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PHILIP BUCHEN

Oral history interview concerning his early friendship with Gerald Ford, their 1941 entry into law partnership, the development of Ford's interest in politics, and Ford's 1948 congressional campaign.

RECEIVED NOV 10 1980

I N T E R V I E W W I T H

Philip W. Buchen

BY

Dr. Thomas F. Soapes
Oral Historian

on

January 18, 1980

for

G E R A L D R . F O R D L I B R A R Y

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Philip W. Buchen

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This interview is being conducted with Mr. Philip Buchen in his office in Washington, D.C. on January 18, 1980. The interviewer is Dr. Thomas Soapes. Present for the interview are Mr. Buchen and Dr. Soapes.

SOAPES: Your first contact with Gerald Ford came in the mid 1930s, didn't it?

BUCHEN: Yes. He was attending Yale Law School on a part-time basis, while he was coaching football, and I had entered the University of Michigan the fall of the year in which he graduated. But since his home was in Grand Rapids, it was customary for him to drive through Ann Arbor whenever he came home from New Haven, and I was in the fraternity to which he had belonged, and he used to stop there. And I first got to know him as he came through Ann Arbor on his way back from Yale to go to Grand Rapids. And then it was customary for the members of that fraternity to gather for New Year's Eve and New Year's day in Grand Rapids, wherever people lived, and usually he stayed on in Grand Rapids through New Year and we used to see each other then.

SOAPES: Did you begin then to become very close friends this early?

BUCHEN: We got to be closer friends one summer when Jerry Ford took some courses at the University of Michigan Law School because Yale did not have a summer program in their law school. So he got credit at Yale Law School for some courses at the University of Michigan. And that summer we both stayed at the fraternity house

while we were attending law school. So there we began to see each other every day, whereas the other, earlier, meetings were on a rather casual basis. And then the summer of 1940, before either of us had graduated from law school, I was in New York City clerking at a Wall Street law firm, and Ford stayed in New York to help work at the national headquarters of the [Wendell] Willkie campaign. And very often in the evenings we used to get together. And it was on that occasion when we were both planning our futures, he said that he intended to go back to Grand Rapids after he graduated from law school to open a practice because he thought it would be better for him to go back to the community where he was known. And I suspect, although I'm not quite clear in my memory, that one of his motivations must have been that if he was going to go into politics it would be better to go back to a city where he was well-known and lived most of his life and that was part of the motivation. Although since he was trying to induce me to join him in law practice there, I suspect that he didn't tell me outright that that was just preparatory to his getting into politics or I might not have been interested in joining him in the law practice.

SOAPES: What were the initial impressions that you had of Jerry Ford?

BUCHEN: Of course, at the University of Michigan he was a well-known figure. Even after he left people knew who he was - - his name had been tied with recent Michigan football activities.

And so he was just generally well-known and, of course, was a very attractive figure, an athlete who was good looking -- who didn't look like a tough guy but who was obviously a superb athlete and a well-built man. And he was just generally well-liked and had lots of friends that were still in school because they had been underclassmen while he was a senior and they all knew him -- so he had generally a lot of recognition there. And that's how I personally came to know of him. Also, knowing I was going to the University of Michigan, even while I was in the last years of high school I would follow the Michigan football team, which for the midwest was, of course, a superb team, although in the years Ford was there it had not had very successful seasons.

SOAPES: What about personality traits?

BUCHEN: He was very gregarious; liked a good time; was in no sense a proud figure as some stars do become even in college; seemed to relate well to people; had a fairly hard role because, even in college, he had to work his way through, so I think that prevented him from ever becoming a temperamental or haughty person because he was used to working in humble surroundings, working in kitchens and washing dishes and that sort of thing. So I guess just generally, to use the expression, he was a good fellow whom everybody liked. I think that describes Jerry Ford in those days.

SOAPES: What did he do to pass away the idle moments,
hobbies or --

BUCHEN: Well, he is sort of a kinetic individual; I think he has to be active. And he was always engaging in a variety of sports. He loved to ski; loved to play tennis; loved to swim; was not one to sit around very much. I don't think he ever spent a good deal of time reading. Of course, he did his studies when he had to, but he was a very active individual and had a good deal of vigor, was the kind of person that liked to get up early in the morning and get going and seemed to thrive on less sleep and rest than most people need.

SOAPES: He wasn't the type of person you'd expect to find in the library, but you would find him out on an intramural field.

BUCHEN: Right, passing a football or throwing a baseball or something.

SOAPES: Having been in a fraternity, was he known to engage in some of the pranks that some fraternities are well-known for?

BUCHEN: Oh, I doubt that. Of course by that time fraternities had sort of tamed down. I don't know whether it was because of the depression at that time but students were more serious generally, because many of them were there at what was then considerable expense or burden, having to make it on their own or live on modest allowances from their families. So fraternities had ceased at that time to do some of the antics and escapades that were known or were reputed in the twenties.

SOAPES: Did his close friends tend to mirror his interests,

or did he tend to attract opposites?

BUCHEN: His two closest friends were not athletes, Eddie Landware and Jack Beckwith, who were both fraternity brothers and, I guess, had only one thing in common, they both came from fairly wealthy families, and they were very close friends of Ford's right through college and long afterwards - - they'd see each other very frequently.

SOAPES: Did this fact that they were from wealthy families tend to be an attraction for Ford?

BUCHEN: Well, I think it must have been. Not that he was associating with them because they had wealth but because they were also attractive people, and I suspect that it was kind of reassuring to know that you could come from a relatively humble background and easily make friends with the wealthy.

SOAPES: Now as you got to know him then in New York, he was involved with the Willkie campaign. I think he had gotten that position through Frank McKay?

BUCHEN: Right. Yes, the story goes that his father had asked Frank McKay to see if he could help Jerry get a position. And I remember his father telling me that Frank McKay after Jerry's father had called him to make this request, very shortly afterwards sent one of the salesmen of a publication he owned and solicited an advertisement from Jerry Ford, Sr's. company. So that was the way McKay was operating. He had many, many business interest and

advanced his business interests through his political connections and through the political favors he did. So this was one evidence of it.

SOAPES: How well did you know Ford's parents?

BUCHEN: Later I got to know them quite well when I joined Jerry in Grand Rapids to open our law office, of course. Before we settled down, I'd go up weekends and stay at his home. And in the summers - - they had a cottage on Lake Michigan - - I'd join the family there and when they had family events I would be invited, along with my wife at that time. And so I got to know them and became very fond of them, and they took me in almost as one of the family.

SOAPES: What personality traits do you remember about them?

BUCHEN: Well, Jerry's gregariousness and his attractive features and his way with people, I think that he got from his mother, who was a very sociable woman and loved people, loved to be with people, was a great conversationalist and always was interested in people - - took a great interest in all of Jerry's friends, girls and boys - - and I'm sure gave him his warm outgoing qualities.

His father, who was not his natural father of course, was a man he admired greatly because he was a man of high principles, rather stern looking but really not stern acting. And he felt a great responsibility to bring up not only Jerry but his natural sons

in a highly principled way, but he, I think, was not as gregarious or as socially at ease as either the mother or Jerry was.

SOAPES: What did you notice about the relationship between Jerry Ford Junior and Senior and as well as his mother? Was there a good parent-son relationship?

BUCHEN: Oh, yes. Oh, yes, indeed. In fact I got the impression that the father was very concerned never to make Jerry feel that he was different from his brothers in any sense - - of course he even kept hidden from him until it came out by accident that he was not born of the father with whom he was living. And so I think because of the determination of Jerry Ford, Sr. to see that this stepson of his identified solely with him and never felt discriminated against or different from the other brothers, maybe there was even a little spoiling of Jerry and a little more attention paid to him and a little more care taken with his upbringing than in the case of the other boys.

SOAPES: What about his relationships with his half-brothers?

BUCHEN: Of course, there was some age gap there - - I'm trying to think - - there must be six or seven or eight years, and so I think generally there was a sense of looking up always to their bigger brother. Of course, that would have been in the period when I didn't know the family, because by the time I got to know the Fords, the other boys had all reached college age or near college age and they were not around as much. They didn't go

around in the same crowd because of the differences in ages, so I never did really see them as a group except maybe on some family occasion when everybody would come for dinner or something. But I'm sure there was always great admiration from the younger boys to the older boy and certainly no sign that Jerry didn't feel close to the boys, but I think because of the difference of the ages they never really shared many experiences together except when they were all in the company of their parents.

SOAPES: During that summer of 1940 in New York when you would get together in the evening, what things did he talk about concerning the Willkie campaign that seemed to interest him or excite him the most?

BUCHEN: I really have no recollection of that. I think at that time there was a great concern about the upcoming war, the threatened war, and I think that was what concerned us more, really. And the question was whether Willkie was the man to keep us out of war or Roosevelt would get us in war, that sort of thing. As you know, the students who were educated after World War I had gone through an experience of learning that made them very anti-war, with the feeling that war never solved anything, and there was certainly a well-inbred passivism, more of a practical passivism rather than an idealistic one. And of course the America First Committee was something that Jerry Ford had gotten into. Apparently it was a fairly active group on the Yale campus. I don't

recall that it became much of a factor at the University of Michigan campus. I don't remember when that was formed, but it certainly must have been operating prior to the summer of '40 on the Yale campus, and that I think was of greater concern almost - - I mean our minds were diverted to that and away from domestic politics except as the election might bear on whether we got into the war or not.

SOAPES: Did he have very strong feelings that we should stay out of the European conflict?

BUCHEN: Oh yes, as we all did. The transformation that came over this country after Pearl Harbor - - it was just a change over night, of course, as all else was forgotten because of a feeling of outrage at what had happened to our country. But prior to then it was very difficult to rouse the interest of younger people in going to war for any reason.

SOAPES: And his point of view followed that same pattern. After Pearl Harbor he then was - -

BUCHEN: Oh yes, yes, shocked like all of us, it shocked him of course.

SOAPES: You mentioned earlier that probably he had in the back of his mind that going back to Grand Rapids was the chance to set up a political career. Had he talked at all about his interest in politics for himself?

BUCHEN: I don't think so. People have asked me that question

before, and I don't think he was that definite. I think he always felt that he wanted to be involved in politics but maybe only as sort of a McKay figure rather than as an elected official. Those were the days when you could do an awful lot in politics without running for office yourself. And I think his idea of actually leaving the law practice and getting into politics probably came as the result of some of the reflecting he did during the war when he was serving. Also, as a result of the fact that there suddenly popped up what seemed to be a real opportunity for a young person to knock out an old-time congressman whose ideas by that time were anathema to Ford and to most of us who had seen how important it was, because of having gotten involved so late in the war, that our concern for how the world was getting along beyond our shores should be a constant thing. We had to be alert to and get involved with the idea that we wouldn't have to go through this war again by making our presence felt, our influence felt, to stop the train of events that could lead to another war.

SOAPES: When you were around the Ford family, was politics, public issues, a topic of frequent conversation?

BUCHEN: Yes, because Jerry Ford, Sr., of course, was very much involved in the local political scene, not, again, as an elected officer, but as one who worked for the party and got concerned with municipal elections. And that's how the "Home Front" started because the community was generally getting quite resentful at the

political hold and monopoly that Frank McKay had. His methods were being more and more exposed as corruption became a matter of state-wide concern, because he was indicted and tried, I think, on a couple occasions for fraud in connection with state bond issues and some other things. And the stories were beginning to build how he took a rake-off on all the liquor sales through state liquor stores and that sort of thing. And so there was just a general feeling that the community had to do something about that man and the hold he had on the community as well as on the state.

SOAPES: Was the Ford family's interest in politics a highly partisan interest or was it more an issue-oriented interest?

BUCHEN: Well, like most civic politics, the issues are not very sharply drawn. It's more - - do you run a reasonably honest government or don't you. And I think that simply said it. The elections in the municipal offices were supposedly on a non-partisan basis - - people were not identified by party on the voting ballots.

SOAPES: So their interest was in a good government, a clean-up-the-machine type of politics.

BUCHEN: Right.

SOAPES: What about Ford's friends in New York, other than yourself that you were around - - the girl friend that was well-known - -

BUCHEN: Phyllis Brown, yes. Well, I can't recall whether

she was in New York that summer or not. I don't think she was there regularly because he wouldn't have had so much time to just go off and meet me all by himself. So I think she must have been away from New York but did come occasionally for a weekend or so and he would see her. And then I remember she came to visit him at the cottage, visit the Ford family at the cottage, which must have been in the summer of '41. I don't know where she might have been that summer, but she certainly didn't seem to be there regularly.

SOAPES: What do you remember about her personality traits?

BUCHEN: Well, of course, she was such a glamour girl and was one who was so striking that on first impression, you thought, well, here is a very beautiful girl. Yet she had a good personality as well; it wasn't just looks. I just think she had a lot of spark, a lot of life, and was always laughing, joking, and was thoroughly attractive.

SOAPES: Then when was it that you went back to Grand Rapids and started the firm with Ford?

BUCHEN: Well, we both completed our credits in mid-year -- he at Yale and I at Michigan -- but since we were starting our own firm we couldn't begin practice until we had both taken the bar exams and gotten the results. The bar exams are only given twice a year -- March and September or something. Anyhow, we took them together in March, and then we had to wait until June or July for the results. And in the meantime I worked as a researcher at the University of

Michigan Law School just to earn some money, and I think Ford did nothing for those several months. Then when we finally got the bar exam results I moved to Grand Rapids. In the meantime I had been driving up there and we selected space for the office, made arrangements to get some furniture and that sort of thing.

SOAPES: How would you describe Grand Rapids in that period?

BUCHEN: Well, it was a very pleasant place, ideal size for a city because it was not so large that it had metropolitan problems or the metropolitan disadvantages of getting in and out or in and around. And yet it was large enough to have a diversity of people and to provide really all the services and shops and a fairly good array of cultural events. And it was an attractive community; it was well laid out with beautiful trees and some lakes right in the city. Many of the Grand Rapids high school graduates went to the University of Michigan so that I had a lot of friends there from school and Ford had, of course, acquired many friends, not only those that went with him to the University of Michigan but those that he had known as a high school student. And from a lawyer's standpoint, would-be lawyer, it was an attractive place. The quality of the bar was generally good; the judges were generally good. In law school it was always talked about as a wonderful place to practice law, a wonderful place to live if you didn't want to go to New York or Chicago or Cleveland where some of us had intended to go, as I had intended to go to New York. And it

was large enough or important enough because it was sort of the trading center for all of the western part of the state; and there was a federal court located there for the western side of Michigan, so that it was generally a place that drew business, not only from the immediate community but from the rest of the area, from that half of the state.

SOAPES: When you think of an athlete you think of someone who has a strong competitive spirit. Was there a strong competitive spirit in Ford not only on the athletic field but then when he got into a business situation?

BUCHEN: I think less so than in a case of most athletes. He seemed to be less determined to compete vigorously, or to get an advantage over the opposition. I think in that sense he had a much more balanced attitude than others did, and I think that's why he always ran his campaigns in a very tempered fashion in terms of how he hit at his opponents. I never saw him make any move that gave him an unfair advantage over another person. So I think he was generally well-balanced in that way, whether it was the Boy Scout in him or the Episcopalian or, I suspect more than anything, his mother's and his father's influences. They were such grand people that I think they would have been annoyed if he had become a bully with his brothers or would be the spoiled sport or get very peeved or resentful if he lost a contest. So I think he had a rather well-tempered attitude toward competition.

SOAPES: I'm sure the firm started out very slowly - -

BUCHEN: Oh, indeed.

SOAPES: In his autobiography he talks about your initial clients - -

BUCHEN: Yes, one who wanted us to abstract a title, and I think the Fords had a part-time maid who wanted a divorce and we tried to help her get a divorce. And we had, oh, just a variety of little matters that people brought in to us. As partners in our own firm, we never got any significant matters or clients because the larger, well-established firms, of course, had that business pretty well cornered.

SOAPES: So by the time that it came for him to go off to the war, your firm was still a struggling, small law firm.

BUCHEN: Yes. I think, if I remember correctly, I guess our net income averaged about one hundred dollars a piece per month for the time that we were together.

SOAPES: And in that time you could survive in Grand Rapids?

BUCHEN: Oh, yes. That's all they were paying me in New York. To live and work in New York I was paid twenty-five dollars a week.

[Laughter]

SOAPES: Now try to do that for a day you don't get very far. Then after Ford went into the Navy you went into the law firm with Julius Amberg?

BUCHEN: I didn't go immediately. What happened after Ford

left, there was a rapid exodus of younger lawyers going into the service so that some of the older established firms were losing their key help. And I got matters referred to me by them where they'd handle the matter but they said: We've got a problem here; we'd like some research done. And I worked for them and they'd share their fee with me on some agreed-upon basis. And then there was a justice of the Supreme Court from Grand Rapids, justice of the Michigan Supreme Court. He lost his research clerk and he came to me and said, "You help me out and I'll bring the briefs and records home on week ends; you go up to the library and give me memos on this and that and I'll put you on my payroll for the period until I can find someone to work with me in Lansing." And that lasted I guess, for almost a year because I still had a hope that the war might not last or that I could keep our little office going until Jerry Ford got back. Then one of the firms that had asked me to do some of this work was Julius Amberg's firm, although by that time he had left to become Assistant Secretary of War and he was not in the office. But they were losing some of their other men to the service and they finally approached me and said, "Why don't you come join us?" And I said I will if I have assurances that when Ford gets out he can join. Of course I wrote or talked with him by telephone and discussed it with him and had his blessings before I made that move.

SOAPES: Did you keep up a regular correspondence with him?

BUCHEN: Not particularly. He's not much of a letter writer as I recall. I think I kept his family advised and I talked with them. It wasn't a case where I'd write him frequently about what was happening at the office. I may have written several letters at the beginning, telling him what I was doing, how matters were proceeding in the office, but that soon ended. When he actually got on the high seas and he got so preoccupied with what he was doing, he didn't really care much what was happening so far as the law practice in Grand Rapids was concerned.

SOAPES: Then he came back from the Navy, discharged I think in '46.

BUCHEN: I thought it might have been in the fall of '45.

[Ed. note: Discharged February 23, 1946.]

SOAPES: And then he came into the law firm with you?

BUCHEN: Yes, by that time Julius Amberg was back and, of course, was delighted to have him.

SOAPES: And did he begin then to immediately start looking at the local political situation?

BUCHEN: Well, I think that this "Home Front" thing that had started really before he left had kept going to a degree - - it may not have been called that any more - - but the group that had started that would meet and get involved in local politics. And then his father, I think, during the war had become county chairman of the Republican Committee and everybody was eager to welcome back

people from the war and get them active in ringing door bells, doing things that you have to do in a political campaign, and he got involved immediately. And then he also, I remember, got involved in various charitable things, like the Community Chest drive and all that. He liked to get out and do those things. So he immediately got back into community life. I think it was such a great relief to get through with the war and he wanted to get back in the home community.

SOAPES: When did he start showing an interest in being a candidate for office?

BUCHEN: Well, let's see - - there would have been an election in '46 when [Bartel] Jonkman got re-elected for the last time. And I'm sure that Jerry and I didn't do any work to get Jonkman elected. There was no reason to: he was a shoo-in. But it must have been after that election in '46 when Jonkman was making local headlines because of his opposition to any move on the part of Congress to get us involved in restoring Europe and maintaining a certain degree of preparedness and that sort of thing. So I suspect it was a combination of that fact and that he had probably gotten to see Jonkman when Jonkman was a candidate in 1946. I'm not sure whether Jonkman was the congressman before the war or not. He succeeded a man named [Carl] Mapes. He was a well-respected man, but I think he died in office. I can't remember when.

SOAPES: I can't recall the dates either.

BUCHEN: But Jonkman certainly wasn't well-known to Ford or

me at all. But somehow Ford must have gotten to see him during that '46 campaign and probably was less than impressed with him as I was. He wasn't a very impressive man and Ford - - although he never said so - - probably thought, how does this fellow get elected to Congress? And I think that was how the idea just gradually dawned on him. John Martin, whom you might want to interview, lives in Washington, was probably closer to Ford on the matter of politics at that time than I was. And John Martin was very much committed to getting into politics, getting into an elective office. But, as Jerry said afterwards, John decided he'd go the state route, getting elected first to the state House of Representatives and then the state Senate and ultimately become one of the second or third officers under the governor. And then after that he tried for the Senate and lost - - U. S. Senate. And so I think that John Martin must have had many conversations with Jerry that may in themselves have led Jerry to decide to run for office as well. John was as well-known and from the very beginning I think probably he encouraged Jerry to do it - - if not by actual words, at least by example.

SOAPES: Also coming into his life at this time is Betty Warren. And you had known her before then, hadn't you?

BUCHEN: Yes. She, I think had lived in Grand Rapids most of her life. And I got to know her during the war because her then husband was in sort of a group with which I used to meet for

lunch regularly downtown. He worked downtown. And we'd meet socially in the evenings at parties, although I never really got to know her well - - she wasn't an intimate friend of ours. And I don't think Jerry ever knew her very well because he was just enough older, different class in school - - not until after he got back and was the most eligible bachelor in town, and she was alone. He tells the story well.

SOAPES: That's an interesting point about being the most eligible bachelor in town. Was that something that was generally known about him at the time that, "Ford's back in town".

BUCHEN: Oh, I think so. I think he's attractive to women. There certainly were a lot of other bachelors, but not many his age. I mean most men had gotten married by that time.

SOAPES: We're moving towards the campaign in '48, and he began to put together an organization. I think you were the one who suggested Jack Stiles.

BUCHEN: Yes. Jack and I were close friends because we had been in college together and had traveled through Europe together as students. Jack was a very interesting fellow - - he had a great ambition to be a writer. His father was in business. After he got back from the service, he devoted a year or more I guess to writing a book that never saw the publishing daylight, and he was just sort of not doing anything. Jerry says in his book that I urged him to run for Congress. I did, although it wasn't a case of saying, "Jerry

have you ever thought of running for Congress? Why don't you do it". It was a case where he had developed the idea of doing it himself, I'm sure, or maybe with the influence of John Martin more than me. But I certainly said, "You should". And he said, "How do I organize the campaign?" And I said, "Well, Jack Stiles isn't doing anything and you're going to have to have kind of an innovative type of campaign. All the experienced politicians probably, one, don't think you have a chance and two, are henchmen of Jonkman or of McKay, and Jonkman was one of McKay's proteges. So I said, "You're going to have to go out and get someone new who may not have had the experience but who has at least the independence and, in this case, the imagination to go about attacking a fairly well-entrenched figure." So he talked to Jack and I guess they arranged what pay he would work for. And it turned out to be a great combination because the effort really fooled the pundits of the community. I remember Julius Amberg, who was, of course, a Democrat, was very enthusiastic about Ford's running. Because of his experience in Washington he was death on Jonkman, and he knew the only one who could ever get elected to Congress at that time from Grand Rapids was a Republican. So he very much supported Jerry, but he kept reporting that he had seen so and so, who knew all about the prospects. In fact, he even talked to Frank McKay and Frank McKay said, "Ah, Ford hasn't a chance." And that was before the days of polling, so, you know you just had to go by your hunches as to who was ahead as far as

public opinion was concerned.

SOAPES: I asked you earlier about Ford's competitive drive. Now as he actually got into the campaign, did this competitive drive tend to come up a little stronger than normal?

BUCHEN: Well, he was determined to make an all-out effort because everybody likes to succeed in what he's doing, but I don't think he was ever a nasty competitor or that he would have been totally crushed if he'd lost. You know, President Carter talks about the terrible trauma that went over him when he lost his first election. But that wouldn't have happened to Ford, I'm sure. He made fun of it really; he wasn't grim about it, and as a result, he did innovative things like going out in the morning and milking a cow and all that. I think he enjoyed it because he likes people and this was a great way to get to see more people.

SOAPES: Were you around his family enough to see how they were reacting to the fact that their son was campaigning for Congress?

BUCHEN: Probably not very much at that time because I think I had sort of grown away from the family. Without Jerry there during the war, while we were perfectly good friends, I ceased to go to their home with any frequency as I had done before. So I didn't really observe how the family felt, except I'm sure that his father was just absolutely delighted, knowing his interest in politics, and his mother would have been very supportive and

delighted with it. It was not a case of where the family might say, "What's our son doing trying to run for public office when he won't make any money and interrupt a career?" They felt it was just a perfect future for their son.

SOAPES: What was Ford's reaction to victory?

BUCHEN: Oh, again you know you wish you could remember the night when the election returns came in, but that's gone. I'm sure it was just great elation, maybe even mixed with a certain degree of surprise.

SOAPES: Of course after the primary -- the tough one -- then the general election --

BUCHEN: At that time it was a foregone conclusion -- no one even remembers his opponent, I don't think.

SOAPES: The transition then from being the candidate to the Congressman-elect -- he's got to make the move to Washington. How did he react to moving away from Grand Rapids?

BUCHEN: Oh, I don't think that that bothered him. I mean after all he had been living in New Haven for six or seven years. He's really very much a cosmopolitan person; he's not provincial in any sense of the word. So, no, I think this was just a nice, exciting adventure to come down here. And in those days you didn't really feel you were pulling up your roots, you know. After all you were the representative from Grand Rapids, and I think everybody expected the congressional sessions would become much shorter

as they had been in earlier, untroubled years. I guess if you look back on the twenties, the sessions ran two, three, or four months and that was all, and so I think he didn't realize how much time he would be away, and he certainly didn't realize the problems that would ensue once he had children when you almost had to keep your home in one place or the other. And, of course, because of the distance to Grand Rapids, it had to be here for the children. You couldn't be pulling them in and out of schools and that sort of thing as you would do if you tried to maintain a really permanent residence in Grand Rapids and only come here for the particular days of Congress. So, when he left, I'm sure they just took a little apartment here, and they bought a duplex in Grand Rapids which, I think they regarded as being their main residence and this only an incidental one, but experience proved otherwise. This one in Washington became the main one and that in Grand Rapids became only incidental.

SOAPES: Did he ask you to join him in Washington?

BUCHEN: No. He had found John Milanowski of course. I'm not sure how he found John; I can't remember that.

SOAPES: I'm going to see him next week.

BUCHEN: Oh, you'll find out. I don't know whether John had gotten active in his campaign -- that may be, although he must have been only in a volunteer capacity. I don't think he was paid as John Stiles was. Maybe John was very effective in organizing the

Polish element for Jerry, because the one Democratic pocket in the community was among the Polish community. And I suppose it was important for Jerry to win the nomination that he got the votes of Democrats.

SOAPES: Was it an open primary?

BUCHEN: Yes.

SOAPES: And he did make an appeal across party lines?

BUCHEN: Oh, indeed. And John may have been effective in that, but Ford can confirm that. John, with his Polish name, was what he needed. John had been a Republican and could have been influential in delivering some of the Polish vote that otherwise would not have voted in the Republican primary. No, Ford never asked me partly because he knew my legal career had jumped several notches ahead of where his was because of the delay in his return. And I guess, at that time at least, you hired people who were really subordinates to you in the office and probably didn't hire high-powered staffers the way congressmen do now. So he probably wouldn't have asked me because maybe he thought it wasn't a fit job for me at that point in my career.

SOAPES: Did he try to keep his fences mended very early in his career, to keep in touch with the local people? I know he makes a comment in his memoirs that he made a choice about spending time on the floor or specializing in constituent service and that he choose to spend a little more time on the floor than a lot of

people did. Do you remember what type of contacts with the district that he had in his first few years on Congress?

BUCHEN: Well, it certainly wasn't as intense as it became later I believe, I suppose partly because there was a long tradition of always sending the same man back. I guess Mapes had been there for thirty years in Congress, and Jonkman, if it hadn't been for Ford, would have probably continued on until he died. So there wasn't a necessity for that deep commitment to constituent services. I think you're right that he probably traveled less to Grand Rapids than he did later on. And when he did come there, usually for the summer holidays, he'd bring his family. I've forgotten when the first child was born but I think fairly early after Jerry got to Washington - - certainly in the first term. And, of course, that I'm sure kept him here more - - the first child always makes you stay home. And so the combination of the first child and the fact that there was no compulsion or necessity to spend a good deal of time in Grand Rapids I think was the reason that he didn't return frequently. And I don't really recall seeing him very often in the early terms, except as he came back for the summer holidays.