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Clifford, William H. oral history interview

Marisa Burnham-Bestor

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Interview with William H. Clifford by Marisa Burnham-Bestor

Summary Sheet and Transcript

Interviewee

Clifford, William H.

Interviewer

Burnham-Bestor, Marisa

Date

February 22, 1999

Place

Lewiston, Maine

ID Number

MOH 066

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Biographical Note

William Clifford was born in Lewiston, Maine in 1929. He attended Frye School, Lewiston Junior High School, Jordan Grammar School and Lewiston High School where he graduated in 1946. He then attended Bowdoin College. He served in the army for two years during the Korean War. He attended Boston University Law School under the G.I. Bill. He was the assistant County Attorney under Larry Raymond and then the County Attorney for six years. He served in the 105th Legislature. He also served in the Senate from 1970-1971. He practiced law with his father from 1956-72.

Scope and Content Note

Interview includes discussions of: the Maine Legislature, 1946-49; the 1960 Kennedy/Johnson Presidential campaign; environmental protection; his grandfather, John Clifford, building Lewiston City Hall; Lewiston population; William Clifford, Sr.'s involvement in the community; John D. Clifford, Jr.'s political career; registering Democrat to get elected; straight ticket voting; Alice Clifford's life; Jere Clifford; farm girls who became textile workers; Franco-American work ethic; Little Canada; mill closing bringing new business; the primary in municipal elections in Lewiston; Tom Delahanty and Muskie; his impression of Jeanne Delahanty; Altan Lessard's political career; Kennedy's Catholicism effecting Maine support; law trend toward specialization; abortion bills; the Clean Air Act; the Clean Water Act; the Clean Rivers Act; Dr.

Walter Lawrance; the origin of his nickname “Bim”; and Louis Jalbert as contentious among Democrats.

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Transcript

Marisa Burnham-Bestor: We’re here at Muskie Archives at Bates College. It’s February 22, 1999. Present are Bill Clifford and Marisa Burnham-Bestor. Could you please state your name and spell it for the record?

Bill Clifford: Yeah. First name is Bill. Last name is Clifford, C-L-I-F-F-O-R-D.

MB: Where and when were you born and raised?

BC: I was born in Lewiston on October 20th, 1929. And I was raised in Lewiston.

MB: Could you describe your family tree, starting with your grandparents?

BC: My grandfather's name was John D. Clifford. And he was married to Kate Clifford; they also lived in Lewiston. They came from, he came from Cincinnati, Ohio. And my grandmother, Kate, lived in Nashua, New Hampshire. And I don't know exactly where they met, but they, he, my grandfather was a contractor. He built several buildings, including the City Hall in the city of Lewiston. And they had four children, one of which was my dad. And that was it. I mean, that's my grandparents.

MB: What were the four children's names?

BC: William was my father, John D. Jr., Louise, and Elizabeth.

MB: Where did each of the children end up settling with their families?

BC: John D. ended up practicing law in Lewiston. Louise married a gentleman from Montreal, Canada. And Elizabeth married a person that ran a magazine in New York City and lived in Forest Hills.

MB: What was the magazine?

BC: I don't remember the name of it. I think there were several magazines.

MB: And what was your mother's name?

BC: My mother's name was Alice, and my father's name was Bill, William.

MB: And they stayed in Lewiston?

BC: They stayed in Lewiston, yeah. And he was a lawyer.

MB: Oh, okay. So are you, right?

BC: Right.

MB: Runs in the family.

BC: I'm one of eight children.

MB: Wow. How many cousins do you have?

BC: Oh, we had a family reunion about five or six years ago and I think there was a hundred and twenty-five that attended. So, a lot of them are in the Boston area. But a lot of them live locally, Lewiston and surrounding towns.

MB: What was Lewiston like during your childhood?

BC: Well, not a great deal different than it is right now. It's, I don't think the population has changed any. You know, Bates College was very much a part of the community. As a matter of fact, I used to walk through Bates almost every day when I went to junior high school, and also to high school.

MB: You walked to school?

BC: Yeah, yeah, it was a little over a mile, but there was no such thing as school buses in those days. There were a lot of neighborhood schools. But, and of course the traffic wasn't what it is right now. But, you know, we had trolley cars in those days. And then we, the buses came along and they, I mean the public transportation kind of buses, not the school buses as we know them now, and they sort of displaced the trolley. This was back in the thirties and forties, until I graduated from high school in 1946.

MB: Where did you, which schools did you attend?

BC: The local public schools. The Frye School, and the Lewiston Junior High School, and Lewiston High School.

MB: Where did you end up going to college?

BC: Bowdoin.

MB: Bowdoin, why'd you choose Bowdoin?

BC: Well, I don't really know. I guess because my father went there and I think it was the only school I applied to.

MB: Oh really?

BC: Yeah.

MB: What was your family, how was your family involved in the community religiously and politically as you were growing up?

BC: Well, my father was very active in civil affairs. You know, he was involved with the Red Cross. He was involved with the predecessor of The United Way. And, I forget now just what it was called at that point in time, you know, the local, the local charitable institution. And he was very much involved in the local athletics. He was involved in the school system. He, I don't think he was ever on the school board, but I know he was on a couple of the building committees when they built the addition to the high, what was, is now the junior high school but was the high school. And he was just very involved in, very civic-minded. Much more so than I am.

MB: What about religiously, was your family at all involved?

BC: Religious? Oh, we were. My father was a Catholic and so was my mother. And we went to the St. Joseph's Church, and we've been a member of that church, you know, ever since I can remember. We almost had a pew that became the family, became part of the family, but.

MB: Where did you say your uncle John settled?

BC: In Lewiston.

MB: So did your brother and he, were they particularly close?

BC: They were law partners for a while. And then he became a federal prosecutor, a district attorney in Portland, and from that job he got appointed as a federal judge in Portland. And he was a federal judge when he died.

MB: Was he politically involved like your father?

BC: No, not quite so much so. But it's, he was politically involved, but not civic. He didn't, was involved, was not involved in civic affairs.

MB: So your parents were both Democrats as well as . . . ?

BC: They were, right.

MB: And has that continued through the family?

BC: Yes, yeah. And, I'm not sure that they were, my family's very conservative even though they were [democrats], or at least most of my brothers were, are very conservative. I'm probably the more liberal one, and I'm, I don't consider myself very liberal. But in, the city of Lewiston's politics are very You know, it's a town, it's a mill town where, you know, the textile mills were here and the French people came in from Canada to work here, and they were predominantly Democrat. So my father was more of a registered Democrat because you wouldn't be elected to anything if you weren't. You know, the Republicans were probably outnumbered ten to one. And I became somewhat involved in politics; I ran for the District Attorney, it wasn't called District Attorney then. It was called a County Attorney. When I first moved back to Lewiston after graduating from law school, I ran for County Attorney mostly to get some trial experience. And if I had been a Republican, I could not have been elected because in those days you could, you know, vote the straight party ticket. If you, and if you were a Democrat, if you were a Republican in the city of Lewiston, your chances of getting elected to any kind of office were just nonexistent.

MB: Was that largely because of the French population?

BC: Yes, because the population in this area, Lewiston-Auburn, not so much the towns, but, was predominantly Democrat. And I can remember one of the elections, the general election

when I ran against a Republican opponent, I think I won, oh, it was like eight or nine to one. You know, I got eight votes. But it was not particularly my popularity that caused that, it was the fact that I was running as a Democrat in this area. And my Republican opponent just, you know, people just didn't vote for them, vote for him, because of that reason, for that reason.

MB: So when was the last time that there was a Republican elected in Lewiston?

BC: Oh, there may have been, like somebody to the legislature, but that wasn't until after the, after they changed the law somewhat in that you, that they took away the straight party voting. In other words, if you wanted to vote Democratic, you could just make one X in one box up at the top of the Democratic ticket. And that was how, you know, you elected a, you cast your vote for every Democrat on the ticket. But they did away with that around the time when I became involved in politics, which is a good thing. And so it made people vote for individual candidates.

MB: Why did you decide to study to law in college?

BC: Well, it, I didn't study law in college, I was a government major. I guess it was something that I preferred over, for example, mathematics or physics, or, I was not very good in the sciences. I was much more interested in that area of study then, in government. Or as opposed to the languages, the, whatever other, I mean I did take languages in college, but I didn't major in them. So I majored in government. And I know that one of my government professors encouraged me to go to law school if I could. And after I graduated from college I went in to the Army. And, it was during the Korean conflict, not the World War II. And they, when I got out of the Army, they had a GI Bill of Rights which allowed me to go to any school that I wanted to for three years. And it wasn't a full scholarship so to speak, but it certainly was very helpful in getting me through, and I think that was probably one of the reasons I did.

MB: Who was the professor who . . . ?

BC: Can't remember, the name escapes me now. I thought of it the other day and I. He was a professor at Bowdoin. Oh, Professor [Orren Chalmer] Hormell, yeah.

MB: How do you spell that?

BC: H-O-R-M-E-L-L.

MB: What law school did you end up attending?

BC: Boston University.

MB: Did you like it there?

BC: Yeah, I did. I like the city and, I like Boston. Although when I got through I was just as, I was happy to leave the city and get back to my hometown.

MB: As a government major in college, how did that impact your political beliefs?

BC: I really don't know. I don't think that it changed my political outlook, is that what you mean?

MB: Uh-huh.

BC: No, I don't think it did. I think I got my sort of political outlook from, more from my family than, than from college.

MB: Did your father's involvement, was that very much a part of your childhood and your life?

BC: Yes, it was, yeah, yeah. I always wanted to be a lot like him, but I don't think I ever was anywheres near as active as he was. He did it mostly to become well known and to further his law career. Which it did, you know. He was extremely well known in the city.

MB: Did he ever run for office like you did?

BC: No, he never did. My brother became the mayor, my younger brother. I had an older brother that ran for alderman and he served as an alderman for I think four years. So that, and both of those brothers that I just mentioned, my older and younger brother Robert, were both attorneys also and we practiced law together.

MB: What was the layout of your family, you said you have eight brothers and sisters, oldest to youngest?

BC: There was, my older brother who was a lawyer. And I had a sister who died when she was thirty-seven. She worked for Arthur D. Little in Boston, Massachusetts, and she was the secretary to the president of the company. And then there was myself. And then I had, my next brother in line was in the kitchen business. And the next brother was in the tire business. And then I had a Jesuit priest; there was a Jesuit priest in the family. And then the next brother was the younger brother that became mayor of Lewiston for two terms. And then there was a foot doctor, he was the youngest in the family.

MB: So you were the fourth?

BC: Third oldest, second oldest boy, yeah.

MB: What was everyone's name?

BC: Jere, Constance was my sister's name, and then came me, and Peter, Paul, Richard, Robert, and David.

MB: Wow, lots of kids. Did you like growing up in a large family?

BC: Yeah, I did. And my mother was, you know, a housewife; she never worked outside the home, didn't drive a car. She was, and she lived to be ninety-one years old. But she was a very

strong lady and very, very well educated. She graduated from Simmons and was, just read every book that she ever put her hands on. Just a very intelligent, very articulate and I think she was really the, sort of the backbone of the family. You know, she, even though my father was very successful I think she was the person that was the driving force behind all these children. And it was quite a functional family, you know, we all have done reasonably well.

MB: How many of you stayed in the Lewiston area?

BC: All but the Jesuit priest. He teaches at Weston, Massachusetts now.

MB: And did all of you go to college?

BC: My sister, she worked for Arthur D. Little in Boston. So she did not stay in, but she had a brain tumor and

MB: That was Constance?

BC: Constance, right, yeah.

MB: So, I'm sorry, I lost my train of thought. So, all of the children stayed in the area. Do you feel that, or all but two, do you feel that your family's kind of togetherness and the wholeness in the Lewiston area has impacted the community?

BC: To some extent, yeah.

MB: In what way?

BC: Well, the, my brother was, my older brother who was an attorney, Jere, was one of the people to start the Lewiston Development Corporation. Which was an organization which was designed and which did bring new industry into this area. One of the big industries that they brought in was Geiger Brothers, and I know that my brother Jere was very instrumental, I'm not saying he was the only one, but he was very instrumental in bringing that particular industry in, along with several others. There's a Lewiston Industrial Park, it's on the outskirts of town, it's near the Lewiston turnpike exit, the interchange. And it is, this area which, I don't know how many acres it is, but it has a great number of industries there. VIP, you know, just probably twenty-five to thirty industries that have all either been, most of them have come in from out, from other areas and settled there, and built factories or businesses in that particular location.

And you know, it's provided a lot of jobs because in the 1950s the textile mills sort of went out of business. They moved to the southern part of this country, into the Carolinas and other areas, and our job bases were just destroyed as a result of this. You know, Bates Mill used to employ six to seven thousand people. And they, you know, slowly, it didn't, it came over a period of time, it wasn't, it was fairly gradual, but over a period of time the textile industry just ceased to exist, and it stopped. It shrunk and shrunk and, until eventually there was no more textile industry in the city.

And the same thing has happened to a couple of other cities in this state, mainly Biddeford. Biddeford and Lewiston are the two big examples. And Lowell, Massachusetts was the, was another, Lowell and Lawrence were big textile cities and they lost their industries, and they've made a wonderful comeback by bringing in other industries to take its place.

MB: Has that happened in Lewiston?

BC: To some extent but not, I don't think the, I don't think the number of people are employed now that were back in the thirties and forties, 1930s and 1940s.

MB: Who in the community were the mill workers, was it mostly the French population?

BC: The French population, yeah. And they had, they started to come in this area in the late eighteen hundreds. The original textile workers were farm girls from outlying districts, from the, you know, from Leeds and Turner and those areas and, but they were very soon replaced by the French people who were, had a wonderful work ethic. They were marvelous workers. They were very skilled in what they did and they soon started to come in from, they were French people from Canada that came in by the trainload. And there was a wonderful French community popping up all over the place. There's still, in this town there's still a place called Little Canada, which is down by the river, it's on Lincoln Street, or just off Lincoln Street.

MB: Why were the French moving, or, why were the French Canadians moving here?

BC: Because of the work. You know, it was a much more lucrative job market than they had in Canada.

MB: And was the relationship between the French community and the Mainers. I guess, like your family and other families that . . . ?

BC: Well, they were the majority after a period of time. And as I told you, they were very clannish, they stuck together. And I don't mean that in a derogatory way at all. You know, they were, they eventually elected their own people to jobs in city hall and they more or less took over the city. And, but, and they did a wonderful job in running the city. And as far as people like my family getting along with them, my father used to have, many of his friends were, and good friends, were French people, you know, and many of his clients were.

MB: What year did the textile industries finally shut, start to shut down?

BC: Start to shut down, it was around the fifties. And they still continued to operate until, I'm going to say in the seventies, and then they completely shut down, except for the one at Bates, Bates Manufac-, Bates Mill, and they lasted into the eighties. But they're, you know, their work force was probably two or three hundred people compared to four or five thousand in the heyday.

MB: How did that impact the political scene? I mean, there must have been a lot of unemployment?

BC: Well the French people didn't leave. They, you know, sought other jobs and that was, during that period of time there was new industry moving in. And one of the reasons that new industry did in fact move in was because there was such a wonderful work force here. And, you know, Geiger Brothers, and I only use them as an illustration, I don't mean that they were the only company to move in. Geiger Brothers hired many, many people that were former textile people. And one of my neighbors was somebody that had worked in the mill and eventually ended up at Geiger Brothers and became a supervisor in one of their departments.

MB: Getting back to you, when you were involved in the, did you say Navy or Army?

BC: Army.

MB: What was your involvement with that like?

BC: Well, I was only in for two years. I knew I was going to be drafted, so I volunteered to go in and during that time. It was during the Korean conflict, you had to serve if you were healthy. And so I signed up for two years. And, I was in the Army for two years and got out and I went to law school, and got on with my life.

MB: You went to Korea, though, or no?

BC: No, I did not. I was scheduled to go, but luckily I didn't have to.

MB: Did your siblings also enlist?

BC: Did my children, you mean?

MB: No, your brothers and sisters.

BC: Oh, brothers and sisters, let's see. My brother, my older brother was in the Second World War, although he didn't go overseas. He was very young and he, he went to Bates College in the V-12 program as a matter of fact. Let's see, my two, two of my brothers ended up in the Army similar to, the two that are closest to me in age, the one that's immediately younger and the one that's next in line also, Peter and Paul both were in the service. But then the draft, I think they changed the rules with respect to the draft and that was when we stopped going in the service.

MB: After you graduated from BU you said you came back to Lewiston, you ran for office. What was the office again?

BC: County Attorney.

MB: County Attorney. Did you win that seat?

BC: Yes, I did, yeah.

MB: Now, what were the responsibilities of the County Attorney?

BC: Well, it was the, you were the chief prosecutor in the, at first I became the Assistant County Attorney. And the, my boss was a fellow named Larry Raymond. And when he, I think it was in his second term, the judge of probate seat opened up, became vacant. So he moved in to, he got the ju-, he got the Governor to appoint him to the judge of probate. And as a result I became the county, acting County Attorney for that period. And then I ran myself and I won the election. I won in the primaries first, which was the real battle, and then I won the general election. And I stayed as County Attorney for about six years.

MB: And then after that?

BC: I ran for state senate and

MB: What year?

BC: Nineteen sixty-nine. Let's see, I was, I served in the 105th legislature, I'm not sure if it was 1969 or 1970. I think I ran in 1969 and I served in 1970 and 1971; it's a two-year term. Then I found it was too demanding on my practice, so I gave it up.

MB: When did you actually open up your practice?

BC: Well, I went in, I became a member of my, I became an associate with my father.

MB: So your father was still practicing?

BC: Yes, he died in 1972. So, and I started in 1956, so I practiced with him for about fifteen, sixteen years.

MB: And his brother was also practicing with him?

BC: Not at that point, not when I came back. He had been practicing; he was a judge by then, federal district court judge.

MB: Oh. Now, Jeanine [*sic* Jeanne] Clifford Delahanty, tell me a little bit about her.

BC: Okay, she was my first cousin. She was the daughter, the oldest daughter of John D. Clifford, Jr. That was my father's brother and also my father's law partner. And John D. Clifford, Jr. was the, he was a federal district attorney. I was just on the county level now. He was a much more responsible job, and he moved from that job as, to the federal district judge, which was a, United States federal district judge. He was the only judge of that kind in the state at that time, and Jeanne Clifford Delahanty was his daughter. And she married Tom Delahanty who was in the legislature with Ed Muskie. And that was, they were very close, they were, Tom Delahanty was a Democrat, so was Ed Muskie. Ed Muskie was from Rumford and Tom Delahanty was from Lewiston and they formed a very close bond between the two of them. They were both in the leadership up in Augusta. And Tom Delahanty was a lawyer in Lewiston and very active in politics. And he was very popular among the French-speaking people. I think

he sponsored a lot of bills for people in this area. And he and Ed Muskie became life long friends. And he was, he was the husband of my cousin, my first cousin.

MB: What was he like as a person?

BC: He, what was he like?

MB: As a person, how was he?

BC: Well, he was very personable, he, very charming man. He was a type of person that when you met him, he was very interested in “you”, you know, when I say “you,” if he met you, he would, had a way of drawing people out and getting you to talk about yourself. And he didn’t do it in a phony kind of a way at all; he was very sincere in what he did. And for that reason I think he was extremely popular wherever he went, you know, he, wherever he had contact with people, they, everybody liked him.

MB: And he was in State Senate at the same time as Muskie?

BC: I’m not sure if it was the State Senate or the House of Representatives. I think it was the House of Representatives, if I’m not mistaken. But he had a leadership position, and so did Ed Muskie. So I think they were, and they were in the legislature at the same time. And I think they were in for more than one term.

BC: She’s still alive today.

MB: Jeanne?

BC: Jeanne Delahanty. She’s about eighty years old.

MB: Wow, and has Tom passed away?

BC: Yes.

MB: What year?

BC: Fifteen years ago, I think. He had three sons that were, one of them’s a superior court judge now. [Tom Delahanty, Jr.]

MB: What was Jeanne, what is Jeanne like?

BC: Well, she’s, you know, just a wonderful lady, she’s very nice. And she’s very talkative. And she still is, her mind is just as sharp now as it was twenty-five years ago when she was raising a family. Very intelligent lady.

MB: I think I’ve seen a folder on her, I think we’re going to interview her.

BC: She lives right around the corner here.

MB: Was she at all active politically?

BC: Yes, she was, yeah. She was always in support of her husband. But still very active, you know, she appeared at functions where there was, you know, I think she went to conventions and that type of thing, Democratic conventions.

MB: When Tom was appointed to judge, you said they

BC: Superior court.

MB: Right. How did that change, did they have to move, or?

BC: No, this was, I got, maybe I got a little, got you a little mixed up. Jeanne Delahanty and Tom Delahanty were husband and wife. And they had a son named Tom who is now a superior court judge, okay? His father, Tom Delahanty, the first Tom Delahanty, Sr., was also a superior court judge, okay. Okay. So that's the case of the son following the father. But he was a state court judge and he did not have to move. He had an office in the county building in Auburn, and he did a lot of his work in this county. Plus he did some traveling also, but he did not have to move, he stayed right here.

MB: So it was never a federal position, it was a state position.

BC: No, it was a state, state judge.

MB: Okay. Who is Alton?

BC: Lessard.

MB: Yes.

BC: He was also very active politically. He was a French, of French descent. He was the mayor of Lewiston for at least two terms. He was in the legislature. He was a Democrat, and he was a law partner of Tom Delahanty.

MB: So Tom and Al were law partners, and your father and John were law partners?

BC: Right.

MB: Were, did the two law firms interact at all?

BC: What do you mean interact? They were competitors, I'd say.

MB: They were competitors?

BC: Right.

MB: Did they get along, though?

BC: Yeah.

MB: Okay. How was Al connected to Muskie?

BC: Al Lessard was the Democrat, he was the chairman of the Democratic Party in the State of Maine.

MB: During the time that Muskie was governor?

BC: No, I think it was after Muskie became, after Muskie got elected to the senate. Or it might have been during that, it was 19-, I know part of his. I know he was the chairman in 1960 when John Kennedy ran for the president. I know that because I was at the, I was at the Democratic headquarters the night of the election and John Kennedy's, not John Kennedy himself but somebody from his campaign called Mr. Lessard and asked him why Kennedy wasn't doing any better in the State of Maine. And, that was a religious issue then because they said that, you know, the Catholic factor was, didn't make it any easier for Kennedy to get elected in this state, or to win this state as a Democrat. So that was in 1960, I do remember that.

MB: So, were?

BC: But I think Muskie was at that function.

MB: So were they particularly close, or were they just?

BC: Muskie and Al Lessard were fairly close, yeah, they were good friends. And there again, I think that stemmed from when they were in the legislature together.

MB: What was Al like as a person?

BC: Al? He was a fireball. He was very glib, and I liked him very much. But, some people didn't trust him I guess is the best way to do it. I did, I mean, I, he was very nice to me and I was a County Attorney during Al also became a state judge later on and so I practiced, I had many cases in front of him, and I thought he was very nice. But some people didn't like him. He was a person that you either liked very much or you didn't, and I happened to like him. But there were people that didn't, you know, he had his enemies.

MB: Tell me a little bit more about your practice as a lawyer in town.

BC: Well, after that first, you know, when I was younger, I was a Prosecuting Attorney. I did, that was just a part time job. But my other practice included, you know, representing injured people that were in car accidents. I did some divorce work, I did some real estate work. I did sort of jack-of-all-trades type of things because I, for a long period of time I was the youngest in

the firm. And then my younger brother came in and he took over some of my practice. But, you know, I was just, in the beginning at least, later on, later years I became more of, my con-, my area of concentration was in real estate, the last twenty years of my practice.

MB: Was this similar to your father's?

BC: Yeah, yeah. Nowadays the trend is toward specialization.

MB: To specialize in either real estate or divorce.

BC: Divorce or commercial law, or, because the field of law is becoming more complicated and there are more and more laws that you, more and more statutes you have to become familiar with in order to be effective.

End of Side One

Side Two

MB: Now, was your practice, how did that differ from your uncle's practice then?

BC: I think it didn't differ substantially at all. And I think most of the lawyers at that time were general practitioners, you know, small town. You took cases as they came in and you'd try to familiarize yourself with whatever case your client had. Nowadays, that's changed, you know, you refer people to different lawyers that have expertise in that, for example, labor law. We have someone in our office now that's an expert in that. Another person is an expert in public utilities law.

MB: Was it easy to maintain a practice and at the same time be involved politically?

BC: Yeah, but when I, I found that when I was in the Senate, it was, I was away from the office so much that, you know, my clients complained and, that I wasn't in the office and I wasn't there to answer the phone. I wasn't there to, you know, give them the advice that they thought they should have; and I agree with them. That's why I only, that's why I stopped; that's why I left the Senate.

MB: Did Tom and Al seem to have similar experiences?

BC: Yeah, they did I think. I think they, both of them expressed that same frustration so to speak.

MB: Did both of them also serve short terms?

BC: I think Tom Delahanty was in the legislature for four years. And I think Al might have been there for, he was in the Senate, I know, he might have been in around the same time, but I don't think they were there together.

MB: Do you know what particular political issues were going on at the time that, were there,

like for you for instance, what were your strongest standpoints as a candidate?

BC: I really didn't have any. You mean, what, was I an issue person?

MB: Yeah.

BC: No, I wasn't. I remember the abortion bill was quite a controversial subject at the time. I voted in favor of the abortion, much to the chagrin of my Catholic family members. And, which didn't set very well with my mother, or my father. I don't remember that the, the Clean Air Act, that was right at the very beginning of cleaning up the rivers, you know, the, that was when the environment started to become an issue. And when I ran for the Senate I remember that I wasn't, I didn't have any strong feelings one way or the other. But when I was there for a while, after two years, I realized that, you know, we have a river running right through that separates this town from the next. And I realized that unless we started to do something about cleaning this up, we were going to have serious problems. So, that was the two issues that I can remember most vividly at the time; that was in 1970 and '71, which was not that long ago, it's thirty years ago.

MB: Had Muskie at that time become involved in cleaning up the rivers?

BC: Yeah, I think he had. I think he was one of the first people. And I think that's how he really made his name nationally was, I think he was a sponsor of that bill and he was a very strong advocate and, I think it was around that time. When did Muskie become Senator?

MB: Senator? He became Governor in '54, '58, oh, I forgot the exact, I think early six

BC: Was it the early sixties [*sic* 1958]?

MB: In the early sixties, yeah.

BC: And he served until when [Jimmy] Carter appointed him to Secretary of State.

MB: Yeah, to Secretary of State, yeah.

BC: And that was in '76 was it [*sic* 1981]?

MB: Uh-huh, I think so. I forget dates.

BC: Well anyway, he was a, he became fairly, very well known nationally as a result of that, that issue, the Clean Rivers Act, whatever it was called. I forget.

MB: Was it successful in cleaning up the Androscoggin and the Allagash?

BC: Well, it's like anything else, it's just going to take forever to clean it up entirely, but there was a start. And there was a, there was also a Bates College professor, biology professor, his name was Lawrance [Dr. Walter "Doc" Lawrance]

MB: Doc Lawrance?

BC: Yeah, he was, he was called the “River Man,” the “River Master.” He used to dump these chemicals in the, I mean, that would eliminate, not eliminate, but counteract the pollution that was coming from the paper mills up, further up river. So, I guess Bates College is a real forerunner of that area.

MB: Is it true that your nickname is Bim?

BC: Yeah.

MB: Spelled B-I-M?

BC: Right.

MB: How’d you get that nickname?

BC: Well, my brother, my younger brother started calling me Bum. And the doctor says, you know, we’d better, before that sticks, we better make a change, and it was a natural because my father was Bill and I was a junior, so that was the dis-, to distinguish me from my father, they started calling me “Bim”.

MB: So it didn’t have any significance as far as, okay?

BC: No.

MB: How has your family evolved politically from the time of your grandparents until now?

BC: Well, my grandfather was not very involved in politics, although he encouraged my father and his brother to become involved. He was a contractor, he built a lot of the commercial buildings locally, and I told you, I think, the city hall. And he retired at the age of fifty and lived, lived off the income from his real estate holdings.

MB: And now are any of your brothers or sisters, or any of your children or nieces and, I guess, nephews Republicans: Has it changed at all?

BC: No.

MB: Everyone’s remained

BC: Democrat, they have.

MB: Are any members of your family, any of your children, active in politics?

BC: No.

MB: I gather there was quite a bit of encouragement from your parents for your brothers and sisters to remain politically active.

BC: Yes.

MB: Is that something that you didn't try to pass on to your children, or?

BC: Well, I never really, my oldest boy was, you know, I think he, he got, he became involved in some, in some campaigns, political campaigns, but it wasn't as a result of my encouraging him to do it. I mean, I certainly didn't discourage him from becoming involved, but I didn't, I didn't really make a point to. He just did it on his own. And my younger son, I don't think he ever cared for politics very much, nor did my daughter.

MB: What were your kids' names?

BC: Paul's the oldest, he's a teacher in Portland, and Constance, named after my sister, we call her Connie, is, works for Bane and Company; it's a consulting firm, it's like Arthur D. Little, in Boston. And my younger son is a police officer in Bristol, Rhode Island.

MB: And your brothers and sisters have children as well?

BC: Yes, a lot.

MB: You don't have to go over them, but none of them remain politically involved either?

BC: Well, my older brother's daughter [Alice] is a County Attorney, a District Attorney in Penobscot County; she's an Assistant District Attorney, she's a lawyer. Other than that, I don't think so.

MB: Over the years there have been splits in the Democratic Party in Lewiston. Can you tell me about some of those instances as far as who was involved and what the issues were that caused the splits?

BC: Well, have you ever heard of the name Louis Jalbert?

MB: Yes, I have.

BC: Well, he was sort of a self-appointed Democratic leader in this city. He was a person that, you know, devoted a hundred percent of his time to politics. He didn't have a regular job, other than he was in the legislature for twenty-odd, some twenty, twenty or thirty years. I think he might have been there for thirty years, now that I think about it.

And he caused a lot of friction between the, among Democrats in this area. He is a person that liked to control the political scene in this town, he liked, and tried to do it at the state level. You know, he was a, he ran for the, for the, he ran for a couple of leadership positions in Augusta at

the State House, you know, for, to be like the speaker of the house, and John Martin, who, he defeated him on one occasion. It was because Louis was very controversial. He was, I'm not sure, thoroughly honest, that people, you know, they didn't support him. But he caused the, he was a very controversial subj-, person, and he caused a lot of splits within the party itself. He, mostly because he tried to control the whole show, so to speak, and, you know, people resented that. They didn't, I know I had a few run ins with him, although I got along for the most part. So that, I think the fact-, most of the factions that I remember being, happening in the party were caused by Louis Jalbert.

MB: What did it mean to have the party split?

BC: It means that the Democrats started arguing among themselves. What, you know, who they would support for a particular candidate. There was always a lot of controversy concerning the budget for the county building. The legislature, the legislative delegates from this area were the, had the final say on how much money the county got for their budget, and that was a source of a lot of controversy.

You know, if Louis Jalbert didn't like someone that worked at the county building, then they generally didn't get a raise, you know, they didn't get their budget app-, you know, they submitted a budget and they didn't get it approved. Or they got budget cuts and things like, I mean that, you know, it was a lousy system because it was too political, it was. And when it gets, when you get somebody in there like Louis Jalbert who had his likes and dislikes, and if you crossed him so to speak, if you did something he didn't approve, he'd take it out on you in one form or another. And you could see that if you worked in the county building, you had to be nice to Louis or . . .

MB: Yeah. How did the French community, how were they involved in the splits?

BC: Well, some of the French people supported him, some of them didn't, you know.

MB: So even within the French community, the split could . . . ?

BC: Yeah.

MB: And that was during what time period, that all this was happening?

BC: Well, it was during the time period when I was involved in politics, in the late fifties and early sixties and seventies, and up through maybe mid-seventies. So, it lasted for a long period of time.

MB: How did that change the overall political scene in Lewiston?

BC: I don't, I'm not sure I understand that. How did it change? It was part of the politics of the city.

MB: There was really no real Republican force, though, within the city, so . . .

BC: No, no, everything was Democrats. It was, there wasn't, the Republicans weren't strong enough to put up any kind of a fight, so what the Democrats did was they fought among themselves. I guess this is what it is.

MB: So that would be more impacting primaries, though, than?

BC: Yeah, it would. But in this town the primaries meant everything. If you won the primaries

MB: You were in.

BC:you were in.

MB: Well, you have an appointment to get to so

BC: Yeah, I'm not sure I answered too many questions about Muskie.

End of Interview

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