

Governor Lincoln Almond
Interviewed by Kyle Conley and Pat McGrath
April 28, 1998

Kyle Conley/Pat McGrath: Where and when were you born?

Governor Lincoln Almond I was born in Pawtucket. My parents were residents of Central Falls.

KC/PM: Where did you grow up?

LA: In Central Falls [R.I.] until I was in the seventh grade, and I think I moved to Lincoln in 1948, when I was twelve.

KC/PM: Briefly describe your family and your neighborhood.

LA: My father, when I was real young, ran a service station, gasoline station, and my mother was a home[maker]. We lived in Central Falls in a tenement house that was owned by my grandfather. My grandfather's house, there was a cottage behind the tenement house and my grandfather lived there, and he was the Fire Chief in Central Falls.

It was a fun place to grow up. I remember it was very painful to move to the country in Lincoln. In those days, there was very little and Central Falls was a very, very interesting. It was a mill community. You could look this up, but I'm going to guess the population of Central Falls back in those days was somewhere about 27-29,000 and it was the most populated square mile in the United States. Very, very urban, very different place, but a fun place. You know, you walked down the street, the restaurants, the movies. In those days, we had an automobile. Of course, during World War II, you had gas rationing, but we were lucky. My father ran a gas station, so we used to get to the beach in South Kingstown that other people couldn't. Everyone in the neighborhood used to pile in the car, but it was a fun place to grow up. I really enjoyed it.

KC/PM: What were your parents' political views?

LA: I can't recall them having any real strong views. My grandfather retired as the Fire Chief when I was real young, and he took an active role in politics in Central Falls, and I remember him running for office one year. He was defeated. He ran as a Republican for the House of Representatives. But I remember that, and I remember the hustle and bustle around election time and things of that nature. But I can't say that my parents ever had any strong political views.

KC/PM: What did you think you wanted to do when you grew up and how did that change over time?

LA: I had no idea. Keep in mind that back in the 40's and the 50's, very few went on to college, and, well, I shouldn't say very few, more and more were going to college, but very few of our parents went to college. My father never graduated from high school. I'm not sure. I don't think my mother did, either. So, education was not a very strong thing, because you were expected to go to school, it was considered to be important. Mostly because your parents didn't graduate from high school, it seemed to be very important that you graduate from high school.

But, there were plenty of jobs available, you know, in the area, so you were more or less expected to graduate from high school and then go to work. So you didn't get a lot of encouragement, and you know, it was also strange, you know, for parents in those days to discuss college 'cause they had no idea what it was. No idea.

KC/PM: Were you aware of any discrimination against people in your family or your neighborhood?

LA: No, and as I say, Central Falls was a very, very populated area. You know, we did not, you know Central Falls has a significant number of Hispanics now, but in those days it was primarily French, Irish, English, Polish and a very significant Syrian population in the middle of the community. Those were the major, you know, ethnic backgrounds, but it was very, very harmonious. There was never any. I can never recall any discussions about discrimination or any problems in the community. There were the usual ethnic jokes, you know, about various ethnic groups, that was taken in a very light way.

KC/PM: Where did you go to high school?

LA: In Central Falls.

KC/PM: How about for college?

LA: The University of Rhode Island

KC/PM: Where did you study law?

LA: Boston University

KC/PM: What did you study at ?

LA: What did I study at URI?

KC/PM: Yeah

LA: I was a Political Science major and a history minor.

KC/PM: And then, where was your other?

LA: Boston University School of Law, that was just a general. I think we were only allowed two or three electives in the law school in those days.

KC/PM: Did you go to law school directly after high school? Or did you?

LA: I stayed out of high school one year and worked to earn some money to go to. And I had a lot of good teachers in high school who really were urging me to go to college, and they were very, very concerned that when I took the year off I wouldn't go. And I used to have contact with. Now keep in mind I lived in Lincoln, but Lincoln had no high school, so we could go to any high school in the state that we wanted to. Interesting, Central Falls did not accept out of state[town] students. The only reason I was the only Lincoln student in the Central Falls high school, you know, I was allowed that because I was joining the class that I had left in the seventh grade. And I had to be interviewed by the Superintendent of Schools, the Principal of the high school, and receive approval from the School Committee to be admitted to the high school. Very interesting, different. It was a very, very good high school. It was considered one of the best high schools in the state back in the 50's, very strong school, just about every teacher I had in high school went on to teach in college after I graduated.

KC/PM: Was the curriculum relevant to your life, or to your political interests?

LA: Well, I am sure it was probably not. Well, you probably see it more relevant than we did. There was just, school was school. But I had ambitions to go to college when I was in high school, so I think I probably paid more attention to some of the courses, especially the science courses, with a view towards going on to college. But I saw it as relevant to continuing education as distinguished from a career.

KC/PM: What instructor or course do you most remember?

LA: That's a tough one because I had a lot of really, really good teachers that were very dedicated. We had a real fine history teacher who is still living, Dan Gobby, who later taught at the Community College [of Rhode Island], and we had a good, he taught American History, which was a very interesting class. And he used to require us to get a current events newspaper and we used to do current events quite often. But I also had two science teachers, James Gobby, who later went to work for the Department of Education, and Mary Rooney, who went to work at the [inaudible] in the college level. And the reason I remember them is they were very intense. They made the class interesting, and I did extremely well in science at the University of Rhode Island based upon the background I had in high school. Science was very easy for me in college, Chemistry, Botany, Biology.

KC/PM: When and how did you decide to become a lawyer?

LA: I can't, that's a hard one. I would say that I entered the University of Rhode Island knowing that I was going to go trying, I was going to try to go to law school. We had a neighbor who lived two houses up from us, Bill McKenzie, who was a lawyer, an interesting person. His wife was a professor at Wheaton College. And I used to go over their house a lot and I always admired him. He was the family attorney. He later became a Superior Court judge and was one of our better judges in the Superior Court. He passed away about two years ago after retirement. But I think he influenced me to some extent.

KC/PM: Where did you go to law school?

LA: Boston University

KC/PM: Describe your experience out of law school.

LA: Well, that is an interesting one because things have changed. When I graduated from law school it was 1961, you were required by the Rhode Island Supreme Court to serve a clerkship for six months before you could take the bar exam, and a clerkship was unpaid. You worked for a law firm and you were a hustler, and you didn't get paid.

Some students who had the financial means would do their clerkships in the summer and so they would have it completed when they graduated. I couldn't do that because I had to work in the summer. I was married, going through law school. So I had to serve a clerkship. The bar was given in July and March, so I was not eligible to take the bar in July. I had to work a clerkship and I was very lucky I went to work for a law firm for the clerkship, I should say I went. I did my clerkship with a law firm and they paid me. And I got an awful lot of experience there. I had to work a full day and then study for the bar. I didn't have time to take a bar course because I was working full time. I took the bar in March. I passed it and I was admitted to the bar in June. That was 1962.

KC/PM: Did you follow any political or social causes during your early career?

LA: I always had an interest in politics. There was an attorney who just passed away two weeks ago, Harry Aswith. He lived about two streets away from me in Lincoln, and when I was in high school, he was the minority leader of the House of Representatives and I admired him. I can recall seeing him and talking with him. He used to give me encouragement. And I think I also was, I was very pro-Eisenhower, and I can remember the, I guess it was the '52 convention, taking a great interest. I was in high school, a sophomore at the time, and that was when Eisenhower was running against Taft for the Republican nomination, and I did have a memory, a good memory of World War II and the admiration for Eisenhower, so I took a real interest in that election.

KC/PM: Why did you become pro-Eisenhower? What made you admire him?

LA: I think it was primarily the mystique of him being the allied commander. The American people held him in great high esteem. He was sort of like a fatherly figure, and I just thought, I just liked him.

KC/PM: Do you think discrimination against people of color was a problem?

LA: You never heard of it. When I was growing up. I think the first [thing] that you really started to see the effects of discrimination

was in the school desegregation issues down south, and they were very heartbreaking. Those were very, very difficult things to understand, how people could take those views, and I think that many of us at an early age found that to be so difficult to understand that it really had an impact on you for the rest of your life in respect to the issues involving discrimination.

KC/PM: What were your views?

LA: What was that?

KC/PM: What were your views? About discrimination?

LA: I thought it was horrible. I mean, the Slavery Movement, I mean, when you were living the age of Governor Forbis and Wallace, and you saw, you know, a young black girl being refused admission into the school and the National Guard and troops in Little Rock, I mean, you did have television, and you saw that. It had an impact on me.

KC/PM: Was 1960 and the election of John F. Kennedy an important turning point for you?

LA: Well, it was very interesting because when I went to law school, I started law school in 1958, the Boston University Law School at that time is no longer there, it was right next to the Massachusetts State House, and across the street there was an apartment building and John Kennedy had an apartment in that apartment building, so I first met John Kennedy as a freshman in law school, and I remember we used to walk up through Boston and there were several of us, and if you were early, you might stop and get a cup of coffee and sit on the steps of the law school and have a coffee, at 8 o'clock in the morning. This would be in September or October of 1958, and he used to come over and talk with us, so I did meet John Kennedy during the 1958 Senatorial campaign when he was running for reelection. And I did see him during the 1960 Presidential campaign.

And I remember a very bitter cold day after the '60 elections, in early '61, in January, when he came up from Palm Beach before the inauguration to address a joint session of the Massachusetts Legislature and give a speech at Harvard, he stayed in the apartment across from the law school, and we stood out in front when he came out. That is the time he forgot his overcoat and got a cold and had to go back to Palm Beach and recover, for about two weeks. He got a bad back problem.

KC/PM: How did you respond to his assassination?

LA: What was that?

KC/PM: How did you respond to his assassination?

LA: Oh, I remember it well. I was Administrator in the Town of Lincoln. I had an appointment with the state Department of Health, and went up into the state Department of Health and was seated waiting for a meeting to start, and there was a radio playing and it came over the radio. And it was really stunning. The meeting was canceled. I went back to Lincoln, and I remember staying at home with my wife and watching the funeral. I just assumed that the town hall was closed that day, and it had an extreme impact upon the entire nation.

KC/PM: Okay. What did you know about the counter-culture of the 60's?

LA: We probably know more about it today than we did then. I don't recall much about it in the 60's. Of course, I was more worried about starting a career and getting out of law school. You know, you read about it and you saw it in the magazines. But it was not that significant. In my opinion.

KC/PM: Did you feel as though it was a positive or negative thing?

LA: I thought it was very negative, in the sense of you know, that was the beginning of the drug culture and the Dr. O'Learys [Tim Leary], etc., and you know, keep in mind, when I went to the University of Rhode Island, I never heard the word drug or never saw. there was never, I mean there was alcohol, but keep in mind that 60-70% of the male student body at the University of Rhode Island were veterans of the Korean war. I mean, they were twenty-one, twenty-two, twenty-three years of age, having been through a war, so you know, for them, to come down to South Kingstown and have a glass of beer was nothing. But drugs, I never saw, heard anything about drugs. Until after I got out of law school, and then you started to hear about it.

KC/PM: Did you feel there was a generation gap in the late 60's?

LA: To some extent. With some segments of the population. I think that is when you, you know, started to see the activism and the questioning of government and the desire for more openness in government and honesty, and it was a very difficult time, because you had a culture of the government that didn't want to respond, you know, to the public, and the public demands far more information. This is the McNamara situation, where, you know, recently he comes forward on his views on Vietnam, where he didn't during the time of the Vietnam era.

KC/PM: What kinds of music did you listen to in the 60's?

LA: Very soft, I mean, that was, you know, just the Nat King Cole's and Patti Page, and I remember the Beatles, I remember them. Ed Sullivan was a very popular TV show, and you know, just the hair length, the styles, the, you know, if you listen to a Beatles record today, it is so, you know, "blah," just average compared to what you thought of it back in the 60's, as being very radical. I mean, it is almost impossible to think that you would have thought it was radical back in the 60's. But it was an exciting thing. I mean, when they were going to be on the Ed Sullivan show, you watched. Like it or not, you watched.

KC/PM: Could you please describe your memory about the clothing and hairstyles?

LA: Well, hair was just starting to get, I guess it was just starting to get long then, but I don't have a recollection. There was a lot of

short hair around, because you had a lot of, you know, among the males because you had a lot of veterans and the veterans always had their hair short, so I mean when you were in college, I guess the brush cut was probably more popular than anything, when I was at URI, because that was what most of the veterans, you know, were used to when they were growing up.

KC/PM: How did you feel about the lifestyle of the hippies?

LA: In a negative way. I think most people back in the 60's, you know, that was very odd to them, because you didn't see that in the community. I mean, that was only something that you saw in *Life Magazine*, to some extent. You didn't experience it.

KC/PM: Did anyone you know, did they participate?

LA: No, not that I can remember.

KC/PM: Were your children affected at all by the counter-culture?

LA: No. I can't say, I would say that we were normally protective. Keep in mind that when my children, my son was born in 1963 and my daughter in 1967, you know, I was in public life. I was an elected official. And, you know, that obviously influenced them in the way they conducted themselves. And, dress, and my wife does a lot of sewing, most of my clothing and my daughter's clothing was made by my wife, so you know, which my daughter liked, it was a thing between my daughter and my wife on clothing. So my wife had a strong influence on my daughter's clothing 'cause she made it.

KC/PM: Were you affected by the Cuban Missile Crises or the threat of a nuclear war?

LA: No. You did have a fear of nuclear war. There was no question about that. I think everyone had a fear of that. And the Cuban missile crisis was followed very, very closely in the news. Very closely in the news. There was a lot of real concern about that.

KC/PM: And, how did you feel about those issues?

LA: How did I feel about those issues?

KC/PM: Yeah.

LA: You just wanted to take people's heads and bang them together, because when you saw what could happen. You see, one thing you, you got to realize, I think, or I did in that era of that, you know, you got. you see, I never had any ill feelings towards the Russian people. You know, towards the Russian leadership. The Russian people, you know, were just like you and I. I mean, they didn't want war. But what used to be frustrating is the. you get the political leadership that is so misguided and so powerful, that. and the lack of information, you have to keep in mind that there were a lot of people in the world starting off careers today. The North Korean people haven't the faintest idea what is going on in the outside. They have absolutely no, no information. They think they are well off and they are starving.

KC/PM: Where did you get most of your information about the outside world?

LA: Television, newspapers, I guess there was. we didn't have.. a lot of magazines also. You know, the library, the school library. Well, I think more so maybe then today that you read magazines. There were many more magazines coming to the home, you know, like your parents would get magazines and you would exchange them with relatives, so there were a lot of magazines around.

KC/PM: And, how about the Vietnam War?

LA: How about it?

KC/PM: Yeah.

LA: In what way?

KC/PM: How did you get most of your information?

LA: The same. television, newsprint. We also used to have news at the movies. Movie-time news.

KC/PM: What articles or magazines did you read?

LA: Oh boy, I can't. Life Magazine, of course, and some of them I can't even remember. There is one that is right on the end of my tongue, the.. But I don't recall we had things like Time and Newsweek. I don't think they were around in those days.

KC/PM: Did you get Life, Saturday Evening Post?

LA: Saturday Evening Post? Sure. You know, that was. you know. The Saturday Evening post was good because of the cartoons. And Norman Rockwell.

KC/PM: In what way were you involved with politics in the 60's?

LA: Well, I became the administrator of the Town of Lincoln. What had occurred there was that I had just gotten out of law school, I was admitted to the bar in 62, I was training to be a trial lawyer, and I mentioned Harry Aswith, the attorney who was a former member of the House, and he and I sort of became friendly. He was older than me, and I would see him in the courthouse.

And he asked me if I would be interested in doing something in the government, and I indicated I would, thinking primarily of a

volunteer . And a vacancy came up in the office of Administrator of Lincoln, and because the present Administrator had become part of the Governor Chaffee's cabinet. But he approached me one day and asked me if I would be interested. I was young, I was 26, and ultimately in January of 1963, I was appointed Administrator of Lincoln and ran for election in June of 1963, was elected and served three terms.

KC/PM: The administrator is like the mayor of the town?

LA: Yes, Lincoln was the first community to have its own Magna Charter. And it has basically a strong mayoral government.

KC/PM: What was your role in the Republican party at that time?

LA: Basically I was the judicial head of the Republican party in Lincoln, when I was very young. I took a very active role in the Chaffee campaign, so I served on his campaign committees. I remember I took a little bit of an interest in the Chaffee [campaign] in I guess 1962, where Chaffee won the election, and I worked on his campaign in 64, 66 and I was a running mate of his in 68.

KC/PM: Did you always want to run for elected office.

LA: It's nothing you want to do. (All laugh very loud) No, I'm just being facetious. Yeah, I always had an interest in community affairs and public office. I thought it was important. I certainly have no regrets in doing it. Campaigns can be very, very, in a very difficult way, hard, and very hard on the family.

KC/PM: When did you become a US attorney?

LA: In 1969. I had run for Congress in 1968. I had made up my mind that I would run for reelection to the post of Administrator in 69 and serve one more term, although I didn't tell anyone that, but I felt I had to get out of there. I was young, I had given up a law practice and I thought maybe 2 more years, 8 years, was long enough to serve.

And there was a battle over who was going to be the US Attorney. There were several candidates and I was not involved in it, because I had no interest in it, and I was sort of getting, I guess a little bit of behind the scenes with new candidates, and I received a call one day from one of three people. It was either the Chairman of the Republican party, or the National Committee member, Fred Lippitt, it might have been Fred Lippitt, I think, or Bruce Selier, who is now a federal judge, and he was very close to Senator Chaffee, but I got a call asking me if I would be interested in the position.

So we met on that weekend, discussed it, and the next thing I knew I was in Washington being interviewed and maybe a week later, I got a call from the Attorney General's office saying that they would nominate me if I would accept the position, and that was probably in March of 69, and by early June of 69, I had been confirmed by the United States Senate and took office in July of 69 as US Attorney.

KC/PM: What kinds of things did you do in that job?

LA: You name it. I tell you, I don't think I ever worked as hard as I did in the 70's. I was US Attorney from 69 to 78. We had a very small staff, in a very active area. Very high organized crime and an emerging drug problem, and I agreed to serve on a task force, on an advisory committee, to the Attorney General of the United States. So I was trying cases, running the office, and I was probably spending about one out of every six weeks in Washington, working on the issues for the Attorney General, which was very interesting, very time consuming, and they didn't relieve me of anything back in Rhode Island, so I had to pick it up.

KC/PM: What were some of the major cases that you dealt with in the late 60's?

LA: Well, I guess the late 60's and into the 70's was the emergence in major federal jurisdiction with respect to organized crime. The organized crime control acts of, I'm going to guess, I'm going to say 68, 70, 72 I guess, they were all major years for increased federal jurisdiction. And organized was a very, very serious problem in the country and in New England at that time, so we put a lot of resources into that.

And then there were the bank robberies, the kidnappings, the counterfeiting, and you name it. Not much in drugs. Drugs was primarily an inner city heroin problem. We did have some prosecutions, but it was not a significant, we had a very, very little, very small presence at the Drug Enforcement Administration in Rhode Island in the 70's.

KC/PM: Did you attend any demonstrations or rallies? Or did you have to send any forces to break them up?

LA: No, I was the United States Attorney, and that was a tremulous time. I can remember, as an example, spending a day with Chief Justice Renquist, who is now the Chief Justice of the US Supreme Court, who was in Rhode Island to go up to Brown University and he was going to be a speaker. He was working for the Justice Department at the time, and I was going to introduce him. And I remember sitting in my office in the afternoon with him, and he was very, very concerned that when we arrived at Brown, it was not going to be very pleasant. But it did turn out all right, very good.

But I have one interesting story to tell you about those times. There were some very, very militant student groups, I mean really. some of them were just, you know, exercising First Amendment rights, some of them were very militant, and some of them were very dangerous. And it effected the school systems in Rhode Island.

I had a call one time when I was United States Attorney from a student at Rhode Island College who wanted to. who invited me to speak to a political science board, and I just accepted it as normal. A few days later, I got a call from, I believe it was the President, if I recall correctly, of the University, telling me I couldn't come. And saying that it would. That basically I was not welcome, you know, on the campus because of the disruption it would cause, and my response was that I thought that should come from the student who called and invited me.

And then I got a call from a professor who said that if I would come he will get a couple of other professors to join me and that they had not had an outside speaker at Rhode Island College for like 2 years. Because of fear of demonstrations. They had a very militant group there. And I went. And it was in the Student Union, if I recall, and there was a group of students from the Political Science club, and then there was a group of real militants, Students for Democratic Action, and they just yelled, screamed, swore, I mean it was really bad, for a good hour, and I just waited them out. And finally, we wore them down, they left, and we had our meeting, and I remember the professors were very appreciative that I came because they thought that might break the ice. They had never had. they weren't even having convocations or anything like that, or outside speakers, for about 2 years, because of this group.

KC/PM: That must have been about 1970 or 71, do you think?

LA: Yeah, I would say it was in the early 70's. My opinion was that those students should have been expelled from the school, you know, they were just a small group, and they were demonstrating and causing disruption. But it was not fair to the rest of the students. They used to have a lot of demonstrations at the courthouse. Most of them were very peaceful, and I always took the position no police, no marshals, I would deal with them, and I would deal with them and it would be easy. We had one group, we had a. I guess the most known group was the SDA if I recall.

KC/PM : The SDS

LA: The SDS? Yeah, and they were coming and they were using the black movement, and, which was not involving the blacks, and we had some good information that they were going to kidnap a Federal Judge and put him on trial, and we believed the information, so the Chief Judge gave me permission to lock the doors of the courthouse, and sure enough, they came. And they were the worst. They were the only violent group that I encountered during the entire Vietnam War. They were very, very difficult.

KC/PM: How did you confront them?

LA: Well, we locked the doors, I had marshals within the building, we had FBI agents within the building, and outside the building. And, oh, they had chains and they had everything and they were throwing things, and they were trying to break the doors. We finally had to restrain some of them physically and eventually, when they saw they weren't going to succeed. They were going to go to Judge Day's courtroom, where there was an actual trial going on, a criminal trial, and they were going to disrupt the proceedings and they were going to seize the courtroom and try Judge Day for treason, and there was no question they were going to do that. You know, it was a very, very difficult day. It lasted about half a day.

KC/PM: Was there a reason they had chosen Judge Day?

LA: No idea. It was just going to be a statement. But most of the demonstrations were on the steps of the courthouse. They were fairly peaceful, and just the heckling. The most difficult thing I had was across the street they were building the Hospital Trust Tower, so you had all the hard-hats, and the hard-hats would stop work and sit on the girders and taunt the protesters, so you always had this confrontation between the hard-hatters at the construction site and the demonstrators in the front of the. That was the most difficult one. I was always fearful about it. I used to go over and talk to those guys all the time, and say let us handle it, but I was always fearful of them charging from the Hospital Trust Tower. It did cause a lot of high emotion.

KC/PM: Did you always feel you were right in how you handled the mobs or riots?

LA: Yeah, I mean, I remember one time we had this big and long line of students, college students, I think primarily Brown, that organized it. And they marched through the City Hall and they marched through the Fleet Tower, or the Fleet Industrial Bank Building at that time, and then they came across Kennedy Plaza toward the Federal Courthouse and in those days, the first floor of the Federal Courthouse was the Veterans Administration. So I stopped the first. I was the only one out there, no law enforcement, and I stopped the first student who was from Brown, and I said I need to have your name, your address, your home address and your local address, and he said what for, and I said because when you go through this building, you are going to go through the VA, and there is going to be a lot of high emotion, and somebody is going to be responsible if there is any damage. And he turned around and they went around the building, and that was the end of it.

But what you do is, you say, we're not saying you can't come in the building. You're absolutely right, you can come in the building. So as long as you told them you could come in the building, but gave them a reason why they shouldn't, then normally they didn't. They were mainly pretty good.

KC/PM: So you felt that the state was right and the people were wrong?

LA: Not that the. now keep in mind that I had run for Congress in 68 as an anti-war campaign, so I was not. I had some very mixed feelings, but I had a responsibility to uphold the law.

KC/PM: Did your opinion on the US involvement in the war change over the years?

LA: No, I was always. I always had a very, very difficult time with the war. I did not believe in the Domino Theory. I firmly believed that the Vietnam War was more about a civil war than about Communist expansion. I disagree strongly with the national leadership on the war. The agonizing thing was that you have to remember that most of the young men who were in Vietnam were not there as volunteers. They were drafted, and they were fighting for their country. And you also have to think that the people who were fighting in Vietnam grew up in World War II, which was a much different war and you have to understand that the great admiration that you had for the Allies in World War II and the courage of the American soldier in World War II, that even though you opposed the war as I did, you didn't want to do anything to undercut the military effort. There was a political issue and military issue. And you had to try and separate them. Some people didn't do that, which was unfortunate. And that caused some real problems for the veterans. But I ran against the war in '68, but was. tried to be as supportive as I could of the men and the women in the armed forces.

KC/PM: And what caused your opinion to change?

LA: I don't think I ever changed my opinion on the war. I think I had the same opinion from Day 1, that it was not a war to win; it was not a war we should win; it was not a war we should be involved in. And I basically advocated for the withdrawal of US troops and to put the issue before the United Nations and that the United Nations refused to act by taking over a DMZ [De militarized Zone], then we should pull out and turn the war over to the South Vietnamese. In a logical fashion so that you don't see the slaughter, but just a gradual movement to de-Americanize the war.

KC/PM: Did you feel Vietnam veterans were treated with respect and courtesy?

LA: I do, I think the vast majority of Americans had a great deal of sympathy and pride for the Vietnam veterans. I think unfortunately a lot of the veterans got the wrong message when they were over there, and I think they came back very bitter, and that was one of the real problems of the Vietnam war. They came back. You had a lot of young men and women who went over to Vietnam, fought very hard, and felt when they were coming back that they were coming back in disgrace. Because they felt, they saw, when you are overseas, I guess, you would see the demonstrations as distinguished from the average person, who was supportive of the soldier.

KC/PM: Did you think people were generally appreciative of what the veterans had sacrificed?

LA: I think the great majority of people were very appreciative. I think they understood how difficult it was, and possibly all knew people who were killed in Vietnam. I had classmates at URI that were killed, and I had people I knew in Rhode Island who were killed.

KC/PM: What were your responses to Lyndon Johnson's announcement on TV that he would not run for the presidency a second time?

LA: No surprise. I didn't expect him to run. It didn't surprise me.

KC/PM: How did you feel when Senator Eugene McCarthy's. About Senator Eugene McCarthy's campaign for the president?

LA: I liked Eugene McCarthy. I thought he was a reason. I thought he was quiet. I think he handled himself very well. If you were a Democrat, a lot of Democrats didn't like him at all because he was against the establishment, but as I said earlier, I was basically an anti-war person, so I had sympathy for him. And you had to admire his courage, taking on a city president, that's not an easy thing to do.

KC/PM: We need to know why you were not surprised about Lyndon Johnson's announcement. Everyone else we have interviewed has said that they were just shocked. So why were you not surprised?

LA: Because things were not going well for him. The war was taking its toll on him and with all the demonstrations and the difficulties that were going on in the country, he would have had a really tough time. I mean the demonstrations would have followed him throughout the election, and I think he realized that. I think he realized it would have been very divisive for the nation.

KC/PM: What were your feelings about Governor George Wallace's campaign?

LA: I was not an admirer of George Walleye. I don't know if this is accurate or not, but I have a memory of him being in Boston during his presidential campaign, and giving a speech, very, very derogatory speech against I believe it was Judge Johnson of Alabama who had issued some of the desegregation orders and the speech was just downright nasty. I mean, totally uncalled for, very, very negative and my response personally to that was very negative.

KC/PM: What were your responses to the assassination of Martin Luther King and Robert F. Kennedy?

LA: Well, I was shocked by them. I mean, those were things that, you know, you just can't imagine can happen in a country like ours. You know..

KC/PM: What effect did the Martin Luther King assassination have in Rhode Island?

LA: I think it had an impact, because I think that Martin Luther King was admired because of his non-violence, and I think, considering the fact that what he was doing in the south I think was supported by a significant majority of Rhode Islanders on the desegregation issues, and the way he conducted themselves and himself, and preached the non-violence, to be killed by violence I think had a very stunning impact in Rhode Island.

KC/PM: Do you recall any riots or rallies, or anything in Rhode Island? There were a number.

LA: I can only remember one very bad situation in South Providence with some rioting, but I can't remember the year, nor if it corresponded to the Martin Luther King assassination, but there was one Summer in South Providence, back in the 70's, if I recall, you see I can't remember when that was, 60's to 70's, but there was some rioting in South Providence. And some burnings. buildings burned.

KC/PM: What were the issues then?

LA: What were the issues? I think it was just the whole issue of prejudice and discrimination.

KC/PM: How did you feel about the Vietcong Tet Offensive?

LA: Well, you see I ran for Congress in 1968, and I was struggling with the issue of Vietnam while opposed to the war, as I said earlier, I had to be.. I wanted to be careful not to point it at the soldiers. I can't recall when that took place, that the offensive, but the bombing of North [Vietnam] I think solidified it, my views on the war. And I remember holding a press conference and outlining the position on Vietnam, which by the way, WJAR ran a program on the Vietnam War a couple of years ago, and you'll see me in those clips.

KC/PM: We did, and that's exactly how we got your name. Well, we knew the name, but I mean we-

LA: No one recognizes me. Everyone was sort of shocked to see me back in those days, cause I was about 30 years old I guess, but I was-

KC/PM: We asked about Kennedy, but he didn't answer that part. How did you feel about Robert F. Kennedy's assassination?

LA: Oh, the same. I mean, that was extremely scary. Keep in mind you went through the assassination of John Kennedy, and you began to say to yourself, you know, are we going to live in a world where we are going to elect presidents and have them assassinated, and have political figures assassinated. I mean, it just. it was stunning. I mean that thing, that that kind of thing was happening. Well, it has happened before. I mean we had it with Abraham Lincoln, and McKinley, and, but those things were so far away you didn't. this was real. This was right up on us.

KC/PM: What was your response to the Democratic Convention in Chicago?

LA: That was a disaster. I can remember watching that and I thought the reaction of Mayor Daley in particular from the balcony was particularly offensive, and it just was a total disaster. Both sides. It, you know, the groups outside were, you know not behaving the way they should, and the constitution and democracy, but the reaction to it was a tremendous overreaction. Feelings were running very, very high, you know, at that convention because of the politics and because of the war and because of the demonstrators.

KC/PM: How did you feel about Hubert Humphrey's candidacy?

LA: Candidacy for president? Yeah. You know, see, I think a lot of people get the feeling that politicians or Republicans hate Democrats, Democrats hate Republicans, and that isn't so. I admired Hubert Humphrey, I thought he as extremely liberal in many ways, but I liked him. As I said I liked Eugene McCarthy. You know, so I had a good respect for him as an individual. I also had some sympathy for him, because he had a real difficult time as a Vice President on the war issue with Lyndon Johnson. It was very difficult to be loyal, and you know, you've got this feeling that he is not agreeing with Lyndon Johnson.

KC/PM: And the election of Richard Nixon? What were your feelings?

LA: I supported Richard Nixon. I think in that era foreign policy was much more important then domestic policy, and I admired Nixon from a standpoint. I guess there were two things that I admired. that led me to admire Nixon. Number one was being Vice President for Eisenhower, and I liked Eisenhower, and the second was that I thought if we were going to do something in foreign relations, that Nixon was the person to do it, and I think history will show that his foreign policy was very good for the nation, opening the doors to China.

KC/PM: He said he had a plan to end the war. Was that another reason you supported him?

LA: Yeah. I know that was. I went up to Channel 5 in Boston during the '68 campaign, and listened to Nixon speak on the war, which I thought was very interesting.

KC/PM: How did you feel about the Women's Liberation demonstrations at the Miss America Pageant.

LA: You know, I don't recall that. I recall a lot of the women's organizations were very offended by, you know, the bathing suit contests and things of that nature. You know, I would say I had mixed feelings on that in the sense that I was not a big fan. I can remember if I was home and they turned on the Miss America, I'd say isn't there anything else on. It was not something I would spend an hour watching, but on the other hand, I felt that was a choice that a woman would make, whether I liked it or not, or whether anyone else liked it or not. That was a choice that was available.

KC/PM: What was your reaction to the space program and the circling of the moon by US astronauts.

LA: That was exciting. The whole space program back in the 60's was very, very exciting. I mean, just. I don't think American's really believed it could happen, and when it was happening, it was just absolutely amazing to see it unfolding.

KC/PM: Overall, how would you say the 60's affected you and the United States in general?

LA: Me personally?

KC/PM: Yes

LA: I thought the 60's were great. I enjoyed them. You know.

KC/PM: How about for the country? In general?

LA: Well, the country I think. I think they were good in the sense that they opened up government much more. I think that the era of government secrecy was probably ended in the 60's to a great extent. And there was a. in the. you know, the whole Vietnam War situation was we were not getting good information. And people sensed that.

KC/PM: What were the most important changes in the 1960's, in your opinion?

LA: The most important changes? Boy, that's a tough one. Probably the desegregation movements and the waking of America on the issues of segregation. They were probably the most important.

KC/PM: Which do you think were more positive and which most negative?

LA: Well, I think the desegregation issues which all started in the 50's in the south and went into the 60's, I think they were very, very positive to the nation.

KC/PM: Some people think the drug use and the counter-culture were the most important aspect of the 60's and others feel the aspect was overplayed in the media. What do you think?

LA: Well, now that I look back at it, the drug issue became much more serious in the 70's and 80's. It became probably the biggest domestic problem in the United States. So I have to say it was an extreme negative to even get involved in that. I mean at one point, you looked at a Timothy [Leary]. you know, like there was this guy from Mars? But he caught on.

KC/PM: How would you compare the presidencies of Kennedy, Johnson and Nixon?

LA: I was administrator of Lincoln during the Kennedy period, and I think a lot of his programs were very good. I'm losing my voice.

Um, he did a lot of good with respect to the economy, keeping in mind that when he was elected, we were in a recession. And he had a program called the Accelerator Public Works Program, which I think was one of the better programs I've seen to get the country out of recession. The other side of the coin is you have to keep in mind that when he went to Texas, the year of the assassination and he was assassinated in Texas, he was going to Texas because he was in deep political trouble. There was a great deal of speculation that if he were to run in 64 he would not be reelected. That was a real.. He was having a real tough time. Do you have a couple of others?

KC/PM: Oh yeah, Johnson and Nixon?

LA: I never warmed up to Lyndon Johnson. I always respect the presidency, no matter who it is, what party. I just had trouble with Lyndon Johnson. I remember him coming to URI and I had a chance to meet him at URI, but I could never warm up to him.

Nixon was a total disaster, total disappointment. You know, there is no way you can defend him. You know, the Watergate which was so stupid. I think that's what. the Watergate was so stupid, when somebody does something, you know, that is that stupid, I don't think it would have any impact at all on the election. It just got totally out of hand and disappointing.

KC/PM: Had the change in women's rights and position in society been a positive or negative thing?

LA: Oh I think it was positive, but I think it was going to happen anyway. I think you have seen. you know, keep in mind that when I was in law school, I started off with a class of maybe 300, and we had 100 graduate. In my graduating class in law school, out of 100 graduating, there were probably 3 women. But you saw in much. Families took a different attitude towards education and that in fact with boys as well as girls, and you saw more girls going to college and getting into the professions, and I think you will see that grow as times go, which is technically good for the country.

KC/PM: Do you think things went too far or not far enough with the women's movement?

LA: Oh, I think some things went too far. I think that . I think for instance that when some woman was sort of being put down for being housewives and staying home taking care of children, that went too far. I mean that was a choice. I'll give you an example. I have a son who is married, his wife is a college graduate, they have three children. She has made a decision to stay home. She had good jobs which she gave up when she had children. My daughter has two children, and she works and she has made the choice to stay, she is an Engineer, and wanted to keep her career. So that is a choice, but I don't admire my daughter for working and dislike my daughter-in-law for staying home with the children, and you respect both. As a matter of fact, my daughter-in-law probably has the tougher job. I think it went too far in that sense that for some reason that a women who stays home to bring up children is somehow second class. The women agree with that. Don't you agree with that? I mean, it's a choice. It's a choice that you take. But you know, you respect both and that's the point.

KC/PM: What do you think African-Americans have accomplished since the Civil Rights Movement?

LA: Well it certainly brought about awareness. I think things are much better for minorities today then they were years ago. Still a lot of work to do. I think the biggest issue that you got to face with respect to minorities is that the only way that you can succeed and break out of this is through education. You know it is one thing to talk about equal employment, etc., but you know, its got to be the educational system, and giving them the opportunity. I mean, then opening the doors for them.

KC/PM: Do you feel racism is still a problem in American society?

LA: Absolutely. Yeah, no question about it. There's still prejudice out there. You see it worldwide. I mean, the bitterness in Ireland, which is primarily religious, the Protestant-Catholic. You see it in Europe, you know, with Bosnia. Some of it is just absolutely incredible how far it can go and deep seeded. To some people it is a way of life, this is the way they were brought up. Just hate, and its. you know we learn this about early childhood, about bad experiences of children in their first 3 years, that it takes a lot to reverse that, years to reverse that. Well, you have children being brought up among nothing but dislike this particular groups, and that is very difficult to turn around.

KC/PM: When the war finally ended, what were your feelings?

LA: Relief.

KC/PM: Looking back at the Vietnam conflict from the perspective of the 1990's, has your opinion changed?

LA: No, I always had the same opinions of the war. I thought it was an error from Day 1.

KC/PM: Have you visited the Vietnam War Memorial or seen a replica of it and what was your response?

LA: Yes, it is very, very sad to go there. I try and visit. I visit a lot of things in DC. When I was US attorney, I used to go there a lot. I can remember going down recently and I enjoy going to the Lincoln Memorial, the Jefferson Memorial, I think that is a great place to just go and spend 5 minutes. About 1 or 2 years ago when they opened the Korean War Memorial, I had the trooper stop and I went up

to the Lincoln Memorial for maybe 5 minutes, I was on my way to the airport, and then I walked through the Korean. You see, that had a lot of meaning for me, because of, you know, growing up with the Korean War. I was just a little too young to go to war, the war ended when I was going to URI, but knowing so many Korean War vets at the University, I really wanted to go to the Korean Memorial just like I wanted to go to the Vietnam Memorial. It's a very moving thing to do that.

KC/PM: How do you feel about young people like us striving to answer questions about American involvement in the Vietnam War?

LA: It's history. You have to know it and you ought to know exactly what occurred. You ought to know and make your own judgments as to right and wrong and how to conduct yourself and how you make a point, how you change government, how you get involved. From a personal standpoint, the 60's were very, very important to me. My two children were born in the 60's, it was a good time, I was working as an Administrator in Lincoln. Basically doing a lot of work in the 60's towards the future, you know with rezoning and economic development, things of that nature, which were very, very successful. Rebuilding the school system, so I was very, very busy during the 60's. I mean I'll be perfectly frank with you. I have two nice kids, my wife brought them up. I was never home. I was at meetings in the evening, I worked long hours, but enjoyed it very, very much. The 60's to me was a good time, and that was. you know, I was in my 20's, starting a career and a family.

KC/PM: What advice would you give to us?

LA: What advice would I give to you? Well, you asked me earlier the relevance of what you are doing today, and it's school, and you better understand that what you do everyday in school is going to be very important to your future. Primarily, you know, if you can't see the relevancy of a particular subject, look at it from a standpoint of developing your ability to think like you are today, and make your own judgments. But this is the times in your lives that are very, very important.

And I find that a lot of young people, you know, sort of get impatient, they want to do everything, you know it has to be done tomorrow, and that they don't have a lot of time, but think about this. As I mentioned, most of the male students at the University of Rhode Island when I was there had served 4 years in the military, so just think about getting out of high school at age 18 and having to serve 4 years in the military which puts you at 22 and you haven't even started college.

So for the average young person, when you get out of high school, take advantage of the years that you have to go on to some, to develop some type of a skill, because you are still very, very young. I mean, you're still way ahead of our time. You don't have the draft to face, and you know, when I was young, and I was very lucky, I didn't have to serve, you know, full-time in the military, but I had to serve 8 years in the reserves, because you have an 8 year commitment to the military when I got out of high school. 8 years is a long time. And you had to put time into the military. So you have a great opportunity ahead of you.

And the other thing is, that the opportunities out there are endless for young people, if you just can acquire a skill and get a direction of where you want to go, and you know, as you asked me earlier, you know, when did I make up my mind to go to law school. I can't tell you when, but I mean, all young people have this uncertainty because nothing is definite as to where you are going to go and what your career is going to be, but. you know, it's going to be there for you. You'll find it. It'll come. Sometimes it's by luck, but if you make the most of the next several years, you'll do very, very well.

KC/PM: Anything that you want to add that we didn't talk about?

LA: No, I think things are. I think the nation is doing very well right now. I think that. How many here plan on going to college? Oh yeah. You know I'm a great believer in. You see, we all wish we were your age. Keep that in mind. You know we talk about lengthening school years and lengthening school days, and you know, you see I'm not an educator, and I think that we've got to have you make the most of your school day, but I think you also should have fun, I think we had fun and if we had problems with the economy, we shouldn't blame young people for that. We should solve those problems ourselves, so I think.. You know, this is a great time in your lives to learn, to take school very seriously, but take it in an enjoyable way, and I think you can do that and I think you can be very, very successful.

KC/PM: When you were raising money for college, 'cause you just worked the one year.

LA: Keep in mind a year at the University of Rhode Island back in 1955 was \$1000 including room and board. Think about that. So, yeah, I worked a full year and .. another thing to do is to be good consumers and save. I basically when I worked in the Summer, you see, I always had two jobs. I had a Saturday job and a full-time job, and a job Monday through Friday in the Summer. My spending money was my Saturday job, my Monday to Friday, my deal with my father always was that if you put the money in the bank you don't pay board. If you spend it, you pay board. And I did the same with my kids.

So they became savers and I had quite a bit of money put away when I got out of high school, from working. I started working summers when I was in junior high school and saved 90% of it or more. And, so I worked that extra year to make sure, keep in mind that although \$1000 doesn't seem like much, but a middle class family in the 50's was probably making about \$4500 to \$5500 as considered a good paying middle class income, that would have been 20% of my father's salary to send me to college. That's quite a lot, so you saved. They didn't have the scholarships or the loans or anything like that in those days. So between saving and working summers you could basically go to school.

KC/PM: What kind of jobs did you do? What were your jobs?

LA: Construction, basically working on the roads and construction companies, things of that nature. Good for you, builds character. I'll tell you, my wife and I have all the ability to send our children through college, but we always had them working. They were able to get jobs. They started working basically in the Summer when they were 14. My daughter was working in a library as a page in Massachusetts, and my son worked pumping gas and he worked at least his first year at URI, pumping gas. He went to the University of Rhode Island, then the University of Connecticut Law School, and my daughter went to the University of Virginia and the School of Engineering. She is an engineer. They worked and saved.

KC/PM: Thank you very much.

LA: Thank you.