# Interview with Governor Thomas H. Kean by Michael Aron
# March 16, 2009

**Michael Aron:** It's the afternoon of March, 16, 2009. We are in Far Hills, New Jersey in the office of former Governor Kean. We're here for the Rutgers Program on the Governor, the Thomas H. Kean Archive. I'm Michael Aron from NJN News. We began a series of discussions with people who served under Governor Kean in January of this year. Today we are going to begin what is likely to be a series of discussions with Governor Kean himself.

**Thomas H. Kean:** When I was elected governor, the Irish Tourist Board came and all their research and said, "You're Irish." I said, "Why do you say I'm Irish?" They said because if it's Kean pronounce 'Cane' that's Irish. The Scotch would pronounce it 'Keen'. But there are a bunch of counties in Ireland where the 'ea' is always 'a'. That's why you've got Ronald Reagan. That's why you've got McKean's. That's why you got a bunch of people who are spelled with 'ea' but always pronounced 'a'.

**Michael Aron:** Tom Kean the lobbyist?

**Thomas H. Kean:** Yes.

**Michael Aron:** He was very Irish. His whole family was very Irish.

M1: Did you talk to him about the family?

**Thomas H. Kean:** Tom Kean? Sure. We're both from Livingston.

M1: Do you know why their family went to 'Keen' and you stuck with 'Cane'?

**Thomas H. Kean:** The only thing I heard of one time from a professor of Gaelic, years ago, actually was at Drew, long before I was at Drew but when I was in the Assembly. He said, "You know why you're 'Cane' and other people are 'Keen' and why the spelling is 'Kean' not 'Cane'?" He said because of the dirty British. When they were chasing the Irish and Scotch back and forth from Ireland to Scotland, what they were trying to do is tax them. They didn't have any written language

really. They were sheep herders and all that kind of thing. The only way they could tax them was to get them to have names. So they all had names but not a written language. A lot of them were called Kean and they tried to get them to write it down. They all wrote it down differently because they didn't have any written language. According to this guy, he said they all spelled it differently and wrote it down. It became the family name. That's about the British tax roles. It's as good an explanation. Now we've got cousins who are actually called McKean. Nobody every calls it 'McKeen'. It's always 'McKean'. My father didn't want the university named after us because of that problem. He said, "They're going to call it 'keen'."

<Crew talk>

**Michael Aron:** Thinking back to your childhood, you came from a family who had been in public service for a couple of hundred years. Did you feel pressure to continue in that tradition?

**Thomas H. Kean:** No. In fact, it was the last thing I wanted to do. I had no interest in it whatsoever. I had interest in it because my father was in it and in Congress. I sort of followed it but I followed it like you follow a baseball team. I knew the players, the scores. I knew we were supposed to root for Republicans and not Democrats, although I didn't always follow that policy. But that was about it. I was interested in being a teacher. That's all I ever wanted to be. If I had a talent, I would have gone another direction. If I had talent, I would have been a short stop. If I had talent, I'd have been an opera singer. Those things were ruled out for me so teaching was what I wanted to do.

**Michael Aron:** You became a teacher after going to Princeton.

**Thomas H. Kean:** Went to Princeton. Went in the Army after a while. Actually, I'm the only Governor I think who's been in the New Jersey National Guard. I did my reserve work there. My commander of the National Guard used to look at me. You're the Commander and Chief when you're Governor. I left the Guard as a Specialist, first class or third class or something. He said, "You got promoted awful fast." <Laughs> I was in the Army and then went to Wall Street. I went from Wall Street to teaching.

**Michael Aron:** Where?

**Thomas H. Kean:** St. Mark's school where I'd gone. It's in southern, Massachusetts. The head of the history department dropped dead of a heart attack. The headmaster of the school, I'd been working for years at a camp for underprivileged kids in New Hampshire, he'd been up there, seen the place and talked to me late one evening. He said, "What do you want to do?" I said I always wanted to teach. He said, "Well, that's great." I didn't think about it anymore. He called up and said, "The head of the history department dropped dead yesterday. You majored in history at Princeton. Would you be willing to come?" I said, "When?" He said, "Next week." So I walked into the head of the firm and said, "I resign."

**Michael Aron:** Where were you living?

**Thomas H. Kean:** Living in New York City.

**Michael Aron:** Were you married?

**Thomas H. Kean:** No. That was easy. You're not married, you can move. I wasn't married so I got in the car and got what belongings I had and drove up there. Got a princely salary of $3,400.00 a year. You didn't require any money because they gave you your board. So I had my apartment, my food. Out of $3,400.00 I had some left over for summer travel.

**Michael Aron:** How long did you do that?

**Thomas H. Kean:** I came in the middle of the year. Then I did it for two years after that. I loved it. Absolutely loved it. I got very- in fact, some of the kids I taught have become my best years. One of them was an usher in my wedding. We're close enough of an age. I took a lot of them up to work at the camp for underprivileged kids that I worked at. We became very close friends. The last year I taught there they dedicated the year book to me and I was Advisor of the Student Government, Advisor of the Senior Class. I coached three sports and ran a dormitory and started about three clubs; was Advisor of the Student Newspaper and all that. As a bachelor, you can work 24 hours a day. It's not a problem. I loved it. I kept looking around at the faculty and there were very, very good teachers there. They couldn't go anywhere else because they didn't have the certification to teach in public schools. A lot of them didn't have MAs or PhDs. If they wanted to leave, the only place they could go was other nonpublic schools.

They'd go to parochial schools. They'd go to private schools. But they couldn't go into public school. They couldn't go into a college or a junior college. I thought if I'm going to go into this profession, I want to be able to move around. I want to be able to teach where I want to teach and have opportunities if I want to take them. I dragged myself out of there. The toughest thing I've ever done was to go into the Headmaster and say I was going to leave. Toughest job I've ever left because I loved it. Absolutely loved it. Loved the kids. Loved the teaching. Loved the classroom. Loved the coaching. Loved all of it. But I knew if I didn't go then, I probably wouldn't go. I was going to look like some of those guys who'd been there 25 years and at that point couldn't go anywhere.

**Michael Aron:** Why do you think a young man like yourself was so drawn to teaching?

**Thomas H. Kean:** I loved it. I had a lot of problems when I was younger. I stuttered badly. I was dyslexic. Had it not been for some teachers, I'm not sure I would have made it, at least not made it well. They took time with me way beyond whatever a teacher was paid to do. They'd see me after class. They'd ask me to stay. They'd work on me and work with things I was having difficulty with and recognize some of them- dyslexia hadn't been invented at that point. Nobody knew the term. But they recognized that I was reversing numbers and letters. I had a terrible problem with spelling and languages and those types of things. I needed a lot of help to get through those subjects. They were willing to give me that help and understand that I wasn't just dumb, which is what they called you in those days. Other teachers called me dumb. "Why are you so dumb?" basically.

**Michael Aron:** Were these teachers at St. Mark's?

**Thomas H. Kean:** Yes. And before.

**Michael Aron:** How long were you at St. Mark's?

**Thomas H. Kean:** Six years. I went there as a 12 year old and stayed there for graduation. Before that I was at school in Washington. My father didn't like the Washington schools much, which is why I ended up going away at the age of 12.

**Michael Aron:** Had he gone to St. Mark's?

**Thomas H. Kean:** Yes, he had.

**Michael Aron:** Is that one of the reasons you wanted to go there?

**Thomas H. Kean:** I didn't want to go there at all. I was told I was going there. In those days, they didn't ask the kids, at least not me. I was told where I was going and I went kicking and screaming. Didn't like it when I went there. Didn't like it after I got there. Didn't much like it all the way through. But you went where you stayed.

**Michael Aron:** Up until age 12 you were in Washington public schools or private school?

**Thomas H. Kean:** Private schools.

**Michael Aron:** How many brothers and sisters did you have?

**Thomas H. Kean:** Five.

**Michael Aron:** You were number five?

**Thomas H. Kean:** I was number five out of six.

**Michael Aron:** You majored in history at Princeton?

**Thomas H. Kean:** Yes.

**Michael Aron:** You taught history at St. Mark's?

**Thomas H. Kean:** Yes.

**Michael Aron:** American History? World History?

**Thomas H. Kean:** I taught both. I taught Early European History. Early European History in school was defined as starting with basically the Egyptians, Greeks, Romans and going through probably until the Renaissance and then through the Renaissance. Then I taught American History. I taught Honors History because I took over the courses of the Department Chairman, which a new teacher would never been able to do.

**Michael Aron:** Do you think you were drawn to history because your family had played a part in American history?

**Thomas H. Kean:** No. I loved the stories. I really loved it. To me, people don't teach history very well normally because they teach a bunch of facts and dates and gender studies and all that kind of thing. What's fun about history to me is the fact these are people. The decisions they made made a difference. You can look at a leader or a king or sometimes quite ordinary people who made decisions that changed the history of the world. Looking at those people and why they made their decisions, the stories of their lives, was always fascinating to me. That's the part I loved. I could go without the dates and the names and the economic history and that kind of thing. I loved the stories of people and what they did, what they were like.

**Michael Aron:** If you have that idea of history, you probably soon arrive at the idea that one man can have an idea that can make a huge difference?

**Thomas H. Kean:** Yeah. It's not only ideas but some historians have looked at history as leader's health. What kind of decisions can that mean? A silly example, not silly example- Napoleon had to leave the field of Waterloo because he had intestinal problems, basically diarrhea. He had to leave the field a number of times during that battle. There are some historians who would tell you that had he not drunk or eaten whatever he had eaten a couple days before, maybe Napoleon would have won that battle. Who knows? But that kind of thing, to me, is fascinating. Kids find it fascinating when you teach it.

**Michael Aron:** What is your family's history within the history of this country? How far back does it go? How many members of Congress were there?

**Thomas H. Kean:** Let me think. John Kean was a member of the Continental Congress; was captured by the British and spent the war, most of the war, on a

British ship in Philadelphia Harbor. Then after he got out, he was First Cashier of the First National Bank appointed by Washington and supervised by Hamilton and then died because he got some sort of a lung disease from his long imprisonment, dampness I guess in the boat. His widow moved to Elizabeth and the family was there ever since, basically.

**Michael Aron:** How many generations behind you would he be?

**Thomas H. Kean:** I'd have to get a piece of paper and think, and you don't want to wait. It was interesting people. His widow married a guy called Niemcwicz, who was the poet laureate of Poland and had Kosciusko Second in Command. Then they tried to throw the Russians out. So they're very much a part of the age of the Democratic Revolutions. He came over here and wrote. Because he was a writer and a poet, wrote descriptions of what the country was like at that point including the description they use when they reconstructed Metternich. It was because he went and stayed with Washington. It was by far the best description that was written at the time. I wrote my senior thesis at Princeton on his descriptions and what he wrote when he traveled in this country. And when he went back to Europe..

**Michael Aron:** What period are we talking about now?

**Thomas H. Kean:** We're talking just after the Revolution. We're talking from the Revolution to about; I guess he lived almost until 1840. He lived to be an old man. He was at Napoleon's Coronation; described that.

**Michael Aron:** How do you spell his name?

**Thomas H. Kean:** N-I-E-M-C-E-W-I-C-Z. It's one of the few things I can spell because I wrote on it. I'll tell you, if you run into some people who were real Polish-- When I ran for Governor, that connection didn't hurt, that I had ancestors that were that prominent in the Polish--

**Michael Aron:** Why did John's widow pick Elizabeth?

**Thomas H. Kean:** Her family. She was a Livingston. The house that she eventually bought to live in had been Governor Livingston's house, the first

Governor of New Jersey. That's still there and has a great history. You can go there. Now it's open to the public. You find everything from when soldiers tried to catch the Governor, to all sorts of people who were there. Martha Washington stopped there at one point. John Jay got married there. William Henry Harrison eloped down out of the windows. It's a great house to go to, an interesting history.

**Michael Aron:** The Livingston House?

**Thomas H. Kean:** Yes. It's called Liberty Hall. It was our family's house. The family was there ever since this woman moved there. Our family never left.

**Michael Aron:** Is it on the campus of Kean University?

**Thomas H. Kean:** It is now. It is now. Yes. My aunt put a tremendous amount of work into it. Got all the old furniture out of the barn. Put it back in the house. There were trunks and trunks and trunks of old papers including letters by the Founding Fathers. Our family's always been packrats. You look around this office and you find I don't throw away much. Neither did they. We've got all these things which Kean University is now going through. They've found some interesting treasures of letters from people who've made history.

**Michael Aron:** John Kean was married to a Livingston.

**Thomas H. Kean:** He married a Livingston.

**Michael Aron:** Was she the daughter of the first..

**Thomas H. Kean:** Niece; niece of the first Governor of New Jersey.

**Michael Aron:** This is how the Keans and the Livingstons came together?

**Thomas H. Kean:** Yes.

**Michael Aron:** The town of Livingston, New Jersey is named after the first Governor?

**Thomas H. Kean:** I believe so.

**Michael Aron:** You grew up in or around that town?

**Thomas H. Kean:** In that town. In that town. In those days when my father served in Congress, the family went with the Congressman, not now when they work only three or four days a week. They had to work six days a week down there then. So, the family moved down. I spent a lot of my youth in Washington.

**Michael Aron:** How many other Keans have been in Congress?

**Thomas H. Kean:** John Kean was a Senator. Hamilton Fish wasn't in Congress but he was Secretary of State.

**Michael Aron:** John Kean of what era?

**Thomas H. Kean:** Oh, end of the late 1800s and then Hamilton Fish Kean was a Senator. In fact there's a picture in the office here of him addressing a rally in Paterson with Herbert Hoover. They were just running for election at that point, which is why he lost, my grandfather lost. Running with Herbert Hoover was not easy.

**Michael Aron:** You say you left St. Mark's after two and a half years.

**Thomas H. Kean:** Of teaching; yes. Two and a half years. Yes.

**Michael Aron:** Where did you go from there?

**Thomas H. Kean:** Well, I love working with kids. The more formative thing I ever did in my life was probably working at that camp in New Hampshire. That probably changed my life as much as anything ever did. Teaching was a certain extension of that. I went to Teacher's College, Columbia. Best place I could think to learn how to be a teacher.

**Michael Aron:** Was that a two year program?

**Thomas H. Kean:** Well, I went there one year. One year and a half, two years depending how long you take to get your- because I wanted not only to get my certification. I wanted to get my MA. I started working on the PhD and did a lot of work for the PhD.

**Michael Aron:** How did you end up in the New Jersey Assembly?

**Thomas H. Kean:** I was teaching. Not teaching but I was studying for that and I had done all the work except the dissertation. But I'd been working summer and winter. I was taking courses in the summertime. I got all that done in about two years, which means you really work at it. Before I went into the dissertation which is a year's work, that's writing a book, I wanted to take some time out. I had a professor at Princeton who told me that the most exciting thing he ever did was work at a convention for a candidate who didn't have a chance because if you work for a candidate who's favored, you're surrounded by senators and governors and county chairmen and all the rest of the political establishment. If you work for a candidate who doesn't have a chance, none of those people show up. So if you show up, you're apt to be right next to the candidate. In the professor's case, he'd worked for Averill Harriman, who was a candidate who was prominent who didn't have a chance at the convention. In my case, I worked for Bill Scranton, who had been Governor of Pennsylvania who I knew about and admired very much. He was the best governor in the country at the time. I thought he'd make a great president but he didn't have a chance because he ran against Nelson Rockefeller and Barry Goldwater who were the two--

**Michael Aron:** Was this '64 then?

**Thomas H. Kean:** No. This was--

**Michael Aron:** Nixon ran in '60. Goldwater won the nomination in '64.

**Thomas H. Kean:** Yeah, you're right. It was Goldwater. It was Goldwater. So what happened was that no one else was volunteering. In fact, they couldn't find anything for me to do. There was one fellow, a wonderful man called Warren Sinsheimer who volunteered as a lawyer in New York. He was the only one we could find out of either New York of New Jersey was working for Scranton. So I got a hold of him and said, "What do you want me to do?" He said, "Well, I'm northeast chairman because there's nobody else. Why don't you try to stir up

something in New Jersey?" So I opened up a little office in Union Country, Scranton for President. Got a couple of people, all volunteers and tried to stir up some things. Like Webb Todd who was the State Chairman; he was Christie Whitman's father, thought I was a little bit of a nuisance but he tolerated me. I was working in the headquarters and got a call from this fellow Sinsheimer and he said, "Can you pay your own way to San Francisco where the convention is?" I said yes, figuring I could get it from my father. He said, "You're now our National Youth Chairman."

**Michael Aron:** How old were you in 1964?

**Thomas H. Kean:** I'm thinking about 22 I guess, 23 maybe. I got my plane and went out there. What happened was Rockefeller- they had a fire at the Governor's Mansion in Albany. Evidently Governor Rockefeller came out of one entrance on one side, I guess a long business, wife came out way on the other side. In the reporter's minds, that concerned rumors that they were going in different directions. And in those days, if you were divorced, it really disqualified you for President, particularly if you were going through a divorce during the campaign, which he was about to go through. What happened was he didn't like Goldwater at all and being a Rockefeller, he had paid for everything right through the convention which means he had the best hotel in San Francisco. He had the best staff, best political consultants and he turned them all over to us, who didn't have anything. No money. No consultants. Nothing. Because he didn't like Goldwater. We didn't have a chance of winning but he wanted to have the other side represented. I was turned over. All of a sudden this whole staff of political professionals got turned over to me. I didn't know anything and they did. But they reported to me. I had a big office of my own in San Francisco. We had headquarters. The best hotel in San Francisco. I was the one detailed to get a group to meet Eisenhower when he came in to greet the Convention. I was in charge of the Convention demonstration for Bill Scranton. I had enormous responsibility and an enormous amount of fun doing it, even though we didn't have a chance at winning. It just was a lot of fun. I got to know these political professionals very well, taught me a lot.

**Michael Aron:** Who?

**Thomas H. Kean:** It was the first consulting firm in the country. I'm trying to remember the name now. But one of them later went on to be one of Reagan's top people, top advisors.

**Thomas H. Kean:** No. John Deardorf was later on. He was with me later on. No, this was- I'm trying to remember. He was before Deardorf. This is the first political-- California is always ahead of the country in everything. These were the first political consultants really. They knew amazing things. When I had to organize a group to meet Scranton at the airport and we didn't know how to get a bunch of people to get to the airport. We had to show activity. So he said, "Here's how you do it." They said, "Go to the airport and then have the announcer announce all television and media people greeting Governor Scranton please report to Gate 6. As soon as people hear television and media are coming, they'll come to Gate 6 if they're waiting for planes." So we had three or four hundred people come to Gate 6. People said Scranton greeted the airport crowd. The same thing in San Francisco. We didn't know how to get a crowd because the political people were all for him. Goldwater had a huge crowd meeting him when he came into San Francisco. We didn't have support in California really. How do you get a crowd? We had Tiffany kind of invitations engraved saying will you please come to a small reception to greet Governor Scranton on his arrival in San Francisco at the hotel. We sent it to every registered Republican in town. So, we got to the hotel with Scranton and there was a mob scene outside of little old ladies, but I've got an invitation. The headline in the paper next day was "Mob Greets Scranton. Enthusiastic Reception." <Laughs> Those kinds of tricks really worked, but little things that were fun.

**Michael Aron:** You make politics sound a little bit like marketing.

**Thomas H. Kean:** Well, it is. <Laughs> Some of it is. It's always been a big part of it. But it was putting a demonstration together, when the Goldwater people didn't want our people on the floor and so on. It was challenging and interesting. We had all the young people with us from Stanford and Berkeley and all of that.

**Michael Aron:** Was it a two man convention, Goldwater versus Scranton?

**Thomas H. Kean:** Yes. Yes. Scranton didn't have any support really because he was too late. In fact, the New Jersey Delegation were so mad at him, the New Jersey Delegation decided that in order not to create trouble, they'd split the votes. So the Scranton delegation, they figured since Scranton didn't have a chance, they didn't want to annoy Goldwater, so they gave 50% of the votes to Goldwater. Typical of New Jersey, don't take a stand.

**Michael Aron:** Were you bitten by a bug there?

**Thomas H. Kean:** Yeah, yeah. I got absolutely enthralled by it and went home and called Webb Todd, who was our State Chairman, Christie's father and said, "I want to help. What should I do?" So I went down and--

**Michael Aron:** Helped Goldwater get elected?

**Thomas H. Kean:** No, no, no. I didn't want to help Goldwater get elected at the time. I had no problem with Goldwater. I was enthusiastic at the time. I worked for Scranton at the convention. I just wanted to help the Republican party in the state because everybody told me it's local. You may want to get all excited about national politics but it's not what's happening. This happens locally. Get involved locally if you want to be interested in national politics. So, I figured I ought to do that. I volunteered for Webb Todd, worked for him at the State Committee. He funded it out of his own pocket. He paid for the rent. He paid the people. I was a volunteer but he paid for the salaries of the people who worked there. He'd buy our lunches when we went out to lunch.

**Michael Aron:** Where was it?

**Thomas H. Kean:** On State Street, in Trenton; down from the State House. We had some problems with the Young Republicans and maybe National Youth Coordinator, State Youth Coordinator trying to straighten that one out. Then he said, "There's a State party in Essex County that's been taken over by people that nobody trusts. So will you go down there and be Finance Chairman because people will not give money to the party unless there's somebody there they trust. They'll trust you." In those days, it was very different than today. There was no accounting whatsoever. If you were the Treasurer of the party in Essex County, you'd go to the Prudential and they'd hand you an envelope or AT&T and they'd hand you an envelope for public service. Inside the envelope would be a certain amount of cash. You didn't know until you got out of the room how much they'd given you. And you had no idea how much they were giving the other party. But you'd go and get these envelopes. There was no public accounting whatsoever. You could really--

**Michael Aron:** Skim a little.

**Thomas H. Kean:** Yeah, that's why they didn't want to trust- that's why I ended up as Treasurer. I remember when we picked up the Election Day money which

was about $40,000.00. In Essex County, you gave a certain amount, five or six dollars a district to district workers. I remember sitting on a stool and the County Chairman picked it up with me. I kept it. I didn't give him anything. I kept it. He said, "I want to stop for something to eat." I said, "What do you mean we're going to stop for something to eat?" He said, "There's a counter here." I'm sitting at a counter eating a hamburger or something with this satchel between my knees with $40,000.00 in it. If people here know, in this neighborhood, we've got $40,000.00 we're not going to get out of here alive.

**Michael Aron:** Where were you born?

**Thomas H. Kean:** New York City.

**Michael Aron:** What was going on in your parents lives?

**Thomas H. Kean:** My father was working on Wall Street.

**Michael Aron:** He wasn't a Congressman yet?

**Thomas H. Kean:** No. He was working on Wall Street. Because he was in the city, we had a small apartment in the city. I was so young when we left the city. It was 7th or 38th, somewhere down on that part of town. I remember the house actually. I left there when I was three or something. Family had that during the winter and then we'd go home to New Jersey in the summertime.

**Michael Aron:** To Livingston, that was essentially a summer house for your family in those days?

**Thomas H. Kean:** Yes, yes. It was big stone thing. There never was much heat in it. We had fire places and smoke. So mostly it was a place we went in the summertime.

**Michael Aron:** At some point, he decided to run for Congress from New Jersey?

**Thomas H. Kean:** Yes, from Livingston. Yes, Essex County.

**Michael Aron:** Was he successful right away?

**Thomas H. Kean:** Yes. I think. I don't remember. I think he may have had a primary he lost but he was fairly successful. I think there may have been an incumbent who had gotten in with Franklin Roosevelt in those days. So, I think he had to knock somebody out of office if I remember. But I don't remember who it was. I was three or four years old.

**Michael Aron:** Do you remember which district he represented?

**Thomas H. Kean:** It used to be the 12th District, which I knew best because these districts change a bit from time to time. But he basically had a third of the City of Newark and came up through Irvington, Maplewood, around Livingston, around through West Essex, Montclair. That was basically the District. He shared the County most of the time. I remember he shared it with Huey Addanizio and Pete Rodino. They each had a third of the city.

**Michael Aron:** What were the ethnic forces in that district?

**Thomas H. Kean:** The part of Newark he had was very heavily Jewish. So was South Orange and Maplewood, and maybe Livingston. I know that was probably the predominant group I remember. There were other ethnic groups in the district but I remember the Jewish community. His campaign manager was always Jewish. I think his opponents were often Jewish so it was a very important vote. He carried it always. He was very, very involved in the founding of the State of Israel and the first congressman to speak up against the Holocaust on the floor of the House. I grew up recognizing how important those issues were.

**Michael Aron:** Do you remember what year he stood up in the House of Representatives and criticized the Holocaust?

**Thomas H. Kean:** I want to say '43, '44. Somewhere in that area. It's amazing to think that nobody else had ever done it. Al Felzenberg, who wrote a book about me, in his research, he has a theory that he was in league with Morgenthau who worked in the Roosevelt Administration and was frustrated with Roosevelt for not speaking out. Morgenthau, who knew my father, may well have made some calls into the House to see if he could get some people to start talking about it. That's just a theory, Al's theory. I guess they knew each other and were obviously on the

same side of those kinds of issues. Or it may have just been that he had enough friends in this district who had family in Germany and Europe who knew about what was going on and brought it to their attention.

**Michael Aron:** Was he a good father?

**Thomas H. Kean:** I don't know how you just determine a good father.

**Michael Aron:** Did you love your father?

**Thomas H. Kean:** I respected him. I respected him. Biblically, I honored my father.

**Michael Aron:** Did you have a happy childhood?

**Thomas H. Kean:** No, not particularly. I don't think. I grew up there in the Second World War

**Michael Aron:** What year were you born?

**Thomas H. Kean:** 1935. So, it was coming out of the Depression, Second World War. My father was away all the time, Congress or wherever. My two brothers and my brother-in-law were away fighting in the war. My mother was volunteering as a Gray Lady in those years. Everybody worked for the war effort. So I was generally alone growing up.

**Michael Aron:** Then they send you off to prep school when you were 12. You resented that initially.

**Thomas H. Kean:** More than initially. <Laughs> Still resent it. That's too young to send somebody away. I wouldn't send a kid away at 12.

**Michael Aron:** That tradition has sort of died away in this country, hasn't it?

**Thomas H. Kean:** Yeah, but there are still schools. I ran into some guy the other day who is a trustee of a school in New England that takes kids a lot earlier than that. I said, "Who goes there?" "Well, kids of divorced parents. Kids with parents who are in the Foreign Service out of the country." There's a market for a place to send your kid if you can't take care of them.

**Michael Aron:** Did your father bring political people home?

**Thomas H. Kean:** No, not that I remember much. I do remember meetings. He'd have things at the house. If somebody was running for Governor they'd generally come do a fundraiser or whatever it was, at the house for a meeting. The back porch. Generally not. I do remember in Washington, of course I was very young and I didn't know what was going on, but he would ask me when I was five or six years old. I would have told you the largest ethnic group in the district was African American. That's what I thought. In Washington, growing up in Washington, inevitably at Saturday lunch we'd have some of the people from the district. Right up from Montclair, they had a lot of very close friends in the African American community in Montclair. And they'd be there for lunch. And so, I thought- and I'd ask my mother and my mother would say these are people who are constituents or district friends of your fathers. So, fine. But they were always African American. And I didn't realize until later, he couldn't take them to restaurants because Washington was still a segregated city. Believe it or not. And I do remember that. I remember if you had an African American friend, you couldn't go to the movies together. You couldn't take people to a restaurant. I think of it now, it's dreadful. Eisenhower was the first one. Eisenhower called the restaurants personally and said it was outrageous in the nation's Capital and asked them personally. There was no law that allowed him to do it. The President called them personally.

**Michael Aron:** You did well with the African American community as well as the Jewish community. Did they associate you with your father?

**Thomas H. Kean:** No. The Jewish Community did, yes. The Jewish Community had memories of my father; yeah, very definitely. And those were when I first was running for office 'cause I ran in some of the same areas that he ran in. African American community, I think it was more-- I marched with Dr. King and I'd been very active in Civil Rights, always.

**Michael Aron:** From what age?

**Thomas H. Kean:** Always. I remember debating at Princeton. There were people in my class who were from the South. We ended up with the Whig-Cliosophic Society, which is the debating society at Princeton. I ended upholding the idea that-- They were upholding the idea that desegregation was moving too fast. And these poor benighted[?] African American people couldn't handle it because it was moving too fast; believe it or not. That was a debating topic when I was at Princeton. We had one African American in the whole university at that point. One! Before I left, they had more but not many more; not many more. It was a southern school in many ways; Princeton. But anyway, I was always involved in those things. I was one of the earliest members I think in the North that helped open up the northern headquarters of the Southern Christian Leadership Association on 125th Street in Harlem when I was a graduate student at Columbia. I was always involved in Civil Rights causes that I can remember.

**Michael Aron:** You said at the beginning that you had Republican and Democrat heroes. You said you rooted for Republicans although you secretly rooted for some Democrats.

**Thomas H. Kean:** Oh sure, and not so secretly when I was teaching. I was chairman at the school for the Kennedy Campaign for President. Because I simply thought like a lot of people my age at that point. I was just enamored with Kennedy and I was in Massachusetts, which didn't hurt any. So, I was faculty head or whatever for Kennedy for President. My father found out about it. <laughs> Somebody called him and said you know what you're son is doing? And he said, "You really want to be doing that?" And I said, "Yeah, I do."

**Michael Aron:** Was there a serious breach between you and him?

**Thomas H. Kean:** No, but I think he was- not as serious as when I went to Princeton instead of Harvard- but still serious.

**Michael Aron:** Had he gone to Harvard?

**Thomas H. Kean:** Yes. <Laughs>

**Michael Aron:** Did you choose Princeton?

**Thomas H. Kean:** I chose Princeton, yeah. I got admitted to both and chose Princeton.

**Michael Aron:** Why?

**Thomas H. Kean:** My brother had been to Princeton, my older brother; much older than I am.

**Michael Aron:** Which one?

**Thomas H. Kean:** Bob, who was much older. He's my godfather as well. And he had been to Princeton. He used to take me to football games but only when he was sure Princeton was going to win. I guess I thought I wanted to go to Princeton. And I sort of wanted to go home to New Jersey too. I had been in Massachusetts too long. I thought about it. My roommate went to Harvard from the school. I thought about it seriously and then I decided no.

**Michael Aron:** Who were the dominant Republican figures of your first 20 years of the time when your father was in Congress?

**Thomas H. Kean:** Republican figures? Bob Taft, Arthur Vandenberg.

**Michael Aron:** Taft was Senator from Ohio.

**Thomas H. Kean:** Yeah, known as Mr. Conservative. Vandenberg was from Michigan and was the architect of the bipartisan foreign policy with Truman. So both of those, those were the two probably most prominent. And then of course, along came Joe McCarthy. I was around when he became more and more prominent. In fact, I remember my father was one of the first to come out against McCarthy in the Republican Party. And he got terrible mail; probably 12 to one against him; letters written on orange paper with green ink, threats and everything else. It was sort of scary. I had to think of it now, but McCarthy had a very strong and passionate following. Republicans running for reelection really wanted McCarthy to come into their districts and Democrats who were running like Jack Kennedy made deals. Kennedy senior made a deal to keep Joe McCarthy out of the district because he really was popular at that point, particularly among Irish Americans.

**Michael Aron:** That was before 1954 and those famous hearings.

**Thomas H. Kean:** I listened to every one of those hearings in my freshman year at Princeton.

**Michael Aron:** Did you watch them?

**Thomas H. Kean:** I watched them. There was a small television set in the commons or somewhere. I went and watched almost all of those hearings. I loved them.

**Michael Aron:** Who were the dominant New Jersey Republicans in those days?

**Thomas H. Kean:** Well, my mentor was Cliff Case. He was just the last Republican Senator probably from New Jersey and somebody I liked and admired very, very much. My father and he didn't always agree but I generally agreed with Case.

**Michael Aron:** Was he more moderate than your father?

**Thomas H. Kean:** He was more liberal. I can almost use the word liberal with Cliff and he wouldn't have been ashamed of that word. He was a very gentle man and one of the nicest people I ever knew. A quiet sense of humor.

**Michael Aron:** What part of the State did he come from?

**Thomas H. Kean:** Union County. He sort of moved down to Washington but he knew <inaudible> kid in those days. He used his son in-law's address, and rollaways, as his voting address but he basically moved down to Washington.

**Michael Aron:** How long did he serve?

**Thomas H. Kean:** I think about two terms, maybe? But, very respected across the aisle. He had a lot of friends; one of those people who had just as many friends on the Democratic side as he did on the Republican side. He was one of those—a

book that somebody's got to write—the records are somewhere—the story of the moderate Republicans, Rockefeller Republicans. Because they were the ones that determined what the policy was in those days. Fritz Mondale told me that. He said, "Every single important bill in my entire time in the Senate, if it was really important, tough; people went to Chuck Percy and to Cliff Case and to Jack Javitz and to Margaret J. Smith and to Brooke and Saltonstall, Massachusetts." All these people- and Hugh Scott of Pennsylvania. They could walk between the parties and they made the compromises. If people got too tied to this way or that way, they'd come together around these people. But they were enormously influential and Case was a leader in that group.

**Michael Aron:** The nostalgia in your voice for that Republican.

**Thomas H. Kean:** Well, yeah but I think any party that ever wants to be in the majority has got to be tolerant of differences within itself. Democrats are, now. Democrats go out to North Dakota and ask who the head of the local NRA is. When they find out, they get him to run as a Democrat and they get elected. There are Democrats in the House who have come onto the floor with guns. They understand that a party has got to be a coalition and if you want to learn about that, learn about the period when I was growing up when Franklin Roosevelt tolerated the worst racists in this country. They had them in the White House as part of the Democratic coalition. In fact, they were his leading Democrats. They were chairs of the committees. Richard Russell ran the congress for Franklin Roosevelt. But you wouldn't want to compromise with those people. The idea of a broad coalition is the only time you can ever govern. When a party becomes narrower and narrower as the Democrats did when they nominated McGovern and in that period when the Democrats were at a Democratic Convention. People looked at the delegates and said that's not who we want to govern us. That occurred for a number of years until Bill Clinton came along and broadened the coalition again.

**Michael Aron:** Did your parents talk about the family tradition? Was it an active part of growing up in your house?

**Thomas H. Kean:** Not too much in our house. I had cousins and I think it was more in their house. They lived in the old house in Elizabeth. I think their mother was about preserving the house, preserving her <inaudible> and so on. So, we went over to visit them, you saw that stuff.

**Michael Aron:** Who was that?

**Thomas H. Kean:** Mary Ellis Kean. She was my father's brother's wife.

**Michael Aron:** Which brother?

**Thomas H. Kean:** John Kean. My father only had one brother. He died early and she lived on and made it her project to preserve the old trunks of papers, to take the old furniture out of the barn and into the main house. To get out the old family portraits and really preserve it for future generations and she deserved a lot of credit for it.

**Michael Aron:** Did that interest you as a young man?

**Thomas H. Kean:** No. It didn't interest me as a young man. I got interested in this particular guy at Princeton; the Polish fellow. But no, I think I became interested in family after I became interested in history as opposed to becoming interested in family and then becoming interested in history. I think it was the reverse. Because this is history, and you started running into people with the same name in history which got to be interesting.

**Michael Aron:** Your father ran for the U.S. Senate in 1958 against Harrison Williams?

**Thomas H. Kean:** Yes.

**Michael Aron:** Did you play a role in that campaign?

**Thomas H. Kean:** Yeah, not willingly. I had just gotten out of Princeton, or was just getting out of Princeton, I guess, when the campaign was moving up. Obviously, I didn't have a job yet. And if you were jobless going out of college and your father is running for the United States Senate, you basically are told to help, which I did. I worked in the headquarters with some fascinating people. They were very wonderful. A guy called Joe Sullivan, who'd been a reporter for the Star Ledger and the News. He used to write the political column and worked for my father.

**Michael Aron:** The one who would later work for the New York Times?

**Thomas H. Kean:** No, no. This is another Joe Sullivan. This was before that. This was way back. I guess he was a columnist for the Ledger. He wrote the political column then; back in the, I guess, 40s, 50s. And then my father hired him. Another guy called Williams, who had been with Vanderbilt and the clean government thing in Essex County when he was running the party. They just had stories upon stories upon stories for fun to listen to about politics, about what really happened.

**Michael Aron:** So you were pretty interested in politics?

**Thomas H. Kean:** I got very interested in that and in them. I loved talking to them. And then one day, I forget. There was a meeting in Union County. I guess I was a surrogate taking my father's place but it was a fairly important one I guess. The town was important in the Primary. He had a tough Primary. I guess most of the party leaders were backing his opponent, which I inherited the party leaders backing my opponents. But he ran against two people. One was Bern Shanley, who we knew because he lived almost next-door to us in Washington. He was Eisenhower's appointment secretary and was national committeeman for the Republican Party and therefore had a lot more contacts in the county and the county chairman than my father did. And a fellow called Bob Morris, who was a right-winger. Very conservative guy but conservative in those days meant foreign policy conservative and fiscal conservative. They didn't have any of the social issues dividing the party. So it was those two and Shanley had the majority of the party support. They said, "Can you go down and represent your father at this meeting in Union County?" And I said, "What do I have to do?" And they said, "Well, just shake hands and so on." I said, "Fine but I don't speak," because I'd never spoken. I had a bad stutter as a child and still had a little remnants of it left and I didn't. So they said, "No, you don't have to speak. Just shake hands and represent your father." So I said, "Fine." I got to the thing. I got to the party late as I'm usually late for most things and they already started the program. And the opponent is running at the mayor; Hatfield of Fernwood I think it was, came up and said, "Flo Dwyer's representative is going to speak, who was a congresswoman, and then you're next." I said, "Next doing what?" "Speaking." I said, "I'm not here to speak." He said, "Yes, <Inaudible> just say a couple of words." And I'd never spoken other than a high school or college debate, ever. I was scared to death. I got up there and I don't know what I said. I don't know what I said to this day. But I just know I got out of there as fast as I could afterwards. I went back basically and said to headquarters, don't ever make me do that again. And then Flo Dwyer's assistant, a woman called Bea Arthur; it was her administrative assistant, called and said, "You know, he gave one of the best talks I've heard in a long time and he's the best representative his father could possibly have getting out on the

road." I said, "I don't believe that." And then the mayor called. The mayor said, "He was terrific last night and can we get him back." And I started thinking maybe I can do this. So after that I did it. I was sent out as a surrogate; even occasionally with my father's opponents when he couldn't be there.

**Michael Aron:** Your father won the Primary?

**Thomas H. Kean:** He won the Primary.

**Michael Aron:** What was the general election about?

**Thomas H. Kean:** Really, it was a bad year for the Republicans. They lost nationally in a big way. It was a year Eisenhower got into trouble. He had an aide called Sherman Adams who had a problem with a vicuña coat as I remember. He had obtained it illegally and had to quit, and a whole bunch of stuff, and the Republicans lost. My father was outspent. I guess I don't know why. Well, I guess the Democrats had control of the state in those days. Bob Meyner was governor and when you have control of the state you can raise money. So, he was outspent by Williams and television was just coming in. A couple of things on television I remember. But he just didn't make it. I was annoyed about that too.

**Michael Aron:** You were annoyed?

**Thomas H. Kean:** Well, more than annoyed because I was convinced he was much more qualified. And he got all the editorial endorsements. The press was convinced he was more qualified too. The Newark News, the Star Ledger.

**Michael Aron:** Who was Pete Williams?

**Thomas H. Kean:** He was a small town lawyer from Union County who had one term in the House, that's all. But, a very attractive presence and able on his feet; nice guy. My father was never a good speaker.

**Michael Aron:** No?

**Thomas H. Kean:** No. I don't know if he ever knew that he wasn't, but he wasn't. People that serve in congress for a long time think they're good speakers because everybody claps when they come into rooms, but a lot of them aren't. And he wasn't. He knew his facts. I mean he really knew the issues but he was not good on his feet. Pete was better.

**Michael Aron:** You had a stuttering problem but you did debating at Princeton and St. Mark's?

**Thomas H. Kean:** Yeah, but that's different. I mean I had done it but not well.

**Michael Aron:** Did your stuttering get in the way in debate?

**Thomas H. Kean:** Yes. A bit, yes. What you have to do if you're a stutterer is you learn how to do things, you have to pick different words. If you feel a word coming and you start to stutter, you think of a synonym and get it out as fast as you can. Some stutterers almost sing a little bit because nobody stutters singing. You compensate. You find ways around it. But the one thing you can't compensate for is when you have to say a word and you can't think of a substitute. When I was in the army, they have roll call. You're supposed to say your name. You can't say another name. And I would breakout into a sweat as they started to get closer to me as to whether I was going to be able to get my name out. It was awful. And in class.

**Michael Aron:** Did you get professional help for that?

**Thomas H. Kean:** No. There wasn't much of it- you didn't give people much professional help in those days. But it was in class, you never raised your hand because the kids would laugh at you if you raised your hand and nothing came out. So, you pretend you didn't know the answer.

**Michael Aron:** Governor, we want to get into your political career in this session. But before we do, Don just brought up the 1960s and the time of unrest and antiwar sentiment among people your age. What was your orientation toward all of that?

**Thomas H. Kean:** I was antiwar.

**Michael Aron:** You were?

**Thomas H. Kean:** Yes. In fact, in the New Jersey Assembly, I think I was the only Republican to vote on-- The Assembly gets into things that are none of their business. Of course, they couldn't do anything about the war, but there was a resolution. I think they put it on to embarrass the Republicans, because the war was unpopular at that point. They put some sort of resolution out. I think I was the Speaker or Majority Leader and I voted for it. <laughing> I didn't like the war at all. I did things like this and I'd hear from some of my fellow Republicans.

**Michael Aron:** All right. Let's get you into the Assembly. You went to the 1964 Convention as a Scranton operative.

**Thomas H. Kean:** Yes.

**Michael Aron:** You had this wonderful experience that you described previously. How did a political career develop out of that?

**Thomas H. Kean:** By accident. A lot of my career is as New Jersey philosopher. Yogi Berra once said when asked if he thought of things ahead of time. He said, "No. They sort of come serendipitous like." My career has been like that. Because I didn't have any intention of running for the Assembly whatsoever. I'd never even been to Trenton I don't think ever except for a couple, working with Webb Todd a little bit for the Republicans. But I was doing some work. The Essex County people knew me, because I'd done some work for the county chairman. The head of Hoffmann-La Roche decided he wanted to run for governor.

**Michael Aron:** Who was that?

**Thomas H. Kean:** Uh.. an Italian-American. He wanted to be the first Italian-American governor. And he-- I'll think of his name in a minute. But people told him he couldn't do that, unless he could control his own county. Now in those days, there was no disclosure of where your money came from. So he's getting it out of Switzerland, I think, Hoffmann-La Roche. But he had tons of money. Using the money, he put together a ticket against the whole organizational Republican ticket.

**Michael Aron:** Would this be in 1965? The 1965 gubernatorial election?

**Thomas H. Kean:** 1967, I think. It wasn't gubernatorial. It was the year after, I think, two years later. So he put together a ticket and got people who had served and got very prominent Republicans out of the ticket. So the organization had to put together its own ticket. In Essex County, in those days everybody ran countywide except the Assembly, which had just been told they didn't. The senators were still running countywide. You put all the county officials together. In those days you had a coroner as well as all the freeholders and the county clerks and all that kind of thing. You had a ticket that went the length of this room and they had trouble filling it up. So they asked me if I'd run for the Assembly. I think basically figuring my father's name was still pretty good in Essex County and maybe that would be good for them in the primary.

**Michael Aron:** This is 1967?

**Thomas H. Kean:** Yes. So I thought about it and thought, "Well, what can I lose? I'm not doing anything else very interesting in my life right now."

**Michael Aron:** What were you doing?

**Thomas H. Kean:** I was running a small real estate investment corporation in Elizabeth. Mostly family stuff that I was putting together.

**Michael Aron:** Were you married?

**Thomas H. Kean:** No, I wasn't. I was not yet married. I was in the process of getting engaged and getting married in that same year. So I said, "Okay." They made the same approach to a fellow called Phil Kaltenbacher, who turned out to be one of my best friends. We didn't know each other at the time, but his father had been fairly prominent in the Jewish community. So the two of us were asked to run for the organization.

**Michael Aron:** Who was the senator from Essex County, do you recall?

**Thomas H. Kean:** Lots of them. There were five, all ran countywide. There was a guy called Giuliani. It was the old Democrats then. The Democrats were in charge. Both sides were running in a Republican primary, but then the winner would have to run against the Democratic ticket. I'm trying to remember who; they were

prominent. The Democrats were in total control of the legislature. Dick Hughes was governor. I don't think they had a veto-proof majority, but they had close. They had been in control for a while. So they asked me to run. Of course, we had this big primary first. They hired everybody in sight, because they had all the money. They called themselves the Reformed Republicans. We were the Organization Republicans. In general, they won most of the seats, but not all of them. We won, Phil and I. There were a couple of candidates from Newark who won. One of the senators came through, a guy called Giuliani. And all the rest of the ticket went to the so-called reform people. So we were sort of on the outs. We'd won the primary, but we weren't with the group. But we started meeting together from time to time. I remember they hired a guy who ended up as a columnist for the *New York Times* as their public relations director, a guy called Walter Well who ran the campaign for Hoffmann-La Roche. He was the number two at Hoffmann-La Roche. And what was his name? The guy who was a conservative columnist for years at the *New York Times*. He writes the word column on the Sunday magazine.

**Michael Aron:** William Safire.

**Thomas H. Kean:** Bill Safire. Bill Safire was hired. So that was the kind of money they were spending. He was in the public relations business at that point. So we had this money now behind the ticket, because they couldn't say, "Vote for everybody except these two guys" in our district. And it turned out to be, after we'd won the primary, a total Republican year. Because there was an issue called S400 on the ballet, where the Democrats had passed a bill saying that strikers deserved unemployment benefits, even though the strike was voluntary and all of that. That put the business community really in arms and it didn't seem logical to people. At the same time, although it was a quiet issue and never became much of a campaign issue, although my opponent accused me of being for it. Hughes's education commissioner, a guy called Carl Marlburger, started to promote busing. And although that wasn't the S400, which was a big visible issue, I think it was underground. People were very worried about kids getting bused around. I think that was part of it. It turned into a huge landslide where we went from a fairly small minority into a huge majority.

**Michael Aron:** In the Legislature?

**Thomas H. Kean:** Yes, huge majority, veto-proof majority in Hughes's last couple of years.

**Michael Aron:** Was that a tough issue for you, the busing, given your interest in civil rights?

**Thomas H. Kean:** Yes. It became an issue in my district because I was supporting it.

**Michael Aron:** You were supporting it?

**Thomas H. Kean:** Yes. One of my opponents was a conservative Democrat and actually, their family had supported my father years ago, so they were sort of half friends. I wasn't out there raising the flag for it, but I was not criticizing him either. So he came out and accused me of being for busing toward the end of the campaign. It was sort of one of these desperation things. If you're losing, you throw everything you can including the kitchen sink into it. It didn't catch fire at all.

**Michael Aron:** You went down to Trenton--

**Thomas H. Kean:** By the way, in campaigning, Irvington was my big town. I learned a lot, because at first I figured out mathematically that if I could hold Irvington, there was no way I could lose.

**Michael Aron:** What was Irvington like back then?

**Thomas H. Kean:** It was a pretty heavily Democratic town, but very ethnic. It had, at that point, a fairly small African-American population, but it had a heavy Polish, German, small neighborhood of Jewish, union. A big union town. The centers of power are often some of the big parishes. It was Monsignor Wojack who was a big Polish Monsignor. He supposedly gave you the wink. When you got his wink you got a whole bunch of votes there. I learned a lot campaigning in very tough ethnic areas and a lot of senior citizens. I learned a lot there, too. There were a lot of senior citizens living in very poor conditions with bolts on their doors because they didn't want anybody to get in. Finally, when they'd let you in, you'd find out their son was a lawyer in Short Hills. You wondered why the hell they were living in here, if the son was a lawyer in Short Hills. A lot of that. A lot of people living in very fancy suburbs with parents who were eking out a living in pretty bad conditions in Irvington. But I beat those areas to death. I went back and back and back, so the old ladies in those projects would see me coming. "It's that nice young fellow again," and carried the projects, which no Republican had ever done before.

**Michael Aron:** You and Kaltenbacher or just you?

**Thomas H. Kean:** I ran ahead of him, but not a great deal. Probably both carried most of them. He worked hard, too. We just beat the town to-- We lived in Irvington. We almost moved in. We were down there every single day and back and back and back and back. I learned that people get to know you and get to know you care about them. You don't just come once and come back. They'll support. I never forgot that. And I also learned that if you carry Democratic areas, each vote is worth two. It's a vote your opponent's not getting. So when I ran for office later on, people always questioned, "What are you doing in cities? Why are you in African-American neighborhoods? Why are you campaigning in these areas?" The Republican Party never understood that. I understood it. That's probably why I won that close election. I did a lot of that.

**Michael Aron:** Did you enjoy campaigning?

**Thomas H. Kean:** I got to, yes. I did. I like meeting people. I like people. I know there are people in politics who don't really like people that much, but I don't know how they do it. I guess I think you have to. To enjoy it, you've got to like people. I did. People are all different. They all have their own problems. Some of them are pains in the neck, but that's part of the game. I liked it. I found out I liked it. The more I did it, the more I found out I enjoyed it.

**Michael Aron:** You would have been about 30 years old at this point?

**Thomas H. Kean:** Yes.

**Michael Aron:** You were in the process of getting married.

**Thomas H. Kean:** Yes. Phil and I would campaign together. I had just gotten married. I got married in the spring.

**Michael Aron:** The spring of 1967?

**Thomas H. Kean:** Yes.

**Michael Aron:** How did you meet Debbie?

**Thomas H. Kean:** I met Debbie, I took out a girl when I was at a graduate school in New York. I went with her to a party and Debbie was there. I sort of figured-- No, actually Debbie wasn't there. Her roommate was there. And then I would see Debbie, because she was rooming with the roommate. And gradually I decided I would switch. Then I went to Wilmington. She went back to Wilmington. She worked from Wilmington. So I spent a lot of time the year before commuting on the Turnpike back and forth to Wilmington. I'd be working. I'd go down Friday night, spend the weekend and drive back late Sunday night.

**Michael Aron:** You decided you were tired of the commute?

**Thomas H. Kean:** Yes. <laughing>

**Michael Aron:** The beginning of your legislative career and your marriage, they sort of coincided?

**Thomas H. Kean:** Yes, absolutely coincided. The fact is, in our wedding album, one of the best political operatives in Essex County and one of the people nobody trusted was Joe Entile. Joe Entile came to the wedding. The picture at my wedding, he's on the sofa and I know what he's saying. He's telling me, "We've got to get a couple of checks to these leaders before you go on your honeymoon." <laughing>

**Michael Aron:** How did Debbie like politics?

**Thomas H. Kean:** She never really liked it, never.

**Michael Aron:** I know by the time you were governor she wasn't crazy about it.

**Thomas H. Kean:** No. She never was. She never was. We had fun for awhile because Phil Kaltenbacher and his wife and Debbie and I were the same age. We all got along together very, very well and we had fun. We laughed all the way through. That was sort of fun. But then when it got more heated up, she didn't like it really at all. After I got elected, the majority of the people who got elected with me, of course, were from the reform faction, not my faction.

**Michael Aron:** Do you recall going down to Trenton to serve for the first time?

**Thomas H. Kean:** Yes, I do. Getting sworn in and meeting all the fascinating other people in the legislature. I guess it's probably the same way, but the legislature in those days was certainly very representative of the state. You met people who were from every walk of life, people with PhD's and people with no education whatsoever, people who were union leaders, and people who had small businesses. The legislature had a lot more able lawyers in those days, because a lot of the major law firms in the state encouraged the young people coming up to do the legislature for two or four years and thought it was good for the firm and good for them. We had the best young lawyers in the state in the legislature until the conflict of interest issues when it turned out that some of the lawyers in the legislature, I guess, had pushed their firms or something. So after Watergate, when all these great reforms went through, they passed this stupid law which I voted for, which I'll always regret, that said--and it's still in effect--you cannot work for a law firm which has business with the state. Every major law firm in the state does business with the state. So all of them, including Bob Wilentz, who was my best friend in the legislature, had to resign. We lost it. We lost the brightest people in the legislature, some of them. We were left with lawyers who either represented small towns or insurance brokers or just didn't do any business with the state, which is small town lawyers. It was a great mistake. I tried to get it repealed when I was governor. They wouldn't touch it. They said, "We're going to be accused of going back on ethics." It's a wrong law, because it's kept very able people out of the legislature ever since. Anyway, that was before that time. We had brilliant lawyers in the legislature, brilliant young lawyers who were very helpful to the process in both parties.

**Michael Aron:** You would have a later history with Wilentz, but we'll get to that. Did you sponsor legislation in your first term?

**Thomas H. Kean:** Yes. It turned out, and again this was accident kind of stuff. They all, I guess, sort of liked me in the delegation. They didn't all like each other. So they elected me delegation leader in the Assembly, even though I was from the minority faction of the organization, which really annoyed the then reform Republications.

**Michael Aron:** When you say delegation leader, delegation from your district?

**Thomas H. Kean:** No, no. From the county.

**Michael Aron:** From the county?

**Thomas H. Kean:** Yes. I was the leader of the largest delegation in the legislature.

**Michael Aron:** The Essex County delegation.

**Thomas H. Kean:** Yes, which then was the biggest. So I, therefore, was given all the urban--this was the year of the riots--in that first term. I was very involved in it, because I had districts right down to Newark and I was redistricting that part of Newark, so I had a lot of interest anyway. Springfield Avenue. It goes right down through the center of the riots, which was my district. But all the urban legislation that came had to come through me. I sponsored all of it. The first urban aid bill in the state ever. All the recommendations were put together by various commissions as to what could be done to prevent riots in the future. In the process I wrote, by the way, the bill I'm most proud of.

**Michael Aron:** Which is?

**Thomas H. Kean:** The Education Opportunity Fund Act. It's probably helped more kids than anything else.

**Michael Aron:** What we call TAG grants?

**Thomas H. Kean:** No, no.

**Michael Aron:** EOF, that's right.

**Thomas H. Kean:** Yes, EOF. It's the largest fellowship program in the state now and has been for a number of years. It came out of a conversation I had with a guy called Harry Smith, who was then head of Essex County College. I said, "What are your problems and what can I do for you?" It was my first term in the Assembly. He said, "I can't tell you the number of kids who can do the work here, but cannot afford to be here because they have to help their families." He said, "If we had some money." So I put together a bill. It was based on the fact that anybody who was able should be allowed to have a college education in New Jersey. There's a fellow called Ralph Dungan. Ralph was Dick Hughes's Commissioner of Higher

Education or Chancellor, I guess. Ralph called me and said, "You put in this bill." I said, "Yes." He said, "I've been working on a bill that's similar. Could you come see me?" So I did. He had a different idea, but a complementary idea. His idea was that these lower income kids, when you got them into college, had been to such terrible schools that they were flunking right out again. So we got them in, but you couldn't keep them in, because they hadn't been prepared properly by life and by the school they were in. So we put the two bills together. It supplied money, but also supplied a separate fund which would give these kids mentoring and tutoring the summer before they went to the college and then for the first couple of years. It's been one of the most successful programs in the entire country. We have people who are mayors and a member of the president's cabinet, subcabinet I guess. We had lawyers, teachers, every profession you can think of. Every now and then we have a 10 year reunion or something and I go. These people come up and say, "Were it not for that program, I would not be able to do what we're doing." I'm almost as proud of that as anything I ever did in public life. I had trouble getting it through.

**Michael Aron:** Did you?

**Thomas H. Kean:** I got it through the Assembly, because I was powerful enough in the Assembly. By that time I had made alliance with the Bergen delegation. The Bergen delegation, we figured that if the Essex and Bergen delegations got together, it was very hard to stop whatever we were trying to do. So I'd do some things to help Bergen. We had an alliance of getting things through then. They helped me with the whole urban package. But it got to the Senate. There was a guy called Bill Herring. He said, "It's going to be a huge waste of money. It's not going to help my district, Ocean County, one bit." He was Chairman of Education in the Senate. He just blocked it, totally blocked it. The choir is over. He said, "It's not going anywhere. It's not going out of my committee." Bill Herring had a bill that came to the Assembly one day out of the Senate with unanimous support to give state aid to independent colleges. At this point, state aid only went to state colleges. This was to give the independents some help. I had no problem with the bill. A lot of these Catholic schools, in particular, wouldn't survive without some state aid. It went to the kids anyway. Anyway, I didn't have any problem with it. But I just filed it. I never brought it up. Eventually these calls started coming up from the Senate. "What happened to my bill?" "The Chairman doesn't like it." "Why doesn't the Chairman?" "We don't know why the Chairman doesn't like it, but it's not going to move."

**Michael Aron:** You were Chairman of what?

**Thomas H. Kean:** By that time, I was Chairman of the Education Committee.

**Michael Aron:** In your first term?

**Thomas H. Kean:** Yes, yes. I took over for Bob Wilentz, just simply because there were so many new Republicans that came in and I happened to have an education background and was leader of the delegation. Those two things propelled me within a year. Bob Wilentz was my tutor. Bob was head of the minority. He would tell me, "You can believe him on this, but don't believe him on that." Or, "This fellow from the school board is good; this one isn't."

**Michael Aron:** Bob Wilentz had been the Chairman of the Education Committee until the Republicans took control?

**Thomas H. Kean:** Yes.

**Michael Aron:** He stayed on the committee?

**Thomas H. Kean:** Yes, as a Democrat minority leader when I came onto the committee and he was my tutor. Bob was tremendously helpful to me, very helpful to me on teaching me the ropes. I didn't know anything about the ropes of Trenton. I don't know where I was on the other story.

**Michael Aron:** Bill Herring wanted his bill.

**Thomas H. Kean:** Yes. So he finally came tromping down the aisle. It was very hard to get senators in those days, to come tromping down to the Assembly. They thought it was sort of beneath them. But he eventually came and he said, "I want my bill moved." I said, "Well, I don't think I can move it." He said, "Why don't you like it?" I said, "Well, I don't know. I just don't think it's particularly helpful to my district." He said, "What?" I said, "By the way, what's ever happened to that education--" He said, "That's not a good bill." I said, "Yes, but you know, it would be helpful to me if you were able to move that bill. I think if you were, I might be able to see my way to move your bill." So anyway, the long story made short, both bills went together. When I was president at Drew I was very happy I got the Herring bill through. But that's how education opportunity went through.

**Michael Aron:** That's a good story.

**Thomas H. Kean:** Yes. The Hughes administration was totally behind it, but they couldn't do any good then, because the Republicans were in such a majority. If you didn't have the Republicans, you couldn't do it.

**Michael Aron:** What did you think of Governor Hughes?

**Thomas H. Kean:** He was a wonderful man. I was so excited. He'd call me occasionally, because I was sponsoring all those bills. I was so shocked. To me, a governor calling me. I never talked to a governor in my life. It was just-- he was just a nice man. He was very helpful to me when I became governor, Dick Hughes. He'd give me advice. He cared tremendously about people and institutions. When I was governor, he would call and say, "Don't forget the poor people in the institutions. They still had a few people from his administration he was watching. He'd say, "This person, just one more appointment and they'll have tenure." Or, "One more appointment until they'll get their pension" and so on. You'd always do that for a former governor. But he was helpful to me.

**Michael Aron:** Who was the Speaker in the Assembly when you went there?

**Thomas H. Kean:** <inaudible>. Dick Hughes used to say, "You know there's a point. Sometimes you have to prove a rule. Republicans are not generally good, but you're the exception, so you prove the rule," he always used to say. The speaker was this guy called Al Smith. In those days, the county leaders picked the leadership in the legislature, which was easy for us the first time, because we didn't know anybody. We all got elected new from all over the state. A lot of able people, but we didn't know anything. Hap Farley, who was the leader of Atlantic County, put Smith in the leadership of the Assembly. Bergen got the next spot, a fellow called Peter Moraities. Then the third went to, I think maybe a guy called Doug Gemson from Hunterdon or somewhere.

**Michael Aron:** It's not entirely different today. The county chairman will have some input into who the legislative leaders are, right?

**Thomas H. Kean:** Well, if they hadn't, I never would have been a legislative leader.

**Michael Aron:** You would have?

**Thomas H. Kean:** Would not have been. No. What happened was Al Smith was a nice man who was totally incompetent and was very small minded. Not small minded in a bad sense, but he got all excited about whether he could get money for his band to go to Washington from his hometown or something. He wouldn't care about the Education Opportunity Fund or anything. He was into little stuff for Atlantic County all the time. I remember I stopped his band bill and he cried in the caucus. He came and said, "I'm the leader, Speaker. People think I can get everything done and you people have done--" and tears started coming down. So we had to get rid of him and at least the younger members all thought we had to get rid of him. One day a guy called Peter Carter, who was a reporter for *The Newark News*. Peter Carter, who tragically died of cancer at a young age, but a very good reporter, wrote a story saying the young turks are getting very restive. There's a chance they will take on the county chairmen and the old leadership and challenge them. If they do, they're going to rally behind Tom Kean. I didn't know anything about it. I don't think anybody else did either. He got it on a whole cloth or he got it from somebody making it up. I don't know where he got it, but he wrote that story and it was a feature story in *The Newark News*. People started coming up to me and saying, "It's a great idea. Will you do it?" Before I knew it, I had 10 or 11 legislators saying, "We're behind you. We're behind you." So we had a meeting at the race track. I remember down at Monmouth or Assembly Day or something. Christie Whitman's brother, Dan Todd, and a whole bunch of people down there and we started saying, "Let's do it." So I ran for Assistant Leader, I guess, against this guy Doug Gemson. I got the support of the young turks and against the County Chairman and won. Suddenly got myself into leadership, again unexpectedly.

**Michael Aron:** Still in your first term or are you now in your second?

**Thomas H. Kean:** Yes, first term. End of first term, yes.

**Michael Aron:** You were the number two Republican?

**Thomas H. Kean:** No, no. There were three in those days. There were only three leaders in those days. There was a Speaker, Majority Leader, and the Assistant Majority Leader. That was it. They put me into Assistant Majority Leader.

**Michael Aron:** Number three Republican in your first term.

**Thomas H. Kean:** It was the end of my first term, beginning of my second term. I'm trying to remember. It may have been in the first year of the second term. But the interesting thing was in those days nobody in either house stayed as leader. You rotated every year, which was thought of as a reform. People across the country, legislative reform was starting. People were talking about consistency in leadership. People should be able to stay more than one year. So the next year, as long as your party was in control, I moved up automatically to Majority Leader. Then I got Dick DeKorte, who was my closest friend on the Republican side, to run for Assistant Majority Leader behind me. Then the next year we started to lose seats. That was the year I was elected Speaker. There were 39 Republicans and 40 Democrats and one Tony Imperiale. Anyway, once you got into that rotation, I was the first Speaker elected to more than one term in office.

**Michael Aron:** One year or one two year term?

**Thomas H. Kean:** No. It was one year terms.

**Michael Aron:** You were the first Speaker to be elected more than one year?

**Thomas H. Kean:** To be re-elected. At the same time, Ray Bateman did the same thing in the Senate. He became the first Senator to be re-elected.

**Michael Aron:** Tell us the story of your famous deal with the Hudson County Democratic Delegation to become Speaker.

**Thomas H. Kean:** Well, it all revolves around David Friedland. He was one of the more interesting and fascinating people I've ever met in my life. He was a published poet. He was the guy who had argued the one man one vote case before the Supreme Court and won. He had a sense of humor that was incredible. He was the one who stood up on the floor at one point and put in a bill to turn the Statue of Liberty around because he said he was tired of facing its rear end and that kind of thing.

**Michael Aron:** Was he the leader of the Hudson Democrats?

**Thomas H. Kean:** No. He was the leader of all the Democrats. He was the Democratic leader. He was always fractious. The Democratic Party in those days was always fractious. They didn't like each other very much, a lot of them. When the legislature got elected, 39 Democrats, 40 Republicans and Tony Imperiale.

**Michael Aron:** Tony Imperiale was an independent?

**Thomas H. Kean:** Yes, independent. Tony thought he was going to be courted—to totally deadlock the place—or to go with the Democrats to get the majority. Both parties declared nobody was talking to Tony Imperiale about anything. So it stayed 39/40 for a while.

**Michael Aron:** How long?

**Thomas H. Kean:** The thing wasn't functioning for a while. I can't remember the exact number of weeks, but it was awhile. Meanwhile, the Democrats threw Friedland out as leader and elected, I think it was, Howard Woodson. I think it was Howard Woodson. But they threw Friedland out. Friedland had a number of alliances within the Democrats. One, he had the Hudson delegation. Then he had some alliances in Union. Then, because I guess he and his father had been labor lawyers, he had these labor alliances around the state. So he started making approaches to Dick DeKorte first, who I guess knew him better than I did, and suggested that he would be willing to vote with the Republicans. First of all, he made impossible demands. But then--

**Michael Aron:** What kind of demands?

**Thomas H. Kean:** He was demanding that he get to be co-leader and his people had to have committee chairmanships and this and that. Just things that didn't make any sense.

**Michael Aron:** Honest political demands, not dishonest demands?

**Thomas H. Kean:** Oh, no. Nothing dishonest, but just things you couldn't do. I don't think he could run the legislature and just leave, I guess, 60 or 70 percent of the Democratic Party out in the cold. He said, "How many votes do you need?" We said, "Two." He said, "I can give you up to 10 or 11. So if any of the Republicans

start going the other way or abstaining, I've got these votes I can pull out," I guess through his labor connections around the state. "They won't vote for you unless you need them, but they're there if you need them."

**Michael Aron:** At some point this was aimed at DeKorte and then transferred to you?

**Thomas H. Kean:** Yes, yes. He wanted to bring me in on it, because I was leader of the party. I was the one that we're talking about as Speaker. And we ended up with a deal which said basically that we were going to have the parties share committees. I'm trying to remember. But not necessarily his people, just the whole Democratic Party. In other words, Woodson's faction, too. He was going to be Conference Chairman, I think, something like that. We couldn't do anything without a title. You needed a title. The Conference Committee was supposedly deadlocked. He was going to chair the Conference Committee. I think the people in Hudson County wanted the same share of patronage, which was the old Sergeant at Arms and so on, that they'd had in the previous legislature. They had been told they were going to lose all that to the other group of Democrats, once they lost the leadership. So none of that sounded too bad to me, because we could organize the place and get it going. So we did. But the press, for a while, was absolutely convinced there were things they didn't know, that it was going to come out in the end, that there was this nefarious deal of some sort where Friedland was going to get this or that or what have you. So there was a huge uproar about it at the time.

**Michael Aron:** Was it embarrassing for you?

**Thomas H. Kean:** It was difficult. Not embarrassing, but it was difficult because people were convinced that something had gone on that hadn't gone on and that it was a real deal. I'd made none but I had to deal with the perception that Friedland was walking off with state jewels. I think the other Democrats were mad as hell. It took a while, but they got their fair share of committee assignments. I gave them a staff member, which they'd never had before, and Friedland got no more power than had been announced. I think it took, for the legislature, about two months. For the press it may have taken three or four, until they finally figured out that there wasn't anything happening here they didn't know about. It was a fascinating legislature, because it turned into a legislature where you could not sponsor a bill unless you had a co-sponsor from the other side of the aisle. There were friendships that developed in that legislature over time. There was more bipartisan stuff than any other legislature on record. The legislature had a tremendous record,

probably as productive an Assembly as we've ever had. Major bills got through and a year later they elected me unanimously, both parties.

**Michael Aron:** A year later, they elected you unanimously?

**Thomas H. Kean:** Yes. This was the first time anybody had been kept as Speaker more than a year.

**Michael Aron:** Friedland would later be indicted?

**Thomas H. Kean:** Oh, yes.

**Michael Aron:** Convicted, and fled the country and faked his own death?

**Thomas H. Kean:** Yes. He had this girlfriend called Holly-go-Lightly, who he fled with. His wife, who I later hired, as Governor. I'd put her in the state bureaucracy somewhere when I was Governor. It was not a major job, but something she needed. She was an able person and Friedland had left her and she needed a job.

**Michael Aron:** Do you think that deal that you made in 1971 suffers from Friedland's subsequent shenanigans in the lore of New Jersey?

**Thomas H. Kean:** Oh, probably. But the record of the legislature is there. The people who served in the legislature all became great friends of mine. You won't find anybody who served in that legislature to say anything different.

**Michael Aron:** Was it a mistake to have made that deal?

**Thomas H. Kean:** I don't know what would have happened if I hadn't, because there was no other way to organize the legislature, unless you went to Tony Imperiale. Nobody was going to do that. Imperiale was an obvious racist. I wasn't going to talk to him and the Democrats wouldn't talk to him.

**Michael Aron:** He came up through the Newark police department?

**Thomas H. Kean:** No. He had a group of citizens, a citizens organization.

**Michael Aron:** He was a vigilante?

**Thomas H. Kean:** Yes, sort of. No, he had an ambulance corps. They did some good things. If you were sick and in trouble, if you called Imperiale's service, they would get there long before the regular Newark hotline or whatever. And they would get to the hospital they'd worry about you afterwards. They'd help you at home. They'd help you find help. I mean they were like a lot of demagogues. At heart there were some good things he did. And people remembered that. And that's why he got elected. It wasn't just that he was a demagogue. And his ambulance corps did some good. People in North ward talk very well to this day about that ambulance corps and some of the things they did for their families and that's Tony's ambulance corps.

**Michael Aron:** But he was a racist. Was he a pariah in the Legislature?

**Thomas Kean:** I don't know if he's a pariah or if people thought of him as a little bit of a joke because he could be very funny. And he didn't do anything overtly racist when he was there. I remember coming from Essex County that he would stir up problems after the riots. I mean he would-- if he found that Leroy Jones and Imamu Amini Baraka was some place, Tony would show up. And each side would have people and they'd be threatening and the police had to be called. Tony, you know, fanned the flames.

**Michael Aron:** So you didn't want to make a deal with him?

**Thomas Kean:** No, I thought he was a racist. I really did. I mean even though he never did anything in the Legislature and I ran against him for Governor and he was running in the primary against me as Governor. But I never heard him say anything overtly racist but I just knew what he'd done in Essex County and I thought that was racist.

**Michael Aron:** Would you make that deal again?

**Thomas Kean:** It would depend very much on the circumstances. If there was no other way of organizing the Legislature and moving the people's business, there

was no other candidate in the Legislature who they were willing to support as Speaker. Yeah. Because I think in the end you've got to do the public's business. You can't just sit there for weeks and weeks and weeks and weeks waiting until the budget doesn't get passed.

**Michael Aron:** So you were just four years in the Legislature and you were now the Speaker <inaudible>…

**Thomas Kean:** Yeah, I think so. Let's see without the Speaker there were no committee chairmen, there's no way of doing any business you can't even organize. So you got to do something.

**Michael Aron:** Other intrigues must have been being hatched at the time. Somebody in the Democratic Caucus must have been trying to get one Republican…

**Thomas Kean:** No.

**Michael Aron:** …just to get them to move over that way, no.

**Thomas Kean:** No, not that we ever knew about, no. We had interesting Republicans there. We had those who needed to be reassured everything was up and up Millicent Fenwick, Al Merck. We had a woman called Josephine Margetts, I mean we had very decent honest, very ethical people and they had to examine that deal and make sure they thought it was in the best interest before they supported it.

**Michael Aron:** You said Dick DeKorte was a close ally of yours back then. Tell us a little more about him.

**Thomas Kean:** Dick DeKorte was one of the most able people I ever worked with in the Legislature. Bergen County—he was sort of a hammer of the Bergen delegation. A guy called Dick Vanderplaat was Chairman. He was a nice guy, a funeral director. But Dick was really the guy. So Dick and I would work together really close. Again we were the same age, became very good friends and generally worked together on what we were going to do in the Legislature. And that was from the time I was elected, almost. As soon as we figured out Bergen and Essex together could run the place with a little help here or there. And, you know, we

worked out how we were going to move the public forward, what bills we were going to support, what bills we weren't, and how we were going to work with the Governor's office and all the rest. And when I became Speaker he was my Majority Leader.

**Michael Aron:** You had a new Governor by then too, a Republican Governor. Cahill in '69 right?

**Thomas Kean:** Yeah, yeah.

**Michael Aron:** What kind of relationship did you have with him?

**Thomas Kean:** Pretty good, pretty good with Bill Cahill. He was a tough guy. He had very strong ideas about what should be and what shouldn't be. I had to talk him into some stuff from time to time. I'll tell you a funny story if you want.

**Michael Aron:** That's what we're here for.

**Thomas Kean:** Well I've always been a great environmentalist. And when Cahill was running against Bob Meyner for Governor I was the leading environmentalist in the legislature. So they came to me then; the New Jersey Conservation Foundation, Audubon and there wasn't much else at that point, and said, "How do we get these gubernatorial candidates to pay some attention to the environment?" So I said to them, "You know, what other organizations do, the best is the NJEA, is they got these questionnaires out." I said, "What you've got to do is to convince people that these questionnaires are important and people are going to look at them. And so you've got to tell them you're going to circulate them among your members. Send out a questionnaire and tell them to fill it out and what are the top issues." They said, "Well the first thing we would love to do, because we're tired of having a Department of Conservation and Economic Development because it's run by Economic Development. So we always get hit badly by the Department that's supposed to be us. And so we want to get the departments separated. Have a Department of Conservation or Environmental Protection whatever." That's their number one priority, then they had a bunch of other priorities too. So I said, "All right, put it on a questionnaire." So they sent me the questionnaire. I approved it, and then they sent it out to both campaigns. And they said, "We're going to circulate them to all our members," and they heard nothing. Neither candidate answered. This was the spring—neither candidate answered. So we figured, oh

well. In October in early October I got a call from the Cahill campaign. You know the congressman wants all these questionnaires answered. We got this environmental questionnaire and we don't know anything about that, you're the one that knows that stuff. Would you do it for us? So I said, "Fine." So they send me the questionnaire that I drafted. It comes back to me in the office and I'm sitting there and I yes, yes, yes, yes for everything then sent it back to the campaign. Cahill says, "Kean approved this?" He signs it. And so we get back to the office and I'm the Republican Leader, I guess Majority Leader, then. And I come into Cahill's office and say, "You know, I'm going to put in a bill to create a Department of Environmental Protection." And Cahill says, "I don't want anymore bureaucracy." I said, "I think, Governor, that you said something about it in the campaign." And he said, "I don't think so." And I said, "I think there's a questionnaire." So I dig it out and sure enough he's committed to it. So he helps me-- the administration helps me get the bill done, drafted and that's the story of how we got a Department of Environmental Protection.

**Michael Aron:** That's a good story.

**Thomas Kean:** Still got the pen.

**Michael Aron:** We skipped over something as we got you to the Speakership that I think we need to go back and touch on it a little more. Your district included Springfield Avenue in Newark.

**Thomas Kean:** Yes.

**Michael Aron:** You ran for office in '67 the first time, '67 was the year of the Newark riots.

**Thomas Kean:** Yep.

**Michael Aron:** That had to be a big issue in the campaign.

**Thomas Kean:** No, funnily enough, not. S400 sort of, for whatever reason dominated the campaign. You'd think the Newark riots would be, particularly with people killed and everything else. But it became much more of an non-issue. After I got elected, it became much more of a what are we going to do? And there was a

commission headed by the head of Prudential and a number of other people who were making recommendations what we can do for the city so it won't happen again. But I don't remember a lot of talk, funnily enough, I don't remember. There was a lot of talk about S400 and a lot of talk about busing and some talk about some other issues. I always used to talk about education when everyone else didn't as much and it was supposed to be something that didn't help you in politics in those days. But no I don't-- but I was very involved in it. I remember going down with a lot of groups of leaders from the suburbs a week or so after the riots because people were scared in the suburbs. People thought it was going to spread. People thought people were going to march out of Newark into the suburbs. And I remember a whole bunch of us marched down to Newark from the suburbs with buttons we care, to show that the suburbs were going to get involved.

**Michael Aron:** Was that a bipartisan group do you think?

**Thomas Kean:** Yeah, I'm sure it was. A bunch of ministers and a big bunch of people who cared. And I remember my wife, Debbie, she didn't want me to go.

**Michael Aron:** She thought it was dangerous?

**Thomas Kean:** Yeah, people had been killed. Nobody was sure quite about the city. The National Guard had been in. And there was a lot of bitterness and a lot of anger and people weren't sure. You know, she was very concerned. It was peaceful there was no problem whatsoever. We met with leaders in Newark and talked about it. I've been very involved in Newark over the years

**Michael Aron:** Did you support Ken Gibson mayor in 1970?

**Thomas Kean:** No I didn't get involved in the Mayoralty election.

**Michael Aron:** Because 1970…

**Thomas Kean:** Ken became a friend of mine. I supported a lot of the stuff he wanted and I liked him very much and still do. But I don't get involved in Newark. That was basically a primary, as I remember, in the other party. And you just don't get involved in primaries in the other party. But I did get involved in a lot of issues

in Newark. I got involved in the takeover of the buildings at Rutgers as Chairman of the Education Committee and that kind of thing.

**Michael Aron:** Yeah, there was just an anniversary commemoration <inaudible>…

**Thomas Kean:** I know and they didn't ask me and I was very upset. Really I was upset because I was very involved in that.

**Michael Aron:** Conklin Hall.

**Thomas Kean:** Yeah, Conklin Hall, they took it over and they wouldn't let anybody in. And I came as Chairman of the Education Committee because I wanted to come in and talk them. And they said, "Okay ,you can come in if nobody else comes in, no policeman, nobody from Rutgers or anybody else." So I went in. And what I didn't know is they wanted a recording kept of the meetings because they didn't trust anybody from Trenton or anything so they wanted a recording kept.

**Michael Aron:** These were African American students?

**Thomas Kean:** Yeah, and so we talked for a while and then the leader said, "You know, we don't need a recording of you." So this kid, with the recorder said, "You get out." He said, "Get out." What I didn't know is that he asked for the President's office to do the taping of the recording. So he put a glass or something against the wall to try to listen. I've still got this very faint recording of this meeting done through the wall by this kid. But we talked and what I found out was what they were asking for was pretty sensible. And there was very little there that I couldn't support them on. And it turned out that we got along pretty well and I put in some stuff in the Education Committee at their request, you know. And it was another case where the kids were fine, it was the elders that weren't so hot. And in those days educators knew nothing about how to handle a situation like this. I mean they had a wonderful liberal called Malcolm Calvert[?] who was head of the Newark campus—decentest man you ever met. Very liberal but couldn't understand the riots and just didn't know how to handle it at all. And was totally incompetent. Mason Gross had no idea what to do, no idea what to do. Stayed isolated didn't really talk to the students, didn't really see them in his office if they wanted to come in. In a way I guess educators used to run universities and so on. But I remember thinking how sad these good people were. They were good people, had been liberals all their lives, yet had no idea how to handle statements like that.

**Michael Aron:** Why do you think the students trusted you enough to turn the tape recorder off?

**Thomas Kean:** We talked for awhile. That's all I remember. I didn't expect them to turn it off.

**Michael Aron:** You somehow won their confidence?

**Thomas Kean:** Yeah, we were talking. (I guess they wouldn't trust the kid too much with the recorder either.) People weren't happy about me going down there either but I was alone. I didn't go down with any staff. So again people didn't necessarily think that I was where I should be in the middle of a takeover in a hall all alone with these students that people thought were terrible radicals.

**Michael Aron:** Why did you go?

**Thomas Kean:** Because of my job. I was Chairman of the Education Committee. This was the biggest most important thing going on in education in the state then. Plus, I'd always been a supporter of the Newark campus. I always thought that Rutgers-- for a long time I wanted it to be Harvard and they just thought Newark was something they had to have. But it wasn't anything they were going to put any money or time or anything else into and that used to make me mad. So I became a student at Rutgers, on the Rutgers campus and I was speaking down there at Newark. But I just felt that Rutgers was not paying proper attention to Newark. And that Newark should be a real genuine part of the university, not second class citizens.

**Michael Aron:** Did you know the Mayor of Newark before Gibson, Hugh Addonizio?

**Thomas Kean:** Oh yeah, he was my father's friend.

**Michael Aron:** Was he?

**Thomas Kean:** Yeah, he and Pete Rodino, the three of them represented Newark. So we used to talk all the time.

**Michael Aron:** His reputation is not very good, 30, 40 years later. What was he like?

**Thomas Kean:** Well, he was a nice guy I think. I always knew him as a nice guy. I think he was a bit of a crook. But unfortunately New Jersey's had a lot of that. But having said that, some of them go to jail, some of them don't and he did. I don't think he was any worse than some of the others.

**Michael Aron:** How about Rodino?

**Thomas Kean:** Pete Rodino was a great guy. I think he did some things early in his career in Congress. I think he had a reputation for selling something to do with immigration or his law firm. These immigrants would come and go to the law firm and Pete would put these bills in Congress to get the immigrant in and that kind of thing. I don't think it was great either. But Pete was a nice guy. I think he wanted to do the best and turned out to be just the right person at the right time in Watergate. I always got along very well with him, always got along very well with Pete.

**Michael Aron:** State finances became increasingly important in the Hughes and Cahill administrations. What was your position on sales tax, on income tax prior to 1973?

**Thomas Kean:** I sponsored the Cahill income tax.

**Michael Aron:** Which never passed?

**Thomas Kean:** No. Dick did too. Dick DeKorte, the two of us because we thought it was right. It was a better income tax than we have now.

**Michael Aron:** How so?

**Thomas Kean:** More thorough. They came up with it on a commission, a bipartisan commission, and it had about 40 bills to it, 40 different parts, it was very comprehensive. And it was graduated, but not unreasonably so. And it took care of the state's problems and it would have grown with time. But its support disintegrated. We were within about three votes from passing it. But it started to

lose support. I remember Cahill called us in and said, "Look this is obviously very hurtful politically to people who are supporting it. It looks like it's not going to pass so any of you who want to get off it in the final vote, fine with me."

**Michael Aron:** So you took a vote on it?

**Thomas Kean:** We took a vote on it and about half the supporters on it took a walk which was understandable and I stayed with it and some of the others did too. It was too bad. It was a good proposal. It would have saved the state a lot of trouble if it had passed.

**Michael Aron:** Was it better than the Byrne income tax of four years later.

**Thomas Kean:** Much better. Yeah the Byrne income tax. Brendan had a whole bunch of proposals for that income tax because it took so long to do and there were different variations of it and some of them were better than others. I thought the last one was dreadful. I voted against it. Even though I supported one along the way. I supported another income tax proposal along the way. But it was tied to a T and E Bill, Thorough and Efficient Bill. And I thought that was a terrible bill and I thought it was going to hurt the schools. And I voted against that and I voted against the income tax that was attached to it.

**Michael Aron:** How did you think it was going to hurt the schools? I mean it was raising money for the schools.

**Thomas Kean:** It was to just give money with no strings attached to urban districts that were, in my mind, practicing educational child abuse. And all it was doing was giving them more money, no strings attached, no reform attached, no conditions attached, no accountability attached, nothing.

**Michael Aron:** The sales tax...

**Thomas Kean:** I think that's what I said on the floor.

**Michael Aron:** The sales tax came in under Hughes, I believe.

**Thomas Kean:** Yes.

**Michael Aron:** Were you in the Legislature at that time?

**Thomas Kean:** No.

**Michael Aron:** In hindinsight was it sensible tax at the time?

**Thomas Kean:** Well you had to have some taxes. You couldn't run the state without taxes and for awhile we did and that's why we had such a lousy state college system. And so many things that the state didn't do that the other states were doing, we were way behind in a lot of areas and we needed the taxes. But I think we wasted most of that income tax money. I still do. I think they passed that Thorough and Efficient bill, tied it to the income tax and then they had a series of court decisions that said even so, you're not giving enough money. So it became millions and billions that went over a number of years into the so-called Abbott districts. And if you take the test scores when the bill was passed and the test scores by the '90s, they were lower. In other words we gave all this money and the test scores went down and not up. The kids were being tutored worse and not better. And so it was a waste of money. And the court caught on in about 2000, I think. The last court decision started tying it to things like early childhood education and said you've got to do these things. And then that made some sense, but it was a long time coming. And I think the court decision would have been different if the Legislature had acted differently. I think we could live with the court decisions. But the combination of the court decisions with simply adding money with no restrictions hurt the state very, very badly and it still does. And we still have a lot of money that's going out there without any sign of how it improved one single childhood's education.

**Michael Aron:** I have a feeling we're going to come back to that theme as we progress through your career.

**Thomas Kean:** I'd rather give Brendan the votes to pass the income tax.

**Michael Aron:** You gave him the votes?

**Thomas Kean:** Yeah, because I let the caucus go. I had a party position and income tax is an important issue. I said I had been talking to Brendan on it. We had a few members who would have voted for the income tax had they been free, hence why I said, "You're free." I voted for one of them after that and we ended up with, I guess, two or three votes coming out of the Republicans and it passed by one vote. So as the Republican Leader, if I helped the caucus to a party line vote, we would never would have had an income tax because the Democrats voting against it were just dead against it.

**Michael Aron:** Let's go back to Cahill for a second. What was he like as a Governor?

**Thomas Kean:** Well, he was opinionated. I think he had totally the right motivation. I think he really wanted to do the right thing for the state. His appointments, I think, were questionable in some cases. They came out of areas politically that I wouldn't have made appointments.

**Michael Aron:** Does that mean certain machines or…

**Thomas Kean:** Yeah, I think so. He didn't have the most able cabinet. He had some very able people. He had a wonderful Attorney General called George Kugler, who was terrific, and some other good ones. He let Paul Sherwin, who was Secretary of State, do all of the political work, which probably turned out to be a mistake. He had some family problems along the way which got him very emotionally involved in certain legislation particularly in the drug area. But by and large he was a good Governor. I didn't always get along with him. He had a temper. People used to always say-- one of my friends on the counsel always told me, "If he comes into the office and you look at his eyeball and the red is above 50 percent you don't go see him." He was funny he had a sense of humor. I remember going in trying to get some money for the New Jersey Opera from him once. And he said, "Not unless they come here and they sing an Irish song." So we got them to come there and sing him an Irish song and he gave them some money. There were some good laws that went through under Cahill. I sponsored a lot of them. He supported my Wetlands Act which was a tough, tough bill to get through. But I had Cahill's support.

**Michael Aron:** Do you recall any strong disagreement you had with Cahill? A fight you had with Cahill?

**Thomas Kean:** Just when I wouldn't do everything he wanted me to. You know, he was very much, "I'm Governor and here's what we're going to do." And occasionally I'd say, "No, I'm not." You know, actually I'll tell you where he was right and I was wrong. One of his greatest accomplishments was when he turned a sports complex into the whole Meadowlands District. And I was one of the sponsors of the whole Meadowland area and all that. And the sports camp came along and I sponsored that. But then when the Rockefellers, the people in New York started trying to hurt the financing because it was questionable whether we would get the financing to do it. They wanted an oral pledge from the state. And we'd said very clearly that an oral pledge wouldn't do for the sports complex. We had to raise money legitimately for that and the state shouldn't obligate itself. So I voted against the obligation.

**Michael Aron:** And in hindsight?

**Thomas Kean:** I think I was wrong. I was wrong because that could have blocked the sports complex if I'd been the House Speaker. I didn't hold anybody else to my point of view. I didn't and I got threatened. I got threatened by one of the State's newspapers for doing that.

**Michael Aron:** In your day the rotation of legislative leaders was such that it wasn't automatically a stepping stone to higher office.

**Thomas Kean:** No. Nobody ever got higher office out of the Assembly except me. I think I was the only person that got out of the Assembly in the State's history.

**Michael Aron:** Were you thinking about that back then?

**Thomas Kean:** No.

**Michael Aron:** No?

**Thomas Kean:** No, never. I ran for Governor first because I had been in the Assembly for 10 years, I did every leadership position there was. Because of Watergate I thought it was going to be a long time before the Republicans became the majority again. I was sick and tired of being in the Minority because it's fun for about two years and then it's no fun, particularly if you've been the Majority. And

so I wanted to make some points about education, about the environment, about things I had been a hobby horse for for a number of years but you don't get listened to very much when you're in the Minority. So I thought how do you get heard? Well if you run for Governor they've got to pay attention to what you have to say. Whether you win—I didn't think I was going to win—and I didn't. I was running-- and I thought about it very hard because Ray Bateman was and is a very close friend of mine. And Ray and I probably had almost no disagreements, worked very closely together when he was Senate President and I was Assembly Speaker. And so I remember going to see Ray to tell him I was going to do it. And I thought if Ray said, "Don't do it," I probably was going to say, "Yeah, but will you deal with these issues," and so on. Instead Ray said, "Well, good luck then." So I went out and ran. I didn't think I was going to be elected Governor because Ray Bateman had all but one of the County Chairmen. I mean that he was pretty much a shoo-in. But I did want to make some points. I didn't want to go out with a whimper I wanted to go out with a bang after 10 years in the Legislature.

**Michael Aron:** I think you ran for Congress before you ran for Governor.

**Thomas Kean:** Yes.

**Michael Aron:** And we want to get there. Before we get there let's stay with the period where you're Speaker of the Assembly.

**Thomas Kean:** Yeah.

**Michael Aron:** Cahill's the Governor. We mentioned the Meadowlands, the DEP, the Wetlands…

**Thomas Kean:** Yeah, they helped engineer that thing too before I even got there. They managed to stay a mile away from it afterwards. But Dick worked with Paul Sherwin on that whole thing before I even heard about it.

**Michael Aron:** With the Governor's office?

**Thomas Kean:** Yeah, oh yeah, they didn't want the Democrats to be in control of the Legislature, I guess.

**Michael Aron:** What were the other critical issues of the State back then?

**Thomas Kean:** Well I was very interested in environmental issues. And we hadn't been paying much attention to the environment at that point. So I guess we put through about 10 to 12 important environmental bills and I sponsored all of them. Cahill signed all of them. It got harder, every one of them got harder because of the people who were on the other side. The momentum of Earth Day we got a lot of stuff through. But then the builders and the lawyers and all of them who were on who really wanted to build and didn't really want more stuff preserved or wanted to pollute—more pollution not less pollution—for whatever reason, got better and better organized. So it became harder and harder each on the last one I think being the Wetlands Bill which was blocked in the Senate at one point. We couldn't get it going. As a matter of fact, Al Beadleston fostered it for me in the Senate, and they had it blocked until we started getting a lot of activists going. We had the League of Women Voters organized and some others organized where the opposing legislators all got sent clam shells. And the shells started pilling up on the desks. We knocked a couple of votes lose and got it through.

**Michael Aron:** What support staff did the Legislature have back then.

**Thomas Kean:** When I started none, really. I mean the Majority party had a person, Minority party had nobody. We hired, not me, Joe Gonzales who was the first legislative guy.

**Michael Aron:** Executive Director.

**Thomas Kean:** Yeah, Executive Director, then later on I hired Carl Golden and a woman, Joanie Wisniewski, I think her name was, who was a Research Assistant. And then when I became Speaker I gave the Democrats somebody because I thought that was fair. I don't remember his name, a good guy, Joe somebody [Gannon].

**Michael Aron:** Two, three people, that was it.

**Thomas Kean:** Yeah, you had Legislative Services and Sam Alito, the father, with a guy called Art Applebaum and some other assistant who drafted all the bills. And if you wanted a bill you went to them and they drafted it. Then you had another guy called Lanning who also was involved. But it was a professional staff who took care

of both parties. And the parties themselves had nothing until Gannon, Joe Gannon, that was the guy the Democrats hired for themselves.

**Michael Aron:** Obviously both parties now have significantly larger staffs, partisan staffs. Is that a good thing do you think?

**Thomas Kean:** Everything's exaggerated. Well no. Yes, it's good to have a partisan staff. It's not good to have the huge bureaucracies they have now in the Legislature. I don't know how much the Legislature's budget is now but it doesn't have to be that. I think the Minority and the Majority parties both have a few more than they need right now or should have given the economic climate. But we got along with the people. I sponsored the bill to create the Office of Fiscal Affairs with Danny Todd who was Christie's brother who was in the Legislature then. And I remember that was the frustrating thing in the Legislature when you had no fiscal expertise. So if you went into the Governor and said you needed something and the Governor said we have the money for it or we don't have the money for it.

**Michael Aron:** The Office of Fiscal Affairs was within OLS?

**Thomas Kean:** It didn't exist.

**Michael Aron:** But you created it within OLS?

**Thomas Kean:** Yes, it was separate. We created a separate body, I think, originally. But I remember it was a part of a national trend. Legislatures around the country were starting to feel that you had to have some fiscal expertise of its own. I remember we'd walk into Cahill's office and he'd have the guy who was running the fiscal side of the budget, Walter Wexler, sitting there. And I would say we want to put this bill in to do this. And Wexler would say, "Well I'm sorry I just don't think there's money for it." And I would say, "Governor we really need to do this." And Wexler would look at Cahill and say, "Do you really want to do this Governor?" And Cahill would say, "Okay, yeah." And Wexler would say, "Well, I guess we can find the money." But it was that kind of an arrangement. The Legislature was really handicapped. I mean we put in this Office of Fiscal Affairs and it took awhile to get the idea going and to get it through. And it got to Cahill's desk and Cahill called me in and said, "You know, if I sign this every Governor from here on in is going to curse the day I put my signature to it." And I had some days as Governor when I cursed the day he put his signature to it, because it was a nice time when the

Governor had total fiscal control of the state and could tell people whether there was money or not. That was a good time for the Governor. But that was one of the most important reforms we did. Giving the Legislature a fiscal arm was one of the most important things that we did.

**Michael Aron:** You were Speaker from '71 until when?

**Thomas Kean:** Seventy-three.

**Michael Aron:** Seventy-three, you stayed in the Legislature after '73?

**Thomas Kean:** Yeah, became the Minority Leader.

**Michael Aron:** Your party was hurt in the '73 election. Byrne became Governor…

**Thomas Kean:** Hurt?

**Michael Aron:** You were decimated.

**Thomas Kean:** I came back as one of 14 Republicans.

**Michael Aron:** Because of Watergate?

**Thomas Kean:** Yeah, I remember walking down my hometown of Livingston with incredible support, and a guy calling me across the street, one of the town lawyers and he said, "You know you're the best legislator we've ever had in this district. I want you to know that. And I also want you to know I'm going to vote against you." He said, "We've got to send Nixon a message." It was bad. And the fact that the Legislature, where I treated the Democrats fairly as Speaker, really came back to benefit.

**Michael Aron:** How so?

**Thomas Kean:** Because they were very decent to me as Minority Leader. They let me do things. They let me get things through. They treated me with total courtesy.

Howard Woodson, Bill Hamilton that whole gang, Burstein—they couldn't have been nicer. They couldn't have been nicer or more helpful. When I needed something they gave it to me. And it was because we were friends, because we had become friends, in a previous Legislature when I treated them fairly.

**Michael Aron:** I think there's the lesson.

**Thomas Kean:** I think there is and we've got to learn it too.

**Michael Aron:** Had you met President Nixon prior to Watergate?

**Thomas Kean:** Yes. My father served in Congress with him. So I'd met him when he came through the state campaigning. I can't say that I really knew him. But then I was an alternate delegate to the convention in Miami.

**Michael Aron:** In '68?

**Thomas Kean:** Yeah. I remember that I was pledged to Cliff Case, the favorite son. And Nelson Gross, the Chairman of Bergen, broke the delegation to give Nixon votes. And I came back to the hotel where we hanged him in effigy.

**Michael Aron:** Nixon or Nelson Gross?

**Thomas Kean:** Nelson Gross.

**Michael Aron:** Explain that, was Nixon being challenged in '68?

**Thomas Kean:** Yeah, Nelson Rockefeller.

**Michael Aron:** Nelson Rockefeller.

**Thomas Kean:** Yeah he was very much there. And Ronald Reagan was starting to emerge out of the West.

**Michael Aron:** The entire delegation was pledged to native son, Clifford Case. And then Nelson Gross at one point wanted to release the delegation to go with the winner.

**Thomas Kean:** He wanted to curry favor with the winner, yeah. And we wanted to hold on for at least one ballot to see what happened because Reagan was coming on and we didn't know what was going to happen.

**Michael Aron:** And you wanted Rockefeller.

**Thomas Kean:** Yeah.

**Michael Aron:** And most of your Republican colleagues at that convention wanted Rockefeller.

**Thomas Kean:** We did in Essex and I think Webb Todd, State Chairman, did. He was a Rockefeller friend, so I think he did.

**Michael Aron:** Did you-- I mean Watergate was a year and a half long, incredibly unfolding saga. But did you sense early on that that with every newspaper headline your party here in New Jersey was going to pay a price?

**Thomas Kean:** Yeah, I'd never thought about the price we paid because I didn't understand yet that people take such a party as a whole. You can be a town councilman and if the president of your party or the leader of your party does something stupid in Washington or something bad they take it out on you. And that's the way it works. And I learned that, I learned that lesson. I mean after that comment I had from the guy in Livingston I worked very hard in that election, harder than I had for a number of years because I got scared. And I came closer to losing that year than I did any other year.

**Michael Aron:** Do you recall who ran against you on the Democratic side.

**Thomas Kean:** Yeah, I think it was the year (I get these years confused) the labor leader Giblin, Tom Giblin, I think, very nice guy.

**Michael Aron:** The same Tom Giblin who's still there in the Assembly today?

**Thomas Kean:** He's still there?

**Michael Aron:** Yeah, Giblin's an Assemblyman.

**Thomas Kean:** Is he an older guy now, is that the same Giblin, maybe it's a son.

**Michael Aron:** He's probably 60 the one who's there now.

**Thomas Kean:** He would have been older than that now, I think.

**Michael Aron:** How about Cahill? The scandals in the Cahill administration played a role in that landslide don't you think?

**Thomas Kean:** No, Cahill's scandals played a role for Cahill, and Cahill lost the primary to Charlie Sandman. A whole combination of things, but certainly the fact that his top people were getting indicted, and the whole Newark News was on an anti-Cahill crusade for whatever reason. So any time there was a Cahill indictment or anything like that Cahill had huge bad headlines, and that was in my backyard. So I knew we had problems.

**Michael Aron:** We're going to stop for today and then we will resume with you as the Minority Leader in '74 and '75 and your decision to challenge Millicent Fenwick for Congress. Is that what happened?

**Thomas Kean:** No, she decided to run against me.

**Michael Aron:** Oh, she did? Well we will have an opportunity next time.

**Thomas Kean:** Okay…Oh yeah that's right. That was Brendan's fault by the way.

**Nancy Becker:** Was it?

**Michael Aron:** Well we'll hear that story, I hope.

**Thomas Kean:** Well okay.

**Michael Aron:** You're roasting Brendan.

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