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Spiegel, Jack oral history interview

Andrea L'Hommedieu

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Interview with Jack Spiegel by Andrea L’Hommedieu

Summary Sheet and Transcript

Interviewee

Spiegel, Jack

Interviewer

L’Hommedieu, Andrea

Date

May 20, 2002

Place

Portland, Maine

ID Number

MOH 354

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Biographical Note

Jack Spiegel was born in Salem, Massachusetts on November 6, 1917 to Lena Ann [Swig] and Charles Spiegel. His mother was a housewife and his father was a shoe wholesaler. Jack was educated in the Salem public schools. He graduated from Amherst College in 1939. After college, he became active in business, coming to Maine and operating Quoddy Moccasins, which he sold in 1971. Since then, he has been active in various community and philanthropic activities. He donated 160 acres of land to the Bradley Mountain State Park, and 1100 acres in Raymond to Lands for Maine’s future.

Scope and Content Note

Interview includes discussions of: Salem, Massachusetts; becoming a Democrat; donating lands; registering Republican to beat Ralph Owen Brewster; parent’s immigration; Quoddy Moccasins; economic set up of Quoddy; selling the company; Portland Democratic leaders; Larry Spiegel at the Portland Press Herald and Governor Brennan’s office; congressional reaction to shoe imports; importance of quality workmanship; decline in Maine shoe industries; Ralph Owen Brewster; corporate scandals in 2002; corporate greed; problems with department stores in the shoe industry; and the Jewish community in Portland.

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Transcript

Andrea L'Hommedieu: This is an interview with Mr. Jack Spiegel at his home on Ocean Avenue in Portland on May the 20th, the year 2002, and this is Andrea L'Hommedieu. Mr. Spiegel, if you could start just by stating your full name and spelling it?

Jack Spiegel: The name is Jack Spiegel, J-A-C-K, S-P-I-E-G-E-L.

AL: And where and when were you born?

JS: I was born on November 6th, 1917 in Salem, Massachusetts.

AL: And is that where you grew up?

JS: I grew up in Salem, graduated Salem; we called it at that time, Salem Classical and High School. And from there I went on to Amherst College and graduated in the class of 1939.

AL: What was your major?

JS: My major was English and Economics mainly, they were my specialties.

AL: And stepping back for just a moment, growing up in Salem, what kind of a community was it in terms of economics, religion, politics?

JS: Well, Salem was a very political city; very, very political city. There were dominant, strong ethnic groups; there were a lot of Irish, there were a lot of Italians, a lot of French. And Salem had the Pequot Knitting Mills, which was the biggest employer, and also what was called the High Grade Lamp Company, which was the start of, now I forget the name of it, one of the big electric companies. And (*unintelligible phrase*) of the city. But the, I would say in terms of politics it must have been all Democratic.

AL: Very heavily Democratic.

JS: Very heavily Democratic city.

AL: Now, what were your parents' names?

JS: My father's name was Charles. You asked the question about how do I happen to be a Democrat, and the memory is very clear back to when Al Smith was running against Herbert Hoover. And my recollection is the St. Louis Cardinals were going to play the Yankees in the World Series. And my brother and I, who managed to argue and fight over everything, had trouble agreeing on that, that's because we both wanted to vote so we both wanted to have, to bet on Al Smith and the Democratic Party. And so, I don't remember how we split up, but from then on that, it was a result of that episode that I became a Democrat. And if I'd lost the toss up maybe I would have started off as a Republican. But that's how I became a Democrat.

My wife, Ann, and I have had the pleasure of, we had acquired wood lots in Maine when we first came to Maine, and we were very proud and happy to donate a hundred and sixty acres to add to the, to Bradley Mountain State Park. We also had an even more exciting deal that involved eleven hundred acres in Raymond that we dealt to, and is now managed by Wildlife and Fisheries, I guess that's what they're called.

AL: Yeah.

JS: Managed by them, under the control of Raymond. And that was done through Lands for Maine's Future which we felt was a good organization. It made it possible for us to make a contribution to the state by doing it. But the interesting thing was that we bought it from Hancock Lumber, and they were represented at the time in the deal by Owen Hancock, who was chairman of the Democratic State Committee at that time. And in talking about various things when I told him that I was a registered Republican, he wouldn't go through with the deal until he personally saw me go down to Portland City Hall and reregister as a Democrat. And at that point he was ready to go through with the deal.

The reason I had registered as a Republican was that the politics in Maine at that time were so overly Republican weighted, that your vote didn't amount to any good unless you could vote in the primaries. And I was very determined to vote against Owen Brewster and for Margaret Chase

Smith, so to have a vote that counted I registered as a Republican. I don't know how Owen felt about that, he probably felt pretty good about that, but by the same token he wouldn't let me off the hook until I reregistered as a Democrat.

AL: Did you have other contacts with Owen Hancock besides that deal?

JS: No, actually not. We used to keep in touch with each other once in a while, but I had nothing, no political contacts with him.

AL: Now, you told me your father's name was Charles. What was your mother's name?

JS: Ann.

AL: And her maiden name?

JS: My mother's name was Lena-Ann Swig, S-W-I-G.

AL: And were they from the Massachusetts area or here, from -?

JS: Well, no, no, my mother was from, came over as a young little girl over from a town in Poland, and my father was from southern Romania, from the, near the Black Sea area. He made his way across Europe, I guess, when he was thirteen or fourteen years old and got to London, and by age sixteen he came over by himself to the United States. They were very proud to be here and enjoyed it. And we had some fascinating experiences. My mother, after she'd already had some children, was determined to get some more education, so she went through primary and grammar school in a period of two years. But several years later my sister, and then myself, we went to the same school, so we had the same teachers that my mother had just a few years prior to it.

AL: Were your parents, did you get a sense growing up that your parents wanted you to go to college, was that -?

JS: They were very determined, that was a big deal. There were five of us and they made sure that we all went to college, and we all went to good schools.

AL: What were your parents' occupations?

JS: Well, my father was a, my father had, was a shoe salesman and he ran his own wholesale shoe business. And that is what got me interested in moccasins. And it had not been my intention to, not been my intention to go into business but, or particularly the shoe business. But that I sensed that the best way to be in business was to specialize and I chose moccasins. I was fascinated by the state of Maine, at that time we felt that you could get a good honest. . . You could get good honest labor up there if you just let people alone and let them have a week off in the spring to plant their gardens and a week off in the fall to go hunting. And the rest of the year they produced wonderful products and it was a delight to me. I own the trademarks of Best of Maine, besides the Quoddy moccasins.

I had a program that really frustrated me. I bought a piece of land at the end of the runway in Portland, South Portland, to establish Quoddy Moccasins, to move Quoddy Moccasins there. It's a ten acre plot, which is now occupied by Staples and Burlington. But I had an idea that I wanted to sell the State of Maine and I couldn't imagine a better spot to do it from than right there within sight of the turnpike and at the end of the runway. I took a week off and went down to Bermuda and I sat down and I wrote up the plan on how to sell the State of Maine on every level at that spot. Up until then, I had been selling moccasins and selling, when I took (*unintelligible phrase*) as a matter of fact, I found it was, I was just fascinated by Maine and I wanted to sell Maine products.

I don't want to dwell on the fact that when I submitted my suggestion to the state, to the governor's office, they had a fellow who I knew, evaluated it for the governor and he apparently reported to the governor that I was just looking for some free publicity and stuff. So, I had enough to do and more than none, and more than none. And both of my hands full trying to take care of things so that I said, oh, the heck with it, when I get to it someday, I'll try to get back to it.

But I maintained that trademark of Best of Maine until I sold the Quoddy Moccasins. And to the people I sold it to, I said, "Do me a great big favor, don't insist on having that trademark Best of Maine, let me have it myself. You will never understand how to put that to proper use, and you may never use it. And I think that would be something I would like to do." And they just simply said, "No, we're buying your company, we want everything that goes with it." So that was the end of another thought that I had on how to run a, and something I would have found fascinating because I, business was not anything I enjoyed. I had never intended to go into business the slightest, and walked away from it when I had accomplished my purposes with it. I had so many other things that I was interested in doing.

I could have stayed in business the rest of my life if I could have responded to that one thing of having that ten acres at the end of the runway, selling the State of Maine on every level, meeting place for people from out of state to meet Maine people, and Maine companies to have local offices there. I was gung ho on it, but things happen.

AL: It sounds like it was a wonderful idea. Who was governor at the time?

JS: I refuse to comment.

AL: Okay.

JS: And he wasn't the, I don't think he ever knew about it. I knew the governor and I was happy to know him. But I don't, it may never have gotten to him but I just felt I had too much to do and too - it was hard enough to make a living and I wasn't going to go fighting, fighting them. I just kept selling Maine Made products as best I could, but I walked away from it in 1971 when I'd accomplished my purposes. It was no longer exciting and -

AL: So what was the span of years that you were in business with Quoddy Moccasin?

JS: Twenty-five years, from 1946 to 1971. In 1971 I really wanted to step completely away from business, and we had a couple of good years of traveling and finally, and then I started lining up with financing the medical profession and. Over a long period of time, and the interesting thing was that the people that bought Quoddy Moccasins said they were only interested in moccasins, they were not interested in land. And my corny story goes on to say that when I was in the hospital, I used to have this recurring thought, I've got to get well to show these guys that that piece of land there was more valuable than the moccasin business.

AL: Now how did you build the moccasin business? Did you, was it wholesale?

JS: We created a vertical structure. I think the thing that is done in a lot of companies is they try to be too many things, they try to be manufacturers and distributors and retailers. And I always felt that you could only do real good at one thing. And I just simply felt that my specialty, it probably was one reason I ran the business the way I did, was because I was an English major and had never studied business and so I didn't have any preconceived notions of how to run a business. And I just found the challenge fascinating of, if I stuck to a single product and put my message across very simply, and I'd get well known for what I was doing. And for many years restricted myself to that wonderful penny postcard, one cent, they gave you the postage, and they gave you the paper to put the postage on. And I specialized in mailing lists and how to reach people.

And I liked the postcards because I talk too much as a salesman; I'm terrible because I never stop talking. But I couldn't, but I was limited to what I could put on a postcard, and so over a period of time we became well known, and probably the best at the time the best-known moccasin company in the country.

I specialized in the selling end, on the wholesale distribution. However, we operated a small retail operation, and a small mail order operation so we could have a constant feel of how to handle that part of it. And as we grew bigger, to protect our supply, we took an interest in a number of different factories as minority stockholders so that we could (*unintelligible phrase*).

AL: Could you tell me the origin of the word Quoddy that you used in your business?

JS: Well, I was associated for a while with my dad who was a shoe distributor in Massachusetts, and one of his brands was Quoddy. The origin of his using the word Quoddy was entirely based on the project that President Roosevelt was trying to run at that time of making, of drawing, of creating electricity from the tides up in Passamaquoddy Bay, Quoddy Bay, and so that the origin of the word Quoddy with us was strictly that. Later on, especially when we got to know some of the Passamaquoddy Indians, they felt that we were trying to take advantage of their name. We didn't think of it that way, we thought of it purely in terms of the Quoddy project. And I always wondered why it didn't work. I suppose I . . .

AL: And going back to your parents in Salem, you said it was very heavily Democratic, and your parents being immigrants to the U.S., did they get involved in the political activities at all?

JS: I don't recall that they did at all. My father was a very philosophical and serious kind of guy, and he used to read philosophy when he was traveling out, when he was on the road. And my mother was occupied with a bunch of young kids, taking care of us. But the, so, I don't, they were not particularly involved in politics.

AL: Did they talk about it at home at all around the dinner table?

JS: I just can't recall. All I remember very clearly is that my father always said when we were at the table that there's a word printed on the wall which says tolerance. And to him tolerance meant we were not to have any argumentative subjects at the dinner table, we could not bring up any subject that would get us arguing with each other.

AL: And there were five of you?

JS: Well, actually there were more but my younger sister passed away, and then another sister passed away. But at that, when we were growing up there were five of us.

AL: And your parents, did they ever pass on to you some of the traditions of their homeland?

JS: Oh, there's no question about that. They used to talk to us of, you know, what it was like growing up. But they were far more focused on growing up in America. As I mention my mother going to school when she was already a mother, starting off in primary school to get her education. My father went to night school for a while I know to learn the language and learn tradition. But they were gung ho on America; there was no question about that.

AL: Now, when you were in your shoe business, who were some of the community leaders and political people that you met and interacted with?

JS: Well, over a period of time I was, for a while I was on the Democratic City Committee. The person who was leading me into that was absolutely one of the nicest persons that ever lived, a fellow named Al Leibowitz who ran the surplus store in Portland, and he was a big supporter of every Democratic candidate. He was gung ho. As a matter of fact, I think he was in the legislature, he was, I recall also that he was on the turnpike committee, or the Turnpike Authority. So he was deeply involved, and he used to get me interested in those things, and he got me on the Democratic State Committee. I remember with great fondness that one night, one day a very handsome young man walked in with some message, to one of the meetings, or whatever his reason for coming to the meeting. And I discovered his name was William Mitchell and it was always fascinating to me when I looked at him to, that my previous recollection was a young fellow in his early twenties, I presume at that time, so that was the first time I knew Bill Mitchell.

AL: Who were some of the other people that you met?

JS: Well, I was on the Susan Curtis, Al Leibowitz got me on that, too, I was a director or trustee, whatever they called it at that time, the Susan Curtis Foundation. And I enjoyed that period very, very much. I remember that Ken Cianchette see the way he passed away. And I

enjoyed that.

AL: Did you know Ken Curtis at all?

JS: Yeah, I got to know him at that period through Al Leibowitz and we've had a friendship. I don't see him that often, but it's always very pleasant when we meet to this day, it's very pleasant. I was probably closest to Governor Brennan, to Joe Brennan. We followed his career in Portland right along, because of my son Larry who was, when he got out of school he was doing newspaper work, he worked for the *Press Herald*, and later with the Associated Press. So he was involved in politics and he got to meet later to be Governor Brennan, and they had a close relationship. Larry worked on his campaigns with him, and when he became governor he was initially the governor's press secretary, and then later his speechwriter.

Somewhere along the line, I don't re-, I wish I, I don't remember the details, but somewhere along the line in one of the speeches that Larry prepared I guess for Governor Brennan, he made some reference to Andre the seal up there in Rockport, and after he had, I guess swam up the coast to get to Rockport. And somehow or other the press picked it up and I just kept teasing the Governor about it. So that it was standard procedure there for quite a while that every morning they made sure that the Governor had some Andre the seal story or joke or quip to make until the thing finally died down, but it went on for months.

AL: Now jumping ahead, but still talking about your son's time in Governor Brennan's office, you had a story to tell about one of his most exciting -

JS: Well, one day I happened to be up there in Augusta, and Larry was all excited. He said to me that he had, that day he had done one of the more exciting experiences in his work at the State House in that he, the governor asked him to contact Senator Muskie, who was on Air Force One, having just been appointed secretary of state. And I think Governor Brennan had some, wanted to discuss his succession, I presume that's what he wanted to discuss. But he said he it was very exciting to find himself in contact with Air Force One when it was in the air.

AL: And that was 1980.

JS: Was that 1980? Larry enjoyed very much his career in the State House, it was a good experience. He really, he had known Governor, he had known Joe Brennan for many years before he became governor, and had been a great admirer of him, and was very happy to work with him on his campaigns, and to be in his administration.

AL: Did your son ever relate to you what were some of the things about Joe Brennan that he found so appealing and supportive of?

JS: Well, I can't, looking back to then can't really recall them, but I also had the good fortune of, because of Larry, to have had many occasions in which I had, was in his company. And I always enjoyed knowing, and appreciated knowing Governor Brennan, and of course later when he was a congressman.

AL: Did you ever work on any of his campaigns?

JS: Well, I don't know -

AL: In one capacity or another?

JS: Not really.

AL: Yeah.

JS: Not really, I was not a political worker. I was a cheerer on the sidelines.

AL: Who were some of the people in the business community in Portland that you knew over the years that maybe were involved in community things?

JS: Well, that's going back a long time, it's very hard. One of the more exciting experiences in my early years are when, really one of the most exciting experiences when I was brand new to business, was an unusual thing done by some of the policemen in the Portland Police Department in which they ran a, those were the days before organized social work or whatever you want to call it. But they ran a grand Christmas party every year, with the idea that during the year they would have people pick out probably as many as a hundred kids that were really, the idea, well, kids in poor circumstances. And they ran the most wonderful Christmas parties deliberately to spoil the kids, give them everything they could. They would not solicit, but they had enough people who were interested in what they were doing.

And to jump to the end, several years later when there was a new chief, this was always done very. . . They did it without hustling because they didn't want to ask people for things because they didn't want to be a police pressure of any kind, and they did it very quietly, there was no publicity, there was never any publicity to it. But they were just wonderful parties.

And jumping further ahead, when they, and I remember the chief came in and he says what they're doing is not good, that he feels the public should know, and the fellows in charge said that if you go public with it, we quit. And the chief went public with it, and they never had, to my knowledge, never had another party like it.

One of the, I don't remember, I'm having a little trouble remembering who were the people that were involved, but one of them was certainly Doug Steele who became chief. Another one was Capt. Hines, and there were a few others. But it was a great time I remember. We used to do it in my place, we used to, we'd shut down our plant and we'd go over there with Indian moccasins, and my help and I would stay there until we fitted a pair of moccasins onto every kid that was there. Another was a guy named Gauledeets who had a, was making leather jackets, and every kid got a leather jacket. It was an exciting party, we gave the kids all kinds of presents, they had *(unintelligible phrase)* with a magician or something, they always had a good program. But they never allowed any publicity, and they never did with any strings attached of any kind. It was fun. I would guess we did it maybe five years, but they had been doing that prior to that, too, *(unintelligible phrase)*.

AL: Did you know Harold Loring?

JS: Who?

AL: Harold Loring?

JS: No, I just knew of him, I did not know him.

AL: Well, can you talk to me about some of your dealings with the Maine delegation in regards to shoe imports?

JS: Into what?

AL: In regards to shoe imports?

JS: Well, the interesting thing to me, I would like to, there were a number of reasons I would have liked to have continued on with the shoe business. I was running too much of a personal business. I did not, deliberately did not make the moves to make it a big organization, and I was a purist on a few things. And I believe to this day, even though I've seen that Dexter is finally giving in, Bass is giving in, and they're all taking

I believe to this day that if I was still in the shoe business I would never have an import of any kind. It was just a thing with me because I never, I never looked at business the same way other people did. It was a matter of, that I enjoyed, of trying to make Quoddy the best known name in moccasins, to provide a living for my family. And I never had the feeling of piling up money. I mean, these things, it just wasn't me. I was enjoying what I was doing.

And I remember that one of the problems I had with one of the factories I was involved with. They always wanted to use substitute materials, like imitation wool for linings, and I was amused by the fact that people that made deerskin footwear had deerskin on the outside, but you felt when you picked up the shoe, that it didn't have deerskin on the inside. And I felt I was the first person that went ahead and made shoes with deerskin on the inside and the outside. I felt that there was a market for the best of everything that could be made. And I would have enjoyed staying with it.

And some things we learned, I was very proud of the fact that we had the, we used to make the most gorgeous sealskin products, but boy, let me tell you, it's a shock when you wake up and all of a sudden you realize, hey, it's something you shouldn't be doing. So we dropped sealskin. But with genuine shearling and deerskin, we had a great time making the best there were. And I think we had a, even last night, after thirty years later a fella said that he still wants me to make good on a pair of slippers that are beginning, moccasins are beginning to wear out and I said, "I'll guarantee it," I said, "we're on our thirty-first year since we quit so we only guaranteed the shoes for thirty years." And it was all man made and, hmm, I'd better bite my tongue on that one. We did, we used to get some, believe it or not, we used to get some moccasins from Texas. But our good stuff was all made in Maine.

AL: So you didn't want to be importing, you wanted to have it done -?

JS: Oh never, I would never have imported. It just, it just wasn't that important to me. To me it would be, someone made a, handed me a cartoon of me, it had an Indian paddling up against the current, and I guess, I guess that's always been the story of my life, to get a kick out of challenges and then when the challenge was met I used to get bored. But it would have been a challenge to me to prove that I could have stayed one hundred percent having the moccasins made, and making the moccasins in Maine. Again with my theory, to make them the very best they could and that I would find the market that would appreciate the very best that could be made.

I admired most of all the Sebago people, they really had an eye for quality. I presume in the later years, it's not in my direct knowledge because I'm, this all happened after I left the field, but I'm sure for many, many, many years they were one of the last holdouts about having things made offshore. They were very proud of their product and did a great job, they made wonderful products. There were other good factories, but I would say that Sebago's the only one that I remember that never compromised on anything but the very best, never put any imitation into anything. So they made wonderful products.

AL: So what was the Maine delegation stance on shoe imports? Did they want them to bring more jobs to Maine?

JS: Well, I presume so. I wasn't thinking, I can't remember the politics of the time, I just felt that it was, again, upstream kind of thing, going against the current. Being Democrat in Maine who was really going against the current. I remember sitting in a coffee shop with the guys climbing all over me because I said a nice word about President Truman. I couldn't believe the intensity and the ferocity in which they belittled that Army man that didn't know what he was doing and whatever. But they would have, oh, it was a, I couldn't believe it. I used to, in those days, say that being a Democrat in Maine was comparable to being a Communist almost anywhere in the world. But that's the way, that was the atmosphere here without any question.

Of course they all became admirers of Ed Muskie, with what he was putting up with. I heard stories that he used to, that he was so hard up that he used to sleep in Jack Ager's office for lack of, I don't know the reason, maybe it was because he didn't have the money, or he was too occupied with so many things. But I understand that that was one of the things that was different about him. Do you remember that famous episode when the Republican Party, I don't remember the episode, but when the Republican Party, somebody doctored a picture and they had, I can't even remember who there was involved, but what mileage he got out of proving that it was a phony photo that was, remember the episode?

AL: Yes, that was regarding a labor union in the Lewiston area. Louis Long, I think, was somebody else involved in that. Do you recall Ed Muskie coming on to the scene in Maine in the early '50s?

JS: Sure, we were conscious of him all the way, it was exciting to us to have someone that

could command attention the way he did. He was great, he was great.

AL: I'm thinking back to like 1951-52, and he was heading the OPS, the Office of Price Stabilization. Did you ever know him through that?

JS: No. No, I'm not conscious of, I never met him that many times. I had the pleasure of being invited down there in Kennebunk to a lobster bake one time, I enjoyed that. But it's all too fuzzy, and in those times, those days, I was far more interested in trying to meet my goals and peddle my shoes, peddle my moccasins than politics, as much as I enjoyed the politics.

AL: I know earlier you mentioned Ralph Owen Brewster. Did you have an impression of him?

JS: Well, I think it was Howard Hughes or something, it was in those days when they used to pay a lot of attention to congressional hearings. And I re-, my recollection was that I really enjoyed the fact that Brewster tried to abuse Howard Hughes, and as I recall Howard Hughes tore him apart. And I enjoyed that immensely. I hope my recollection is correct on that, but you probably know more about it than I do. Do you remember that episode at all?

AL: I don't know that one.

JS: Well, you look into it. That's my recollection. That would be in the very early days, that would be in the immediate post war, like 1947, '6.

AL: Mid to late forties?

JS: Late forties, when Brewster was the head of some kind of a committee who dragged Howard Hughes there, and Howard Hughes tore him apart, I loved that.

AL: Do you remember, though, how you felt about Ralph Owen Brewster politically?

JS: Well I just, I wish I could remember the words that a very interesting guy, very high in education, made to me very recently about. . . I wish I could remember because when you're so Democrat that, the raunchiest Democrat, or whatever word to use. I wish I could remember, I'll have to call him up and ask him what his exact words about that. That he was for any Democrat no matter how raunchy the Democrat was, whatever. It's atrocious and appalling to me to see the ground that's being lost in the environmental situation, and trouble with civil liberties and so forth, that are going on now. It just, it's just to me so sad that we're heading in a direction that is unfortunate. I'm really sorry for the young, I never thought I'd have the, be wondering about, a youngster made a comment to me I thought was very interesting.

I hadn't thought of it that way, but that the great civilizations, when they became very popular, attracted everybody from around until they got overwhelmed by the people that were coming in there and that ended their stay as a great nation. And it got me thinking that, I hate the thought of it, but I got to thinking that maybe we should go through a period now of limited immigration for a few years to make sure that we've absorbed all the people that we can handle successfully and well, and then maybe go back to it again. There are so many different things happening that

I'm afraid that the, I hate to use the word reactionary, but the too conservative attitude of the administration will be very hurtful for the country in the long run, because we, as we give up our, the things that made us so great; this, freedom of speech and real civil liberties, and concern for the, actual concern.

I'm appalled, absolutely appalled at the atrociousness and the greed that's going on, that has been revealed during this last period here when the management of companies, it's appalling to think that the administration's first action was to have utilities policy to be determined by committee. It was apparently entirely Enron people who were as greedy and crooked as anybody has ever been in history. But if it was only Enron that apparently is in every, every concern during this period was granting themselves these millions of shares and options and everything. The last stock I bought was Tyco, and the next thing I heard was that I read how the Tyco management managed to borrow five hundred million dollars at a time, or a hundred million dollars at a time from their own company to buy their own stock and all these things are so bad. So, I'm not just picking on the Republican Party, I'm just, it's just so sad that, I hate to sound like an old fogey, I can't say that looking back I would be darned if I say that our ethics and morals and attitudes were so great when I was growing up.

We saw plenty of things that weren't so great but, they weren't good, but it didn't have the size, the amount, the overwhelming, you know. It might be a policeman who's getting fed at a restaurant or something, but boy this, when all of a sudden you're creating hundred-millionaires by printing paper and writing false deals, it's just, it's sad.

I enjoyed business because I was a, I can say this with a clear conscience; I was a hundred percent purist. I felt that I would give my, I felt that I would have the exact same offer for everybody because it just made it easier for me in a lot of different ways. You create sales by the enthusiasm of your customers. And I didn't mind if they said that nobody could, quotation marks, "make a deal with me," that it was better off for me to say to people, if there's a guy who knocks himself out to give you the best that could possibly be had and everybody's on the same basis. I always said to anyone, "My books are open; you can see that I charge Sears Roebuck the same price that I charge any merchant."

And my reasoning was that if you give a person a deal, they aren't about to become a sales person for you because they want to keep the deal to themselves. They won't say, "You ought to do business with so-and-so," because then when you go to them they may be expecting a deal. So that it was, so that it was good for me to say that you couldn't, that I wouldn't do for one customer what I wouldn't do for another. It just made life simpler. These are my prices; the burden on me was to be that good, our products had to be that good, our services were to be that good, that they would put up with not having special deals for themselves.

I was never successfully able to sell to department stores who I learned to detest because they had the lowest standard of morals than I ever saw. They always wanted kickbacks, personal kickbacks; they wanted kickbacks on their company, and to service that trade. I was successful with a few of them, but if I had stayed in business long enough, I would have created another brand with a totally different set of markups that could encompass the demands of the department stores for special considerations, advertising allowances, treats. I don't know, I was

a purist, I was the wrong guy, I was not a person for business, I was the highest level of -

End of Side A

Side B

AL: We are now on Side B of the interview with Mr. Jack Spiegel. And you were just finishing up a thought -

JS: Well, I'm just going to stop running over at the mouth. But I was saying is, I was at the highest level of one of the major companies one day, and a fellow busted in, he didn't know me from a hole in the wall. I was sitting with a group of people, and he busted in and he said to the people I was with, he says, "You gave so-and-so a nice trip to the Caribbean." He says, "How about one for me?" And my eyes popped on it, that a guy could, that not only, I wasn't that naive to realize that it wasn't happening, but that it was so open that a fellow would say it in front of me who he didn't, without the slightest knowledge of who in the heck I was. In any event, I am appalled today, appalled, I'd have had a, I would have, I think I would have had an exciting career in business now if I'd stayed in, because I am appalled at how this, how people can make a profit at fifty percent off, and then the next day be selling at full price. The manipulation of the public, the manipulation of prices, and deals and.

I grew up with the original, the original person who established Marshall's Stores, and he was a very close personal friend of mine, and in the early days Marshall's was very exciting. One price and that was it, no sales, no deals, no nothing. And that was the way I ran my business, no sales, no deals, no nothing. And guarantee that our, we put a guarantee on every pair of shoes that we ever sent out, saying that if you're not happy with these, send them back to us. And I, it is my claim that no merchant ever lost a dime on any of our products, and no person ever owned a pair of Quoddy moccasins that they weren't happy with it. And I'm going to stop waving the flag and I'm not going to any more. You had said that you're supposed to be politics and you've got me, you've got an old guy just rambling on.

AL: It's a great Maine history because your business does tell us, you know, the business communities in Maine during that post World War II period. I also understand that you were active in the Jewish community in Portland.

JS: I have always been active in the Jewish community in Portland, and still am. But it's not only the Jewish community, I've been, as I say, I'm very proud to be on the Board of Advisors at the University of New England, and I was. And down through the years, as soon as I started having free time I was proud to be a director of Goodwill Industries, I've been very proud to be an advisor at SCORE. Within the Jewish community, I guess I've been a director of every organization and when they, each one of them finally got rid of me by either making me a life director or an honorary director. Most of them. That's saying too much. I've been involved in pretty well, in quite, really every Jewish organizations in town.

This week among other things, I'm commander of the Jewish War Veterans locally, which is really just a title. But this week we will be putting flags again out on the cemetery, and I am staggered by the number. We put more than three hundred flags out of veterans, and I've always

been astounded, the Jewish community back in the early forties was not that large. So it seems to me just about every, just about every eligible young man in those days got into the service. And I've always been, it's always amazed me that a small community like that could have, there's three hundred deceased veterans from WWII and later.

AL: So the Jewish community -

JS: Let me tell you, the Jewish war veterans, the veterans' flag on the Jewish war veterans' graves.

AL: So you've seen the Jewish community grow over the years?

JS: Well, it has grown but I haven't, you know, I have no, I never know figures or, you know, never understood them. I should backtrack on that claim to be so important, I've always been, I've always been low key. I've always just simply had membership and, I've always had membership and supported things that I felt were important, so as far as the Jewish community is concerned, it was that small that anyone who was interested could wind up being a director. So I had the titles, and I was involved with most organizations, including where we are now.

AL: I listened to an interview with Rosalyn Bernstein. I wondered if you knew her, and ever done anything politically with her. I know she -

JS: Well, you know, I've known her, but I've never been involved with either Roz or Sumner that close. In other words, I've always been at meetings where they have been involved and I have been involved. I think they've probably been involved in more things than I have by far, and also they probably, without any question, not probably, without any question, have devoted themselves more thoroughly to them than I did. And I do, it's a matter of style. I just have always been low key, and the things that interest me I support. But I, one of the reasons I never took a leadership in any of those organizations is because I always have the feeling that, that I'm interested in so many different things that it would be unfair. This sounds corny but it's true, that I feel that I could be letting the organization down because I would not devote myself to it as a person who was going to the president or the head of. . . So, not wanting to face that situation, that I would either have to change my lifestyle or that I would be changing, so I've just gone ahead and done everything I enjoy doing but without taking the ultimate responsibility.

AL: Now, how did you meet Don Nicoll, how long have you known him?

JS: Oh, I met him through ITN, Independent Transportation Network, the program of transportation for senior citizens.

AL: And as a, do you have any final thoughts on Senator Muskie that I didn't ask you, or you'd like to add?

JS: No, we didn't say much about Muskie. I mean, I was a great admirer and I loved the guy. I always felt that he was hopelessly abused up there in Manchester. And I remember reading recently something to the effect that they weren't tears, that they were snowflakes. It's just, it's

sad that a little episode like that could do such damage to a person's career. But he certainly was a target for a lot of people, and he stood up beautifully, he was a great guy. I'm proud to have been alive at the same time he was. I mean, that sounds corny, but I really mean it. He was an inspiration. And so, so down to earth that it was a pleasure.

AL: Thank you very much for your time.

End of Interview