all these different things were going on in Washington that were bizarre for Republicans and also for the country as a whole. So we had a lot of good, hard discussions about what government should be doing, the Great Society programs, what was working, what wasn't working. His philosophy was very much, I think who he is. He was very moderate, fiscally conservative, but also, moderate in the various programs. I mean his very first piece of legislation that he passed as an assemblyman, was the educational opportunity act, which was a direct relationship to all the-- what happened in the sixties. The--

Michael Aron: Civil Rights movement.

Anthony Cicatiello: Yes, the Civil Rights-- no actually the riots that occurred in '67 out of Newark. People don't realize that Tom Kean's district, when he became an

assemblyman, started from the central ward of Newark and went all the way out to Short Hills and Livingston. So-- where he lived, which was in Livingston. But he had the central ward.

Michael Aron: That helps explain why he did so well with African American voters in the '80s.

Anthony Cicatiello: It laid the groundwork because Mary Smith-- I mean, a lot of these people, these names you wouldn't know, but a lot of them were a part of that post riot period that were active in the community. And Kean felt that the way to solve some of these problems was really through education.

Michael Aron: The Kerner Commission report on civil disturbances was also around that period of time. Do you think he was responding to it to some degree?

Anthony Cicatiello: Well, I don't recall the details of that report, but I do remember that. I think Kean had his own particular approach that he-- yes, he responded to some of those things, but I think he knew Newark better than people would have expected.

Michael Aron: Did you know at the time that his family had a rich history in public life in this state?

Anthony Cicatiello: Yes, and when I came up to meet him I got a little profile that was given to me by the guy who asked me to come up for the campaign. And he gave me a little history of the family and a little bit about what was going on in the past, as well as currently. I mean his father was still active politically in the party. I mean I remember that Attorney General Richardson had just stayed at the home. I mean there were all these things going on during the Nixon administration. And the Keans were still active and involved--

Michael Aron: Did you meet his father? His father was a Congressman.

Anthony Cicatiello: Oh, yes. His father was a Congressman.

Michael Aron: Was he still a Congressman in '74?

Anthony Cicatiello: No, 195-- Former Congressman. But he was still active in party politics. And he still stayed in touch with things in Washington.

Michael Aron: What was he like, the father?

Anthony Cicatiello: He-- in many ways he was very much like Tom. I mean he was thoughtful, sincere, took time to learn the issues. He did not like the fact that Tom was considering a run for governor. He always wanted Tom to be the United States Senator from New Jersey. These were things-- I mean he and I got very close because--

Michael Aron: Robert Kean?

Anthony Cicatiello: Yes, Robert Kean. He and I got very close basically because one of the unique things-- one of my responsibilities in the campaign was actually to go and ask the father for contributions. The son, obvi-- sometime just couldn't do it and didn't feel like he should do it. So I would go and ask the father. So we would sit down and talk about what he was doing. I asked him for contributions in the Congressional race as well as when he ran for Congress-- or when he ran for governor.

Michael Aron: Alright so you moved to New Jersey because you liked this politician, Tom Kean, who's-- what about 15 years older than you?

Anthony Cicatiello: Yeah, he is. That's exactly what he is. Yeah. He's 19-- actually, 12 years older, yeah.

Michael Aron: And you think you're going to have an uncontested primary and Millicent Fenwick-- what was she at the time?

Anthony Cicatiello: At the time, she was the head of consumer affairs in the state. And she had such a great reputation. She was coming-- she was part of a Republican administration, which was, at that time, the Cahill administration. He had put her in as consumer affairs. She didn't realize that when a Democratic administration comes in, people leave or at least have the courtesy to submit their resignation. And then they put new people in. Well, she wasn't going to leave. But Brendan [ph?] asked her to resign at that time. And she was-- she couldn't believe that. And half of the people in the county said-- Somerset County, in particular-- people who had already asked Tom Kean to run for congress-- I mean a lot of the people had-- Peter Frelinghuysen, at that time, the

chairman of the Somerset County Republican-- all of them had told-- encouraged Tom Kean to run for Congress.

Michael Aron: Whose seat was it? Who was holding the seat?

Anthony Cicatiello: Peter Frelinghuysen.

Michael Aron: It was his seat. He was retiring?

Anthony Cicatiello: He was retiring.

Michael Aron: And it was a Republican district?

Anthony Cicatiello: Oh, solidly Republican. It started in Livingston and Short Hills, went through the southern part of Morris County, and all of Somerset County. And then it had a little bit of Mercer County. It had Princeton and a few towns down there.

Michael Aron: And was Kean a sitting assemblyman, at that time?

Anthony Cicatiello: Yes.

Michael Aron: Was he an assembly leader at the time?

Anthony Cicatiello: He had just left. I mean because Brendan had won with the historic victory that he had, and brought in, at that time-- he brought in 66 Democrats into the assembly. Tom won and barely won at that time, in the assembly-- in a safe district. But he went from speaker-- he went from speaker of the assembly to minority leader in a matter of a year. And so those things change your perspective. After having been in power like he was as speaker of the assembly, all of a sudden he's now minority leader. And not only minority leader, minority leader of fourteen. I mean that is, not only did they have a veto-proof assembly, I mean they could have done anything they wanted and never even considered the Republicans there.

Michael Aron: Who were the key Republican leaders or bosses in the district back then that you recall?

Anthony Cicatiello: John Renna was still-- was active as the county chairman--

Michael Aron: Of Essex?

Anthony Cicatiello: Essex, right. You're saying Republican leaders?

Michael Aron: Republican leaders in the congressional district who you had to appeal to if you were going to be the nominee.

Anthony Cicatiello: Luke Gray down in Somerset County. Morris County was pretty wide open. That is what is considered an open county. The county chairman has a role, but not that much. And Essex County was John Renna. And also, John Entile [ph?] some of those people that had been there for a long time, we had to make some courteous discussions with various people in the county, and make sure that we touched all bases.

Michael Aron: 1974 was the year of this election? It was also, I believe, the year that Nixon left office? Right, the summer of '74? What impact did Watergate have on this election?

Anthony Cicatiello: Oh, just tremendous. It's different-- if I can bring it back to today, the election in 2009, if this is relevant, the election in 2008 was so dramatic economically. Watergate was an emotional election. I mean there was this feeling of this guy is corrupt, he's a liar-- there were all these things around the president, but it didn't filter down deep into the populace as it did-- as 2008 did with the economy and such a difficult situation. But 2000-- but 1974, there was just this, "I want these people out of office. They all look like crooks." If you had an R-- if there was an R beside your name, you ran away from it. But now-- and this was the primary that we did. And it was June, but it still was all the Watergate. It was very much going to be a part of the campaign. And everybody had to deal with that. And the Democrats were playing to that issue.

Michael Aron: Who were they putting up for office? Do you recall?

Anthony Cicatiello: God, you know, I can't even remember.

Michael Aron: Do you recall what Tom Kean said about Watergate and Richard Nixon in the primary campaign?

Anthony Cicatiello: Basically, that issue we all played as it was evolving. You encouraged more openness. I mean you wanted the investigation to go forward. What was going on in Washington was basically what people were saying. I mean as a Republican all you can say is that-- let's get to the truth. And whatever the truth may be, let's get to it.

Michael Aron: Why did Millicent Fenwick win the primary?

Anthony Cicatiello: Basically, the discipline-- back then the discipline of the county vote-- if you looked at the tallies, Tom-- which, in the Morris County parts of the district, won those. He won basically every municipality except maybe one, the one that was closest to Somerset. All of Somerset County-- it was a machine back then. Luke Gray ran it. He got the vote out. I mean there were some--

Michael Aron: And she was a Somerset County person. And he was an Essex County person.

Anthony Cicatiello: He was an Essex County person. See, the interesting thing about the Keans. The Keans come from an aristocratic family. But they were not part of that Somerset aristocratic crowd, the crowd of the Dillons, and the Fenwicks, and the Frelinghuysens. The Keans stayed in Essex County. That was sort of like another world to the political-- that little political machine down there, which was much more controlled. The Essex County machine is different than the Somerset County machine. It's-- the money crowd really control that. Essex County, it was tougher. You had Newark to deal with. You had other aspects of political life, broader issues.

Michael Aron: What was the Kean money based on?

Anthony Cicatiello: It came from utilities, primarily. But it went all the way back to railroads, as well. That's where it started. But it filtered in through the utility business, both gas and water.

Michael Aron: What were the styles of Kean and Fenwick as campaigners back then?

Anthony Cicatiello: It was the most genteel campaign. I mean I was just-- I didn't have much hair, and I was pulling it out then. And it was just the kind of thing that I think the public would have enjoyed. It was basically two people saying how much they respected

each other and how they enjoyed this debate on the issues because this is what needs to be done in politics. It was just one of these incredibly fun campaigns if you were a person listening because you had people debating the issues, genuinely debating the issues and having differences of opinion, even as Republicans. But it was gentle, no backbiting, no heavy fighting. All the back room stuff that I had to deal with as the campaign manager-- and dealing with the party people and county chairman, both in Essex, Morris, and the others, that was a little rougher. But we tried to break through the Somerset controlled environment by staging little things, having Keans name appear at certain things. Surprise them. They didn't stand for any of that stuff back then. So it was a different ball game than it is now. I mean it was much more controlled. And Luke Gray knew how to run a county.

Michael Aron: Who was Luke Gray?

Anthony Cicatiello: Luke Gray was a long time chairman-- Republican chairman of Somerset County who always controlled-- matter of fact, always had a little money in his back pocket that he can spend whenever he needed it. And it was because he would go into the horse country area and get the money that he needed to run the party. I mean they wanted a certain gentle environment in that area. And they got what they wanted in that county. And it's a very well run county. And it's also-- has some very good public officials that they bring to the forefront.

Michael Aron: There were some Republican congressman at the time supporting Richard Nixon. Maraziti, Sandman, do you recall whether Tom Kean criticized them?

Anthony Cicatiello: No. I mean Maraziti was in Morris County, as well, in part of the district that we-- the northern part of Morris County. He was not critical of them. I mean it was-- as it got-- if he had gotten by the primary in June, and went into the general election, then there might have been a little more contention. But Maraziti stayed with the president all the way until the very end, even when it became apparent that some impeachment would take place.

Michael Aron: Was it a close primary, do you recall?

Anthony Cicatiello: For?

Michael Aron: Fenwick and Kean.

Anthony Cicatiello: Oh, yeah. 76 votes.

Michael Aron: Wow, 76 votes.

Anthony Cicatiello: Yeah. It was-- you know, we had just tremendous turn out in Essex County, but we only had two towns. The Morris County section was very solid for Kean. And it was just Somerset County. There were some districts in Somerset County where Tom would get three votes out of fifty cast.

Michael Aron: So what posture did he assume upon defeat in the primary?

Anthony Cicatiello: Well, you know this was a turning point, I think, for Tom. And it was-- for me as I look back, I think his whole perspective changed. Where his focus was Washington, after this defeat he became a lot more introspective in the sense of what he wanted to do in Trenton. He was still minority leader. He still had a term to finish up there. And he wanted to go on and do some things in the state. Both of his boys, the twin boys, were six years old at the time. And Debbie was pregnant with Alexandra. And at that time, he just-- his focus was Washington, but it shifted because he knew he wasn't going to Washington now. And Millicent ended up winning the district, and winning the congressional seat, and went on the serve, I think about five terms. Four terms and then she ran for the United States Senate. But he knew that that was no longer an option because it was a safe congressional seat. And that his towns would probably never get moved around that much. They would probably stay in that district. So his focus shifted to New Jersey. And in doing that, because the boys were six at the time and started school, and he knew from the days when he was in school, having to go to school on your own, the separation of the family from you as a child and growing up. He didn't want that for his kids. He went to private school. And he literally got on a train and would go up to Massachusetts. And that's where he went to school and would come back to Washington. It was a different time. The period that he went to school-- he was born in '35, and he was going to school during the war period and also the post-war period. So that's when he was in private school. But there-- and the Congress, at that time, would go down to Washington and, basically, his parents would stay. They had a home down there. And they would stay in Washington because you didn't have the back and forth. But the dislocation of the family he didn't want. He wanted to keep his family together. So with the boys reaching school age, I feel that his focus shifted to New Jersey. And that's when everything became more New Jersey. He didn't want them-- to uproot them. Go down to Washington and-- we've talked about it a little bit. And he kind of agrees, but I think if something had come up, he might have take-- he might have considered Washington again, but I think his focus became more New Jersey.

Michael Aron: He continued to serve in the legislature until, when?

Anthony Cicatiello: 1977.

Michael Aron: '77. He chose that year to run for governor. What was your role with him after he lost the primary? What was your relationship?

Anthony Cicatiello: Basically, I got a job here in New Jersey. And I went to work for Merck and Company in their Rahway offices. And I decided to stay. I mean my focus changed, too. I decided that I didn't want to get into all of this political running around the states and doing campaigns for people that I didn't know. I had to believe in the candidates that I wanted to work for. I had to have a personal connection. And so I decided that I would stay with him and work with him. Sort of, take a gamble in the sense of if you're going to do something in public life, go with someone that has the ideals and has the values that you find. Don't go trying to search around the political world. Just go with so-- I know who he is. I know what he stands for. Those are the things that I want to stay with. So I decided to stay with him. And I continued to work with him. At Merck I was able to work my job and then do things for him at night.

Michael Aron: How did you get your job at Merck?

Anthony Cicatiello: That was-- at that time, Merck was very-- just starting government affairs. And they had no government affairs department. They didn't even have somebody that would go down to Trenton. Back then Merck was a proprietary drug maker. They only made drugs that they manufactured, that they actually discovered. So they didn't have a lot of issues. But all of a sudden generics became an issue. And legislatures all around the country were starting to talk about generic drugs as a way of reducing costs. And Merck, being a proprietary drug maker, needed to begin to educate the public about what is a generic drug as opposed to proprietary drug. And matter of fact, they hired me before they actually hired the top guy. I was young at the time, but they needed somebody in the state. So they hired me and that's how I got the job. It was purely-- I went around. Tom recommended to me, he said, "This state has a lot drug companies." He said, "You should go an interview with the various drug companies." Because I had Washington experience. I mean I had that on my resume, so I could go around to these companies and say, "I have some experience in government affairs, and I understand corporate life." Because I was representing, really all the big manufacturers of food, Procter and Gamble, General Mills, General Food, those were all the companies that I represented when I was in Washington. So I had the corporate experience along with the government experience.

Michael Aron: And this job enabled you to keep a hand in with Tom Kean as a, what? As an advisor?

Anthony Cicatiello: As an advisor. I, basically we would-- periodically I'd go visit. I'd travel with him, hear him speak, comment-- and we would always talk about different issues. Where things are going. And I got the job at Merck in 1974. The whole presidential campaign started up around '75. And that was the time that Ford was in office. He had just pardoned Nixon. So it was stirring up 1975. That was the emergence of Ronald Reagan. So you had a lot of rumbling within the Republican Party at that time. And Tom's father, the former congressman Bob Kean, was very close to Jerry Ford. So there was a lot of interplay with the president at the time. And that's where we decided to, sort of, help the president as he was coming into his election. Tom sat down with and he said, "What do you think of the presidential election?" And I said, at that time, I said that I thought the economy was moving in the right direction. If you remember, the early part of the '70s was a very, very difficult time for this country. Not only did we have Watergate and a presidency that was always sidetracked with extraneous issues, as opposed to the economy, also experimenting with a lot of different things, but you also had the embargo. You had the Arab oil embargo, and you had all these things playing into an economy. It was a really tough economy. But all of a sudden I felt that the president was going to be the beneficiary of the economy starting to move out. And he was. And the economy did start coming out in '75, and emerging in '76.

Michael Aron: I want to ask you about the '76 campaign in a minute. But, going back-- do you recall if Kean's father had any reaction to his losing the primary or any advice to his son?

Anthony Cicatiello: Yeah, he was very disappointed. As a matter of fact, I learned a lot about him at that time because those old-time congressman really knew their numbers. They could sit, and they could look at those districts and know exactly the numbers that they needed. As we saw the numbers coming out of Livingston and Short Hills, he knew that there was a chance that he could win. But he also knew that there was that problem down there in Somerset County. And if that porality [ph?], if the porality that we were getting out of Essex, those two towns in Essex, would offset the poralities that-- huge difference that would occur down in Somerset County. And we almost did. We did well in Morris County, which was surprising to a lot of people. In fact, Kean took a good bit of Morris County, all the towns in Morris County, except for one. But it was understanding those numbers-- how they knew them. They knew-- they could tell by the calls that were coming and the numbers that they were getting, whether things were going right or wrong. He was very disappointed. He wanted Tom in that Congress.

Michael Aron: You say that Tom shifted his focus to state politics because now the seat was filled by a Republican, it looked like it would be-- How do you think that sat with Robert Kean?

Anthony Cicatiello: Well, I think that's when he and I would talk a lot. I said, "You know, Mr. Kean--," I always referred to him as Mr. Kean. And I said, "You know, Tom has these-- he has good instincts for this state." And it was just something you could watch and see. The very first speech I heard Tom Kean give, I didn't know who he was. I came up here to r-- I came up to New Jersey in 1973 to speak to the New Jersey Food Council. We had all of this legislation, very complex legislation in Washington at the time. Had to do with nutrition labeling, discard-- putting dates on when you could let go of things, when things should be stored. All the states were doing different things. They were requiring all this different information on food containers. So I came up to hear-- I had to advise, basically, the executive committee of the food council and ask them for support. They said, "Why don't you stay for dinner, and then go back?" And I said, "Fine." So I listened to the speaker of the assembly. His name was Tom Kean. And back in Washington, at that time, we were all reading David Halberstam's book, "The Best and the Brightest". And here I'm sitting in this New Jersey Food Council meeting, and this guy is talking about-- very articulate, talking about "The Best and the Brightest." I'm saying, "Yeah, New Jersey." But the interesting thing of that whole speech is that he used the one example that is probably the one that is used most often. Where Lyndon Johnson goes back to Sam Rayburn and he talks about his first cabinet meeting. And he basically says, "God, Sam you should see all these people. The president of American Motors, the dean of this school, that school." And Sam Rayburn looked at Lyndon and said, "You know, Lyndon, I just wish one of them had run for sheriff." Now that story-- and you know why he told that story? Because there was a sheriff in the audience that I didn't know. But I asked him about that afterwards. He said the county sheriff was in the audience. It just shows the man.

Michael Aron: What does it show? That he has good political feel?

Anthony Cicatiello: Good political feel, knows his audience, knows exactly-- and he's always on message. All this-- I remember after Tom got into office-- and you probably knew. And I know that a lot people looked at Tom as he wasn't a good speaker. They said, oh he went to classes. We never sent him to any classes. We never did any of that stuff. I mean he talked funny. And half the time I didn't hear that. Every once in awhile I would hear a rolled out r. I mean but it was New Jersey so I didn't. Everybody talks funny in New Jersey. Being from Ohio, I thought everybody was-- had a little accent. But the thing is, he knew-- first of all he had to understand speaking because he did have the

stuttering problem that he had to work his way through. And not only the stuttering problem--

Michael Aron: As a child?

Anthony Cicatiello: As a child. As a child. But, what it did for him, basically, was-- he also understood music. He understood breathing and singing because he was a big opera fan. And if you listen to Tom, Tom speaks really down from the deep part of his v-- in his chest. And basically it's that baritone voice that he has that comes out of understanding both music and overcoming that ability to stutter. And every once in awhile he'll stutter. He'll go back into that basically because he's too anxious to make a comment. But he slowed his speech down. It comes out very strong. And he has a nice big baritone voice and that's bec-- I mean his speaking is always-- in my opinion has always been right there. But he also understands his audience and knows it. One time I asked him to come in for-- to speak at a group. And it was sort of a nothing event. It was the hundred and fiftieth anniversary of McCarter & English. And he came in and gave one of the nicest speeches. And I don't know who did the work up on it. I sent some information down because McCarter-- there were many McCarters involved in politics in New Jersey over the years. They started PSE & G. One of the McCarter brothers started the law firm, and all that. Well, he made this wonderful speech. And one of the lawyers came up to me. He said, "You know this guy is always on." And that's how Tom Kean was. The state of New Jersey got a governor for eight years who was always on. And by that I mean he worked like no other governor I've ever seen. I mean I only know a few governors. And the one in Ohio-- the candidate that I worked with was very much the same way, a real hardworking guy. But I used to ask Debbie, "Does he sleep?" because I could tell-- sometimes I would have things with him when he was up early. When he's up early his eyes don't open up. He looks Chinese because he's-- basically he's not a morning person. He's much more of an evening person. But I asked her, "Does he sleep?" And she says, "No, he was working until two, three in the morning." He could work on three, four hours sleep. And I don't know how he did it. And I used to complain with Cary Edwards. I don't-- we could probably get to this later on. I complained to Cary. I said, "Cary, your memos are too--". Tom would show me his homework, and I mean the memos were just this thick. And I would say to Cary, you're going to kill the guy. And he would say, "Come here." So one time I went into Cary's office and he took Tom's briefcase out. And you would go through the memos, and on page 32 there would be changes. And you would just say, "What's he doing reading all this stuff?" He was very much a speed-reader. And I used to watch him go through books. We would sit on the beach up at Fishers Island and literally read books in a couple of days, big thick books. I remember one summer we were into Edmund Morris's biography on Teddy Roosevelt. They had a couple of volumes.

Michael Aron: You would read, simultaneously, the same book?

Anthony Cicatiello: We would read the same books, but I could never keep up with him.

Michael Aron: Fishers Island, the family had a house on Fishers Island?

Anthony Cicatiello: Family, yeah. Basically, those were a lot of Debbie's friends. A lot of people from Delaware settled on Fishers Island as a summer home. And there were a lot of Debbie's friends. I don't--

Michael Aron: What's Debbie's story? What's Debbie Kean's background? How did he meet Debbie Kean?

Anthony Cicatiello: Actually, it was arranged I think. It was-- somebody wanted to introduce him. Just sort of like, I have a friend that you'd be great for, that kind of thing. And I can't remember, exactly. There was a Princeton party, too, where I think they'd met. And then Tom followed up when he found out she was from Delaware. He followed up, and he had friends down there. He had some relatives down there. And they went there. And that's where he actually-- he invited her over to the house, or one of his relative's house one time. And that's how it all started.

Michael Aron: What was the state wide political landscape like at the time that Kean lost the primary? What was going on?

Anthony Cicatiello: At that time it had changed so dramatically. I mean we had come out of very strong Republican legislative years. And there were very strong Democratic governors, as well. But you had a Republican governor who was defeated after one term. Governor Cahill, which was-- in four years in New Jersey, often times you really can't get everything done. But because of that conservative element, because of the Sandman competition, all of that, the party was just in a shamble. Plus, not only the fight that was going on here in New Jersey, then you had Watergate to add to it. The party was broke. Basically, Webster Todd, Christie Whitman's father, was paying for the electric bills just to keep the state party open. And it was everybody for themselves. And Tom, if he had won, the congressional seat would have at least been a part of that leadership that was going to bring the party along. But when he decided to-- when he lost that race and focused more on New Jersey, he did start to work with the party and bring more active participation, and actually recruit people to run for office.

Michael Aron: From our interviews with Brendan Byrne archive we know that the debate over whether to impose a state income tax dominated political life in the state during that period of time. Do you recall how Tom Kean positioned himself on that question?

Anthony Cicatiello: He was very open, and also he felt that it was the kind of issue that you had to let every legislator decide for themselves. I mean he didn't push any particular way. But he was also probably the best debater that the Republicans had in terms of going on television and doing different things. I remember the Dick Leone [ph?] debates with Tom Kean were exceptional. I mean those were things to really listen to.

Michael Aron: Those were on New Jersey network.

Anthony Cicatiello: New Jersey network and they even did Channel 2 news. I remember going with Tom to the Channel 2 when they-- it was a big issue. It was a primary issue. And everybody-- he eventually got to the point where I think he voted for a tax. But he did not push anybody or a party line in that particular way. He allowed the candidates-- he allowed every individual member of the legislature to do what they wanted.

Michael Aron: Alright you say that Congressman Kean was close to President Ford. And you and Tom Kean got involved in the New Jersey effort to reelect President Ford-- or to elect President Ford. He was never really elected.

Anthony Cicatiello: He wasn't elected, no.

Michael Aron: What role did Tom Kean play in that presidential campaign?

Anthony Cicatiello: We talked about it and he-- because his father was active with the president and also he was to a great extent. At that time in 1975-- or 1976, he was basically the-- he was the Republican leader, or one of the leaders. And also, he had the kind of statewide perspective on issues because being the speaker of the assembly prior to being the minority leader, he was very active in getting around the state and doing a lot of speaking. So he had a statewide perspective. And the father--

Michael Aron: Was he the chairman of the Ford campaign?

Anthony Cicatiello: No. He became-- Yes, he became chairman of the committee to reelect President Ford.

Michael Aron: Did he surrogate speak on behalf of--?

Anthony Cicatiello: Oh yes, he was the campaign manager. Dick Cheney was our boss, at that time. And we, to a great extent-- he was the campaign manager--

Michael Aron: Cheney was managing the Ford campaign--?

Anthony Cicatiello: He was the chief of staff.

Michael Aron: Chief of staff, in the White House.

Anthony Cicatiello: In the White House, right. And I was the executive director. So we both, basic--

Michael Aron: Did you ever get to talk to Cheney?

Anthony Cicatiello: Oh yeah, periodically, when I needed money. <laughs> We would talk to the various-- Cheney, and then there were also surrogates underneath him that we worked with.

Michael Aron: Was there a U.S. Senate election in '76 in this state, as well?

Anthony Cicatiello: Yes, in 1976 there--

Michael Aron: Was that Harrison Williams and David Norcross?

Anthony Cicatiello: Harrison Williams, David Norcross, right.

Michael Aron: Did Tom Kean get involved in that election?

Anthony Cicatiello: He did not.

Michael Aron: Why not?

Anthony Cicatiello: Well, because that was a tricky part of dealing with the Ford campaign. Ford, periodically, needed various votes, and also knew Harrison Williams very well. So it was a real juggling act. And it was difficult to deal with, basically, because there were opportunities that we could have helped Dave in terms of the campaign, but the White House didn't want certain things to happen. So you had to be very cautious in what you did, and how you did it, and who was in the room when you did some things because Ford was here twice. Ford actually came twice and--

Michael Aron: Do you remember where?

Anthony Cicatiello: He was down in Atlantic City, once. And he was in Union County. He went into Maddie Rinaldo's [ph?] district, right in Union-- right near Kean College, there. We had a reception there. That was-- that time, in particular, when he was in Union County was right after Ford had made that statement in the debate that Eastern Europeans were not under Communist rule. So we had a lot of Polish people that we brought together to have Ford meet and also to calm them down. When a campaign is moving it gets a little bit of a rhythm. And if a candidate makes a mistake like that, everything sort of stops. And you have to reach out to the groups that you normally would not speak to, bring them back in, and then get going again. It's hard to explain, but you have those issues. And when Ford made that statement, we had to deal with that issue of Eastern Europeans. And we were able to do that. And we brought them into Union County.

Michael Aron: Ford lost the presidential election to Jimmy Carter. Who won New Jersey?

Anthony Cicatiello: President Ford, by 60,000 votes. I remember telling Tom, back when we were thinking about it. I remember telling him that I personally don't think that this guy, this candidate President Carter, or this candidate Governor Carter, is going to sell in Jersey City, or Hudson County. Somebody that talks like that is not necessarily going to really convince a lot of the labor guys that we know-- or we-- union guys that we understand are going to go along with someone like that. Maybe it's a North, South situation, I don't know. But it just-- it wasn't going to sell. So we actually-- our campaign actually targeted a lot of what was going in Hudson County. Tom Kean-- or President Ford lost Hudson County by 22,000 votes, which was unheard of.

Michael Aron: That's a small margin for any Republican--

Anthony Cicatiello: That's a small margin for a Republican. I mean Hudson County-- you know Essex County, 40, 50, 60,000 votes. He also won Bergen [ph?] County. President Ford won Bergen County by 60,000 votes.

Michael Aron: Did Nelson Rockefeller run against Gerald Ford for the nomination that year, or--?

Anthony Cicatiello: No, he was--

Michael Aron: Or did he come in to do-- What was Rockefeller's relationship to Ford, at the time?

Anthony Cicatiello: He was appointed vice president.

Michael Aron: He was the vice president?

Anthony Cicatiello: Right. He was appointed. And that was the first-- that whole law, that was the first time that the appointment process after a president steps down, that's when that law was first used where the president-- you now when a vice president-- Spiro Agnew left office in disgrace because of the scandal. So Nixon appoints, for the first time, a vice president. And that was the first time that law was actually used. And he appoints Gerald Ford, which was very well received. I mean bringing somebody in from the people's chamber. So President Ford is there. And then Nixon goes through that whole thing. So he moves up. And then Ford appoints Rockefeller.

Michael Aron: You're saying this was the first time an appointed vice president stepped up into the presidency. Prior to that elected vice presidents had stepped up. So Ford appointed Rockefeller vice president. And did Rockefeller campaign in New Jersey?

Anthony Cicatiello: He did not. He did not. It was Dole who came in. it was the candidate who came. But Rockefeller came in for smaller th-- Yes, as a matter of fact, he did. I remember doing some actuaries with him. Yeah, right. I'd forgotten that, but he did come in for certain events. But he-- the issue in our case was just making sure that the Ford people and what we needed to do with the various ethnic groups, everything worked out along the lines that we had actually planned out with the White House. And then the only that we had to worry about was really Hudson County and some of the Democratic counties. And when we felt that we were having an impact in those areas, we

actually told a lot of the White House people to stay out. Matter of fact, they were always upset with us because they never thought we had enough money to do what we needed to do. And I asked them for a little bit more money at the end of the campaign. But we didn't need that much. We just need to continue to do what we were doing.

Michael Aron: We were talking about Harrison Williams a moment ago. Do you know what Robert Kean's opinion of Harrison Williams was? He had run against Williams for the senate at some point. Do you know what year they ran against each other?

Anthony Cicatiello: 1958.

Michael Aron: '58. So what did Kean, Sr. think of Williams?

Anthony Cicatiello: Yeah, not much. He never said a lot of-- he never got into a lot of specifics because he had lost that race, and there were a number of reasons. He didn't do a lot of things that he should have done. They took a lot of things for granted. This was 1958 and Eisenhower didn't do some things that they thought should have been done. I mean there were a lot of things that were happening at that time, that-- and he didn't run a good campaign from what I gathered among the party people. But I think he did not have much respect for Harrison Williams back then. And then when all of this-- he wasn't around-- I don't think he was around when all of that took place. But it was truly, truly ironic to have the person who defeated his father-- to have Governor Kean, then appoint someone to fill the seat of Harrison Williams.

Michael Aron: When Harrison Williams got in trouble over the Abscam scandal?

Anthony Cicatiello: Abscam thing, yeah. Goes to show you, politics can go all the way around. Even though he lost in 1958, his son was able to appoint somebody to fill the seat.

Michael Aron: Somebody from those Somerset County moneyed Republicans, who you were talking about 45 minutes ago.

Anthony Cicatiello: Yes. Who Tom was never really a part of, and most of those people didn't...

Michael Aron: Nicholas Brady [ph?].

Anthony Cicatiello: Nick Brady. Most of those people didn't contribute to Tom when I was running those campaigns. It was interesting for me. I would always tell Tom, "These are your people." I'm saying it's like me going into Youngstown, Ohio and going into certain wards. I mean I would have expected some support there. And I would get this pushback from his people, and I could never understand some of the thinking that went along there.

Michael Aron: But you're saying they weren't really his people.

Anthony Cicatiello: No, they weren't. When I step back to understand it, the Keans were unique, politically unique. They didn't ride the horses. They didn't do all those things. They were very close to the Rockefellers and active politically, as the Rockefellers were, but they were not part of that set.

Michael Aron: Was Tom Kean friendly with Nelson Rockefeller?

Anthony Cicatiello: Yes. And I think if there was ever anything that he might have done in terms of national senate or anything like that, I think they would have been involved in, but he never felt he needed that.

Michael Aron: So Ford succeeds in New Jersey by fails nationally. Tom Kean is doing-- go ahead.

Anthony Cicatiello: One of the nice things that President Ford did, because we were the only eastern state that supported him and won, he invited us all down to the White House. Back then we had a very young staff. It was Greg Stevens [ph?] and we were, basically all of us, except for Web Todd's [ph?], Eleanor Todd [ph?], was my scheduler. And she was in her seventies back then, I think, or late sixties, something like that. But we all went down to the White House, and he gave us a day of touring the White House, and he also agreed to this.

Michael Aron: Who do you recall going on that trip?

Anthony Cicatiello: There were 10 of us, myself-- we all took the train down-- Greg Stevens-- we have great pictures of that-- John Lebutlia [ph?]- some of the staff, I can't even remember their names, because I had hired them. They were so young.

Michael Aron: Eleanor Todd.

Anthony Cicatiello: Eleanor Todd, and I can't remember all of them. But there were about...

Michael Aron: Tom Kean.

Anthony Cicatiello: And Tom Kean, and Tom introduced each one of us when we went in the oval office, and we all had pictures, and we brought out-- we brought with us a "Jersey Loves Jerry" sign, which he just loved. And it was sad, because when we had the tour of the White House, I actually, believe it or not-- this is sort of an inside story-- everybody else went on a tour of the White House. I went in a back room and met with John Dierdorf [ph?] and Doug Bailey [ph?] and basically started planning the campaign for the governorship in...

Michael Aron: Really? Dierdorf and Bailey were what at the time?

Anthony Cicatiello: Bailey and Dierdorf were political consultants.

Michael Aron: Consultants, and they were at the White House?

Anthony Cicatiello: They were at the White House. They had worked with the president, so we had a meeting in the back.

Michael Aron: Were there offices in the White House?

Anthony Cicatiello: No, no.

Michael Aron: <inaudible>.

Anthony Cicatiello: <laughs> Back then it was a different time. You could actually have political meetings in the White House. No, they were just there waiting for me, and I went up in one of the offices, and we sat down and started talking about the campaign.

Michael Aron: So you're the quintessential backroom guy. <laughter>

Anthony Cicatiello: I mean it was something that Tom didn't give me explicit instructions on, on whether or not he wanted to leave the assembly. But this was 1976, and I was just-- at that particular point in time, I didn't think he wanted to stay in the legislature. But we didn't talk about it, but this was December of 1976, and I was just getting-- as I do, I quietly get my stuff together, talk with various people and then see when he's ready to make a move.

Michael Aron: So it was 11 months or 10 months before the next gubernatorial election.

Anthony Cicatiello: Right.

Michael Aron: Let's take a little break and talk about that election when we resume. Okay?

Anthony Cicatiello: Okay. Yeah, wherever you want to stop.

<crew talk>

Michael Aron: Tony, we left off with the thoughts of a '77 run for governor in your mind in the White House. Let's go back a bit and talk about Tom Kean's career in the Assembly, as he prepares to present himself to the state in a gubernatorial primary. What are the highlights of his Assembly career?

Anthony Cicatiello: All right. Well, that's one of the strengths of Tom Kean. I thought he had probably one of the best careers. In that 10-year period that he was in the Assembly from '68 to '78, he had practically some of the premiere legislation that he had introduced. He introduced the legislation on the Department of Environmental Protection.

Michael Aron: Creating it.

Anthony Cicatiello: Creating it, actually creating a department. You have to realize, I mean he was there in 1968. I mean back then the environment was not high on a lot of people's minds, so it was just coming into the fold, and it was the opportunity to begin the process of creating that department. He had major legislation in education. He always had issues in education, and he also had-- I don't know all the specifics in some of the economic development areas, but he was there on issues of taxation and also credits for

different kinds of taxes, for businesses and things like that. I mean, he had a good, solid-- from a Republican's perspective, he had a good, solid base.

Michael Aron: Was ethics one of his issues at that time?

Anthony Cicatiello: Yes, yes. That was an issue but it wasn't-- it came out of that Cahill [ph?] period where you had a couple of the cabinet people that had problems, and there were some scandals there. But it basically had to do with-- it didn't get as broad, what I would call, the kind of awareness among the people that other things did. And the environment, I think, was one of those things that he was really very solid in.

Michael Aron: I'm reminded that whatever he did on ethics was meant to set him off from Watergate.

Anthony Cicatiello: Primarily. Yeah, primarily that period, it was more of-- that was an individual-- that was an act that was so-- in many respects, he was trying to control the government from within the White House. That's not the way government is supposed to work. Government is-- got to be out. You have to provide the leadership, but the departments have to run the government, and you have to have the confidence and the controls. The White House, to a great extent, needs to be the assimilation of information and, in many respects, the reporting mechanism. But what Nixon was trying to do, and which will actually happen to you, the bureaucracy will end up turning on you. You have to be able to provide leadership but not necessarily try to control the government.

Michael Aron: Did Tom Kean have a mentor in the legislature, do you know?

Anthony Cicatiello: The guy that I think would be able to speak directly to a lot of the things-- the person that made, and Tom Kean liked to model himself after was Richard De Korte. And he died, unfortunately, very early in life. He got cancer and died. But Dick De Korte was the guy that Tom respected the most, I think, in the legislature. He liked some of the personalities in the legislature, but it was De Korte and his political acumen and how he presented himself that he watched very carefully.

Michael Aron: De Korte was from what county?

Anthony Cicatiello: Bergen County.

Michael Aron: Bergen County. How about enemies in the legislature? Did he have any, or rivals...

Anthony Cicatiello: He always had Jimmy Wallwork, who felt-- he was the senator from his district, and they never really talked that much, and there was always this sort of-- that was minor though, and Wallwork was always concerned that he was going to run against him, and that was not the case. Tom was happy where he was, and he was happy that-- Jim Wallwork worked very hard as a legislator. He had nothing really personal against him. It was just the fact that that they're competitive. He had some other legislators who he could hardly stay in the same room with, but he learned to deal with them.

Michael Aron: If one covered Tom Kean later in his career, one inevitably heard about his deal with David Friedland...

Anthony Cicatiello: Oh, yeah.

Michael Aron: ...and the Hudson County Democrats to become speaker. Tell us that story. You weren't here at the time, I don't think.

Anthony Cicatiello: I wasn't here at the time, no.

Michael Aron: It's portrayed as Tom Kean's deal with the devil, or Tom Kean showing what a hardball politician he can really be. How do you view what happened there?

Anthony Cicatiello: I think it does show Tom's savviness. It doesn't necessarily mean hardball or anything like that. A lot of it was done by Dick De Korte. The deal was actually made by Dick and pulled together by the Bergen County crowd. And Tom knew what was going on and understood, and also, if you look at what they dealt with, the deal, whatever they gave to Friedman, that chairmanship, it really didn't have the kind of impact that everybody-- the political impact that everybody thought. Yes, they were dealing with the devil, but they had to move the process forward, and they dealt with it and they got something done. The bottom line is that Tom is very results oriented, and sometimes the politics, you have to understand-- you can't compromise your principles-- but you have to understand, if can move something forward, even in dealing with the devil, as long as he then controlled the legislature, he then controlled what went on that board. So the controls were at his fingertips at that time. It was a delicate balance. It wasn't easy, but those are the things that made Tom Kean the leader that he became as

governor. All of that that he did in the legislature, from being assistant majority leader to majority leader to speaker of the Assembly to minority leader, all of those things were the core that made Tom Kean the governor that he was.

Michael Aron: Conflict of interest laws led to some legislators giving up seats, for example, Robert Wilentz [ph?]. Do you think we've gone too far in that realm?

Anthony Cicatiello: I do. I mean, I'm not sure what the balance is on this. I think we've gone too far in terms of the kind of money we spend on campaigns, and I don't know how you resolve that issue. I mean, look at for governors. I mean, look at the unique aspect of what happened this year. In 2008, an individual who's not of great means was able to raise \$750 million to run for president. I don't even know how that happens. Here in New Jersey, Tom Kean-- we never used a lot of his money, but we did have some of his money that we used for his campaign. And it was always a threat that the Keans would use their money. But look at what Jon Corzine did and the kind of money that he spent. Money is a very big problem for politics in New Jersey, and that keeps people out a lot more than I think the ethics issues. I think people who want to get into office I think can deal with the ethics issues. It's just raising the money and the process that you have to go through. That is the one single curbing thing, I feel, in politics in New Jersey, especially because of the lack of the ability to communicate in such an expensive market.

Michael Aron: Let's talk about the '77 gubernatorial campaign. Brendan Byrne is a one-term governor, not looking too strong for a second term. Tom Kean decides to run for governor. Had this been obvious for a couple of years, or had it been planned for a couple of years?

Anthony Cicatiello: No. This is another thing. I think this is a little insight that I think I can give you in my experience with Tom. We ran the Ford campaign for president in 1976, and I told him, "Tom, if you want to run in 1977, we can use this as a basis for gathering the kind of support, whether it's county organizations, delegates, people who are active, whatever." "No, no, no." It was all Ford, Ford, Ford. "I can't afford-- this is a tough fight, dealing with Reagan and coming in." The Reagan people actually...

Michael Aron: Reagan challenged Ford...

Anthony Cicatiello: Reagan challenged Ford in '76.

Michael Aron: '76.

Anthony Cicatiello: And Reagan looked at New Jersey very carefully, and they made a mistake. I mean had they come in and did what they could have done in some of the other states, I think they would have been more effective. Now, Tom, quietly, to a great extent without a lot of organization on my part, because at that time I was working at Merck-- I had to take a leave of absence to do the Ford campaign in 1976, but at that time I didn't. But he himself stood on the phone and talked with each delegate. There were 67 delegates for New Jersey, and we ended up getting 64 for Ford. But it was a really-- you weren't quite sure you had them all until the very end. And it was Tom who did that. That's when Ford picked Tom and brought him into his inner circle. Tom was in the inner circle of the Ford presidency. Had President Ford won, there's no doubt in my mind, Tom Kean would have been in a position in Washington with this president.

Michael Aron: But you're saying he didn't use that to lay the foundation for a gubernatorial run?

Anthony Cicatiello: Yeah. I was giving away state dinners to people who didn't even know they were going to state dinners. They were going to state dinners for-- who was the prime minister of Egypt at the time, who was assassinated?

Michael Aron: Sadat.

Anthony Cicatiello: Sadat. Anwar Sadat. I had these invitations for dinner with Anwar Sadat. I said we could do this, this and this. He said, "No, I need it for this, this and this. I need it for this delegate, that delegate. I need to make sure this is taken care of." It was all for Ford, because he felt he was in a fight. He never did anything to help himself in that process, because we could have come out of that, even though Senator Bateman was by far the favorite to run in 1977. We could have at least began to build some support. Never did anything for it.

Michael Aron: Why do you think that is?

Anthony Cicatiello: Because it's the way he is. I mean, you know how everybody likes to think two or three steps ahead in politics? "If I win this senate seat in state senate, then I can go into congress. Then I have a shot at the senate, United States"-- Tom doesn't think like that. Because he knows, I mean in this world, especially nowadays, politics-- a month is like a year. And back then it was slower, but not now. But he also knew that, if you did well, if you did well-- we won in New Jersey-- now we lost the Big Kahuna in the sense of winning the presidency, but we won. And that in itself laid the foundation for him in 1977, to a degree, the fact that he was one politically astute--

everybody-- you know, they knew they had somebody that they had to deal with in 1977. Federal races, state races, I mean, that's like night and day. I mean those were like two different worlds. The people dealing with the states, they know what they're doing, and they don't even focus on the federal candidates. That's why we have senators who go in there and stay there for 18, 24 years, and we don't even know what they do.

Michael Aron: During his interview here for the Brendan Byrne Archive, John Degnan criticized Tom Kean for not helping pass an income tax, relative to other members of the Republican caucus, like Wayne Dumont [ph?]. Do you have any comment on that?

Anthony Cicatiello: That just was not his style to push certain people, and Wayne would be someone that I don't think he would push in one way or another. But I think that's probably legitimate. I think that probably is legitimate. I think that Tom hedged on that income tax for a long time, and Tom always had a certain perspective of New Jersey remaining competitive with New York and Pennsylvania, and he was always looking at data that really made those, especially as governor, even more so as governor-- he wanted New Jersey to be more competitive than these other states, because he felt some of them were just killing themselves in terms of taxation, and he just wanted to keep it-- but he did not push. He felt that an income tax, a tax issue, a tax vote is so individualistic, and that person has to bring it back to his district. They should have the freedom and not be pushed. You know nowadays, I mean it's all this, the party this, the party this-- Tom didn't feel-- he didn't push. He said, "These are the issues." He laid it out in caucus, but he let them make a decision. If they could carry it back to their district, then they should go ahead and vote for it, if they felt they should.

Michael Aron: What did the primary in '77 turn on? What was it about?

Anthony Cicatiello: Basically, I mean in the primary, which is what we dealt with, it was money. I think people should understand that Tom Keane was the first gubernatorial candidate to be on television in a primary, to be on radio in a primary, and I think-- what were the other firsts that we had in that race? Well, I know it was television and I know it was radio early on in a campaign. We were just starting a whole new trend in politics here in New Jersey. Back in the old days, it was all the county organizations, the bumper stickers, the signs on the lawn, all of that. Well, first of all, we had to go around the organization. We couldn't wait for the organization to take care of us, because Bateman basically had all of them. We disrupted some of the organization stuff, but basically we had to go around them. So we used radio very early. We used television very early, and those were all unique, and we had a great slogan. "Byrned [ph?] up, let's raise Kean."
<laughs>

Michael Aron: How did Tom Kean position himself against Ray Bateman? What was he offering that distinguished him from Bateman?

Anthony Cicatiello: Just like in today's world, it was all economics then. It was all taxes. And basically, Tom said he would let the vote go. He would not take a position, and he would actually allow the people to decide whether or not they wanted income tax. He would take it to a vote. I remember when he came back from the Passaic County Organization Committee meeting, and he came into my office, which was in this dungeon down in Springfield, New Jersey. And he came in and he said, "Bateman just jumped off the cliff. He said, 'No new taxes.'" And he said, "What are we going to do?" <laughs> Because we went to the edge of the cliff and said, "We'll put it to a vote." But Bateman just jumped right over him and said to the Passaic County Organization that he will backtrack on the state income tax. And that's when we knew he would lose the campaign, and that's when we knew, how are we going to win this campaign?

Michael Aron: That's when you knew that Bateman would lose the general election.

Anthony Cicatiello: General election.

Michael Aron: But win the primary.

Anthony Cicatiello: Lose the general election, that's probably a bold statement. You don't know how Brendan was going to play on some of those issues, but I knew he was in a box. And in a campaign, you can't get in a box. I mean this president is one of the most masterful campaigns I've ever seen run in the country.

Michael Aron: You're talking about the current president, Obama.

Anthony Cicatiello: The current president. President Obama ran just a masterful campaign, not only in keeping his themes, and also variations of his themes, together, but he stayed above the fray. He didn't get down deep into some of the issues. But most importantly, he didn't get boxed in. He didn't get boxed into an issue where he can't work his way out, once he gets the reins of power. And Ray just said he would get the legislature to revoke the income tax.

Michael Aron: What kind of personal relationship did Tom Kean and Ray Bateman have?

Anthony Cicatiello: Very respectful of one another. I really think they've always been friends. It gets tough when you're in a campaign. I remember I said to Tom after the race-- and it came down to the last month, and the first week in May of 1977 Tom Kean was 20 points ahead of Ray Bateman. Literally, we were 41, 21, and it was not...

Michael Aron: You thought you were going to win the primary?

Anthony Cicatiello: No. We knew we had a tough month ahead of us, and I knew I was running out of money, and I knew Ray had the ability to get the money, if he needed it. And that's what he did. He went and got a million dollars from all his friends, who signed on a note and outspent us on television and ended up winning. And we lost 51, 38. What we had started early in circumventing the party, we could not sustain it all the way through. And also, some of our ads were not as effective, I thought, in the latter part. But Ray got the money and focused it in the month of May when everybody-- and also, the organization wanted him to win. I mean we were the outsiders. We were long shots to begin with, but we thought we actually had a chance.

Michael Aron: Ray was senior to Kean. He was older.

Anthony Cicatiello: Yes.

Michael Aron: He had been in the legislature longer. He was in the Upper House.

Anthony Cicatiello: Right.

Michael Aron: It was really his turn, was it not?

Anthony Cicatiello: It was. I mean Tom was looked at as kind of an upstart on something like this, so we knew this was a reach for us. But I do think he felt he could move the state forward in a better way. He felt he had better ideas in bringing it away from the party a little bit, a little more independent. He thought it would be effective to make the run. And if you wanted, you had so much flexibility. It would have been unique.

Michael Aron: Did you take a leave to run the campaign?

Anthony Cicatiello: Yeah.

Michael Aron: Were you the campaign manager?

Anthony Cicatiello: Yes.

Michael Aron: You left Merck in order to run the campaign?

Anthony Cicatiello: Yeah. I had to leave Merck in order to do that.

Michael Aron: Was Albert Merck someone you interacted with?

Anthony Cicatiello: Oh, yeah. Al and I were good friends. This is going back a little bit, 1974. After 1974, the congressional race, Al said, "Can you come and run the Freeholders' races in Morris County?" Al was the campaign manager to all the county candidates, and I ran Rodney Frelinghuysen's, Eileen McCoy and Gary Garofalo [ph?] and John Fox's race for sheriff. I ran their race, and Al was the campaign manager, and I ran the campaigns before I got the job at Merck.

Michael Aron: Al Merck was involved in politics. Was he a legislator or...

Anthony Cicatiello: He was a legislator for a short period of time, yes.

Michael Aron: And also an executive at Merck?

Anthony Cicatiello: No, no. He was on the board.

Michael Aron: He was on the board.

Anthony Cicatiello: He was on the board of Merck.

Michael Aron: He was from the family.

Anthony Cicatiello: He was from the family, yeah. And I think he's still involved with the family foundations and things like that.

Michael Aron: Who else were key figures in the '77 Kean primary campaign?

Anthony Cicatiello: We had no real key figures. It was just a small, young crowd that ran the race out of-- there were a couple of-- Phil Kaltenbacher [ph?] was involved, I think, and a friend. But we had no real key figures. And that's the other thing. That's one thing that I found interesting. A lot of the people who should have known Tom Kean, a lot of the business people in the Newark communities and things like that, none of them supported Tom Kean. I mean they all walked away from that. But Bateman had all the key people, all the political-- county chairmen. There were no real powerhouses behind us in that campaign.

Michael Aron: What posture did Kean assume after losing the primary?

Anthony Cicatiello: We both sat down and he said, "I'll let you know when we should do something." And about August, after everything had calmed down a little bit-- I waited for him to go, and he walked into the Bateman campaign office and sat down with Ray and talked with Ray. And then I came in and said I'd help. We all helped as much as we could. We did a lot of work in the primary.

Michael Aron: When did it become obvious to you that Bateman was not going to be successful?

Anthony Cicatiello: Well, it was just those debates and also then that plan. When the plan came out, it was the Bateman-Simon plan and became known as the BS Plan. And then it was just, you couldn't justify, you couldn't even defend it, and then it became very difficult. The media just went crazy on it, which was understandable, because there was no rationale for it. It's sort of like moving ahead. I mean what Brendan did was move the state ahead, because it needed to do some things. He might have done it with a vehicle that somebody else would have done with a different-- whatever. But the point is that I knew, once that plan came out, it was going to be very difficult to defend.

Michael Aron: All right. We want to know what happened between '77 and '81, both in Tom Kean's career and in your life, but we're going to save that for a change of tape.

Anthony Cicatiello: Okay, good.

Michael Aron: After the gubernatorial election of '77 in which Brendan Byrne was reelected, what did you do?

Anthony Cicatiello: I started my own company at that time. I had decided that-- well, I couldn't go back to Merck because I took one leave of absence to run the Ford campaign, and they accepted me back after that. And then I took another leave of-- and they said, "No, you can't take a-- we need help in this position." So I couldn't go back to Merck, 'cause they went and hired somebody. But I decided to start my own company at that time, and actually was involved in lobbying a little bit but also corporate communications. I mean one of the things I learned in corporate life is that when it comes to a public issue, corporations have a hard time circling around it inside the company. See, it's easier to use outside people to help, and then they can-- the people inside the company, there aren't any incentives for people to go out on a limb on public issues. Let's put it that way. They can deal with their own business issues, but when it came to something on the public side, it was very difficult for corporations to set up incentives. Even if you had government affairs people in your office, no one would really take it-- so consulting became a real opportunity. So I took that. I got one client very early on from friends of mine at Exxon. But then I got involved indirectly on Wall Street, and that's when my company started to take off. I started doing financial communications, which involved a lot of interesting writing as well as some very tough issues, basically on the basis, the New York Mercantile Exchange had a potato futures contract. And they were in the middle of a fraud, because somebody tried to corner the market on potato futures. But that was going on as they were developing and finalizing oil futures. And they were just about ready to introduce oil futures when this fraud hit, and Senator Muskie in Washington wanted to shut the exchange down. So a little inside story. You'll like this one, because it crosses Republican and Democratic circles. I get called in, because a friend of mine knows I'm involved, and they need help in Washington. So we go, and we went up to Maine and we dealt with the farmers in Maine, and then we went and testified before Congress with Senator Muskie, who was very upset with the Exchange, calmed him down a little bit. And then they fired the CEO of the Exchange, so they said, "We need to get somebody in here that can take us with this oil thing." So I run into Dick Leone [ph?] out of just somewhere. I can't remember exactly what it was. I don't know if I'd seen him somewhere or something. And I called Dick and said, "What are you doing?" And he said he was doing something. I don't know if he was doing something at Princeton or something like that, but he was consulting and he had some things going along. But I said, "Do you know the New York Mercantile Exchange at all?" <laughs> And he said, no, he didn't know anything about it. So I said, "Well, look it up and find out a little bit about it, because I'm going to call you on this." So I went back to the chairman, who was a friend of mine, a young guy. These guys, these

traders are all young. And I said, "There's this guy that really has good-- understands economics, understands these markets, has a background. He was treasurer of New Jersey." All of this sort of stuff. I said, "We should think about him for chairmanship." He says, "Well, I know that guy. I had him in class in Princeton." So brought him in and he got the job. And it was helpful to me basically because I needed to deal with Muskie, and we had to calm him down, and Dick had a lot of connections there. And then Dick was great. Dick really knew, or learned very quickly. He was a quick study. And you could imagine Dick Leone on the floor with the traders. It was just so wonderful to watch. <laughs> He doesn't suffer fools too long, and traders are an interesting breed onto themselves. But he did a very good job, got the Exchange-- got the heating oil contracts going and actually created a market to where it's now one of the largest exchanges in the country.

Michael Aron: Did you have a partner in your business?

Anthony Cicatiello: Yes.

Michael Aron: Who was your partner?

Anthony Cicatiello: A fellow Ohio State grad, John Neiswanger. I talked him into coming out from Columbus. He had a firm out in Columbus, and I talked him into coming out in 1981, and we've been in business since, well, 32 years now.

Michael Aron: Where did you set up your business?

Anthony Cicatiello: In Rahway. I was there at Merck, and Rahway is sort of centrally located. You can get down to Trenton pretty easily, get into New York pretty easily. You have all those trains that come into Rahway. Rahway's the last station. The trains go down to the shore, and the trains go down to Princeton, so there are a lot of trains that end up in Rahway, so we just stayed in Rahway.

Michael Aron: Where did you live at the time?

Anthony Cicatiello: In Rahway. You know when I went to work for Merck and the guy at HR said, "Well, where are you going to live?" I said, "Well, I'm probably going to live here in Rahway." He said, "Why?" And I said, "Well, it's because it's where I work." He said, "Well, I mean there's New York." My boss, the boss I reported to, lived in

Philadelphia. But I'm from the Midwest. Sometimes we like to walk to work in the Midwest. <laughs> So it was a little different experience for me, but I lived right in Rahway and...

Michael Aron: Where do you live today?

Anthony Cicatiello: Today, I live in Plainfield, not that far, but still central. You can get around pretty quickly.

Michael Aron: What did Tom Kean do after the gubernatorial election of '77?

Anthony Cicatiello: That was the interesting thing. What can he do in this time to maintain his respect among the party people and do things? Basically, he just pulled back a little bit and stopped, because let the party sort of assimilate what had happened in '77 and the fact that Bateman lost. The party was very upset, and there was a lot of consternation on that. They should have never lost, all this sort of stuff, so that he sort of stayed away from all of that and never fully really got back into it, because he took a position on New Jersey Network. And basically, it goes to show you how clever he is. I mean, I was thinking here, point, counterpoint, what are you talking about here? New Jersey Network, and yes, I know that the inside crowd looks at that, but I mean how broad can you get? Well, what happened, it was fortuitous in many ways. They did a point, counterpoint, Dick Leone and Tom Kean, and they did it at the very end of the show. And at the end of the show was when they called the lottery numbers. Everybody in the state listened to these two people talk and debate these issues, and then they listened to the lottery number. It was like he would go out and speak at different things, and everybody would say, "Oh, yeah. I see you. I see you on-- with the lottery number."

Michael Aron: How often do you think they were on? Once or twice a week?

Anthony Cicatiello: Yeah. But it was good. I mean, those two. If I could do a show with those two, I would do it in a minute. I mean, bright, interesting, can absolutely take it down so that everybody understands what they're talking about, bringing in all the various-- two best debaters you'll ever see and good-- sometimes they agree; sometimes they disagree. Good, good, very effective speakers.

Michael Aron: I agree with you. That's when I came to New Jersey, because I remember watching those two guys, and they were a very intelligent set of commentators.

Anthony Cicatiello: And the issues they dealt with, there weren't too complicated for them to deal with. And taxation in particular. Dick Leone was very effective as treasurer in moving the whole tax issue forward for Brendan.

Michael Aron: How did you view Brendan Byrne in those days? Did you see a change in Brendan Byrne from the first to the second term, for example?

Anthony Cicatiello: I didn't, actually. I mean, I thought this is a governor that just hit big issues, and he hit them and took them head on. I mean, I'll tell you, more so than the tax issue, Pinelands was unbelievable. That Pinelands bill had every lobbyist in Trenton hired to fight it. I mean, just took it straight on, and he knew how important it was. People don't know all the internal fighting with that one, because...

Michael Aron: Were you involved in that fight?

Anthony Cicatiello: No. I didn't have a client in that one, but I watched it. I mean, first of all, all the southern guys hired all the northern guys to fight. <laughs> I mean, Jimmy Dugan and a lot of the-- I mean, there were some big heavyweights on the Democratic Party that were taking that issue on. And that's a million acres of land to protect. I mean you had to hurt somebody with that much land.

Michael Aron: It's 20 percent of the land mass of the state.

Anthony Cicatiello: Yeah. I mean, I thought he wasn't weakened. First of all, I thought the campaign was masterful. And that was Dick Leone and David Garth [ph?]. And David and I became good friends after that, because I really wanted David to run Tom's campaign, because I didn't like Bailey and Dierdorf. That's a long story. But David and I would talk about that campaign a lot. And basically, it was very controlled campaign. It was just Dick and David, and Brendan essentially waited for those two to make decisions. But Brendan was good. I mean he had the right instincts as well. I mean he wasn't the kind of governor-- he was out there, but he took on the tough issues. There's no doubt about that. Not only the income-- and then I don't even know; when did casinos come in? Was that...

Michael Aron: '76.

Anthony Cicatiello: So it was just before the run. I thought that was a good thing to do too. I wish they had made that. We've talked about this. Brendan and I have-- I wish that they had done something with Atlantic City and made it somewhat like the Hackensack Meadowlands Authority, because it's just not functional to put a big industry like that into a town like that. But that's hindsight.

Michael Aron: What kind of relationship did Tom Kean have with Brendan Byrne after '77?

Anthony Cicatiello: It was very, very cordial, very respectful. I think it just was a different era. They took on issues. They took on the people, and we might have even had a cute little slogan, like, "Byrned up? Let's raise Kean." But there was respect. I mean, they weren't hurting people like they do today where they actually-- I mean, it's just driven into the negative side to the point where that's all you think about is negative. And there were enough negatives for Brendan in terms of a tax issue, which is a high priority. In a campaign, there are primary issues and secondary issues. When taxes and the economy are primary issues, there aren't many other issues that get discussed, and that was what was out there with people, and they did it in a very-- I think in a very respectful way. And I think Tom did too.

Michael Aron: Did Governor Byrne appoint Tom Kean to the Highway Authority in that period?

Anthony Cicatiello: He did. He did. Afterwards, he appointed him to the Highway Authority, and he enjoyed that. And I think he enjoyed it, basically, because the Highway Authority has the Garden State Art Center, and he loved the music and he loved all of that that they had at the Garden State Art Center.

Michael Aron: Did Tom Kean have to work at something in '78, '79?

Anthony Cicatiello: Yes, he did. He was working, actually working real estate that time, and he was developing land that the family had owned, and so he was pretty active then and complained quite a bit about environmental laws. <laughs> I remember that. He would say, "I don't understand all the"-- I said, "Those are ones you passed. Those are the ones you wrote." And he would complain about this, that or the other thing. But he did some residential here in New Jersey, as well as down in Florida. They had some land. He was doing some work.

Michael Aron: Was he plotting another run for governor all this time?

Anthony Cicatiello: Not really. There was the remnants there that we had and the fact that he had received 37 percent of the vote in the primary the last time, so there was a core there that would have liked to have seen him start something. But he didn't because of his television responsibility, and you had to remain neutral, if you were in that position. And that's how he got to the 1980 convention. He went as, actually, a telecaster for NJN, and he did interviews at the Republican convention when Reagan got the nomination. That's how he got-- and they used a lot of the footage for that basically from him. But he was not politically active at the time.

Michael Aron: Had he been a candidate or clearly positioning himself as a candidate, NJN would have felt obliged to take him off the air.

Anthony Cicatiello: Absolutely. Anything like that. He did nothing to-- and I was quietly-- we had all our material. We had organization. We had to think about who we would have run the campaign. I was busy with my company at that time. All of those things were going on. But then after the Reagan election, that's when we started thinking about it.

Michael Aron: Others from the Kean family were active in New Jersey business circles at the time. Tell us about John Kean and Robert Kean and who they were and what they did.

Anthony Cicatiello: Well, John Kean is the cousin. He was head of the Elizabethtown Gas Company, and that is his cousin. I mean Tom's father and John's father were brothers. John Kean and Robert Kean were brothers, and John was a cousin. They were on the gas company side. Bob Kean was Tom's brother, and he's on the water side. Both families were active in the utility business and active in business community. They were very involved in the areas that they served, and John Kean in particular was active internationally. He was very active in the American Gas Association and all those trade associates at that time when all those issues were being debated internationally as well as nationally.

Michael Aron: Who was fighting for the 1980 Republican presidential nomination? Ronald Reagan. Who was running? Do you recall who?

Anthony Cicatiello: Well, George Bush.

Michael Aron: George Bush. Was Rockefeller in there?

Anthony Cicatiello: No, no, no. Those were the two.

Michael Aron: Those were the two?

Anthony Cicatiello: Those were the principals.

Michael Aron: What did Tom Kean-- well, that's right. You're saying he was neutral.

Anthony Cicatiello: He was neutral.

Michael Aron: He was a commentator.

Anthony Cicatiello: He was a commentator at that time.

Michael Aron: He didn't have to take a position.

Anthony Cicatiello: He didn't have to take a position. Yeah. Basically, the Reagan people came into New Jersey and did a very good job. That was Roger Stone at the time who came into New Jersey and actually did a fairly good job in organizing and getting some of the conservative-- part of the party together.

Michael Aron: Did Reagan win the New Jersey presidential primary; do you recall?

Anthony Cicatiello: Well, he got the nomination. Did he get the delegates?

Michael Aron: Yeah.

Anthony Cicatiello: I can't remember specifically on that.

Michael Aron: All right. So now we're up to November of 1980. We're a year away from the gubernatorial run. What happens to set in motion the gubernatorial run? You have a meeting? What happens?

Anthony Cicatiello: Now, we start thinking about it seriously. And then there was one thing that Brendan Byrne did that made the opportunity to run for governor even that much greater. He opened up the primary, and that was a piece of legislation that just made-- from a Kean perspective, we had a base from 1977 that we can draw on. And everybody came into the race. I mean there were people coming from places we never heard of. Bo [ph?] Sullivan. Joseph (Bo) Sullivan came out of nowhere, had a big party at the convention that Tom went to, but we didn't know politically what he was all about. But he came out of the blue. Pat Kramer, Mayor of Patterson, and then there were six or seven others, include Tony Imperiali, who were in the race. I mean, it was amazing how many people got in the race and wanted-- and it was open. That meant that the county chairman couldn't decide who to put on the line. It was separated.

Michael Aron: It was separated.

Anthony Cicatiello: It was separated from the line that was used by the counties.

Michael Aron: And why did Brendan Byrne do that?

Anthony Cicatiello: He opened it up for his friend, John Degnan, and that one thing alone opened it up if Tom Kean. If Brendan Byrne did anything for Tom Kean, it was that one thing that, in trying to help another friend, he helped Tom Kean tremendously, and Tom always remembered that too.

Michael Aron: Who were the front runners of the Republican gubernatorial nomination?

Anthony Cicatiello: Well, that's the interesting thing. Pat Kramer-- and Bo Sullivan was, but Tom always said, "Don't count out Pat Kramer," because Pat Kramer, see, this is kind of an interesting thing, Michael, and it's something I would have a hard time with, because I knew business people, and I worked in business and I saw all this. But business people couldn't identify with Tom Kean. They couldn't necessarily feel that he was going to be the kind of guy that would fight for them. If it was a tough issue or if it-- and I always felt that, why do you need that, you business people? Why don't you just know that the guy is good and smart? Why do you have to have a sense of knowing that you can take him into that gray area that the business world sometimes plays? I used to get frustrated with that, that entire Newark community, all the Bobs and Paul Steelman [ph?]. I told Tom Kean, if he ever speaks to Paul Steelman again-- that guy had us running around with-- and this was a big shot. This was Mr. Newark. He was chair of National State Bank. He was the president of one of the big insurance-- I can't remember all the things, but he was Mr. Newark. None of them supported Tom Kean.

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They all went with Pat Kramer. So I said to them, "If you, if you ever talk to him"-- and this will tell you a little bit about Tom Kean. About the third year in his gubernatorial race, he came to me and he says, "It's time to run again. Maybe I should talk to Paul Steelman now." <laughs> And I said, "It's up to you." But I could never understand why the business community can't see that, but they always have to have a little something. It's what's wrong with business in this country. Just know that you have a good guy in there, and you're not necessarily going to get everything that you want, but have somebody in there that has the fundamental ideals that you're looking for, and then support him. But no, they have to know that there's a deal somewhere, or that that governor knows where they are on an issue or something like that. Just get the right leader. I couldn't convince people that Tom could win a general election, and that was always a difficult thing. They looked at him differently than I did, and that was my problem is that I could see where he could not only win if he got through a primary, definitely win a general election, because I could see he could appeal to a broader base. No one saw that but me, and that was the convincing thing that needed to be made in the campaign.

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