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Cortell, Shepard oral history interview

Marisa Burnham-Bestor

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Interview with Shepard Cortell by Marisa Burnham-Bestor

Summary Sheet and Transcript

Interviewee

Cortell, Shepard

Interviewer

Burnham-Bestor, Marisa

Date

December 2, 1998

Place

Lewiston, Maine

ID Number

MOH 059

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Biographical Note

Shepard N. "Shep" Cortell was born to Edward and Marion Cortell on July 5, 1925 in Lewiston, Maine. He was a Bates College graduate in the class of 1950. He was on the staff for Congressman Charles P. Nelson from 1948 to 1956. Shep helped Margaret Chase Smith in her run for the State Senate. He was critical of Muskie on the water pollution issue of the Androscoggin River and other environmental issues. He was an active Republican in the 1940s and 1950s.

Scope and Content Note

Interview includes discussions of: the Lewiston community; mill workers and shoe workers; family, religion, and politics; his political involvement with Roger Dube and Margaret Chase Smith as home secretary; working for U.S. Representative Charles Nelson; the Maine State legislature; Muskie's 1968 Vice-Presidential campaign; and environmental issues in the State Legislature.

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Transcript

Marisa Burnham-Bestor: Here we are in Chase Hall at Bates College. And Shep Cortell is here, and Marisa Burnham-Bestor is interviewing. Could you please state your name and spell it?

Shepard Cortell: Shepard Cortell; S-H-E-P-A-R-D, C-O-R-T-E-L-L.

MB: Where and when were you born and raised?

SC: I was born July 5, 1925. And I was raised in Lewiston, spent a lifetime in Lewiston.

MB: How would you describe Lewiston as a town at that time?

SC: It was a mill town, basically Franco. And, but they were hard-working people and there was a lot of them that had tenement blocks. And some of them buy it, good-sized families. Others bought, they occupied one floor and then three floors they rented, and they were quite selective in terms of the caliber of the people that came in there. They might not have been affluent; fact is they were far from that. But they were honorable and they were workers and, even during Depression, we didn't have a philosophy of people running down and getting on relief.

MB: What was your heritage in relation to, you said it was mostly Franco in this area.

SC: My father came from Russia as an immigrant. I'm Jewish. And my mother's family was born here, but she comes from, her family came from Lithuania.

MB: What was your experience with the people living here, the largely Franco population?

SC: Excellent. My father had a store on Lisbon Street, a ladies' and men's clothing store. And because of that the name was well known. And the result was that during the formative years I never realized that there was prejudice and there was anti-Semitism and things like that. The only problem that I had at school was when you had a big guy that was a bully or something on that idea. But I don't remember somebody picking on me because of my religious beliefs.

MB: What were your parents' names?

SC: Edward and Marion.

MB: And did your mom work as well?

SC: No, she didn't. She was a stay-at-home mom. I had four sisters.

MB: What was your family's financial situation as it went through the Depression?

SC: I would say about five times better off than the average person.

MB: Was the interaction between your father's store and the mill workers positive, even during those years?

SC: Oh, very positive. It wasn't just the mill workers; there were shoe factories. My father was very friendly with the owners of the shoe factories. And there was, half of your business was shoe factories as well as the mills. And once in a while you'd get a customer that would sound off against the foreman, get fired and she'd come in and be crying to my father. And my father would pick the phone up, call the owner of the shoe factory and get her back on the job.

MB: That's great. You said you had four sisters; what were their names?

SC: The oldest sister was Marion. She married a Doctor Schaen, S-C-H-A-E-N, and she had a master's degree in home economics from Simmons. And the other sister went to Wellesley; she graduated second in her class at Wellesley with a Durant Scholarship. She, they paid to send her to the University of Illinois, wait a minute, University of Chicago, and she got a Ph.D. there, worked for laboratories in research work and later got a scholarship to go to Yale Medical. And she graduated Yale Medical School in 1944, top of the country in American med boards. She had a big advantage over the rest of them because she had taught quite a few of the courses that she had to take again because, subjects in medical school, you don't take a qualifying exam; you have to go through the whole thing all over again. So, and then my two other sisters went to Bates. One stayed and completed two years and she went down to Hickock's Secretarial School at the end of two years; my other sister went with her, took an apartment in Boston. And she finished a two-year course in one year and she ended up teaching there. And then later, she had children and became a home mom.

MB: Your sister who went to medical school, where did she end up working?

SC: She became a specialist in internal medicine, and she got a job working for Metropolitan Life Insurance Company; she was their in-house doctor. If you were working for them and you needed a medical discharge or whatever, she was the one that interviewed you and reviewed.

MB: Were all of your sisters eventually married?

SC: Yeah. Let's see, the oldest sister Marion, her daughter's a lawyer in Minneapolis, her son is the director of fraud for the government, and he's a lawyer. And then the other sister, that's the one that got the Ph.D., the one that was the oldest, Marion, her son is a physician. Wait a minute, I've already gone over that. Hers is a physician lawyer, yeah, I've reviewed both of those.

MB: Did the two sisters who became secretaries have any children?

SC: Yeah, the, one sister, who is seven years older than I am, had two boys and one girl. One of the boys, a Ph.D., he teaches at Brown. The other one teaches in the University of Illinois I think, and he's an environmental expert; he and his wife both are Ph.D.s in environmental work. So, let's see, and then the daughter, she's a sales representative, and she's on the road and she's married to the head of the, one of the, the Hebrew reform movement in the country.

MB: In addition to your father's business, how was your family involved in the community religiously or politically? I mean, you said you were Jewish.

SC: Well, everything, in those days everything revolved around the temple, or the synagogue, Beth Jacob. They would have dinners and other things so the people would have the cohesiveness.

MB: Were most of the people in the area Jewish?

SC: No, no, very small percentage. One percent, if that much.

MB: But you said that the relationship between the Jewish community and the other, it was mostly Catholic or Christian?

SC: Mostly Catholic, but there were Protestants in Auburn.

MB: So the relationship was good between all the. . . .

SC: Yeah.

MB: That's good. What about politically? Was your family very involved in the political. . . . ?

SC: No, my father didn't like politics.

MB: Did his dislike of politics impact you at all?

SC: No, no, each one of us takes our own course. The road that we take is completely dependent on what our aptitudes are and what our likings are, and also accidents.

MB: Was there a specific accident?

SC: Yeah. I started in '46 here at Bates and then the summer, we were on holiday all through the summer. And I took the bus and went out to a place over in Auburn where it converges and hitchhiked. And a fellow came around who had a new Buick convertible. This is 1946, you know. "Where are you going?" "I'm going to Old Orchard." "Well I'm going to Old Orchard." "What are you going to do down there?" "I got a date." -- he had a date. "Well, why don't you come and then go home with me." So the relationship became, political relationship became very close because he was at that point a candidate for state Senate. And I ended up by being his campaign manager.

MB: Was this congressman Nelson?

SC: No, this was, fact of the matter is, I was registered as a Democrat. And I had to change, well, for him it was all right, but later on I changed to be a Republican.

MB: Who was this person that. . . . ?

SC: Fellow by the name of Roger P. Dube. I'll tell you, this is the most glorious thing in my existence.

MB: I'm not familiar with him.

SC: Well, he was a jerk. First class.

MB: Why, what ended up happening?

SC: Well, nothing ended up happening, but he was always carousing the streets trying to pick girls up, whether they were married or single and so forth. So after a while the identification with him became too great, and I had to dislocate myself from any relationship with him.

MB: He was a Democrat, though?

SC: He was a Democrat. Now, how I changed to a Republican. He had all kinds of nerve, nothing phased him. When he was a youngster he learned how to fly and when the war started he was a capable flyer. So they sent him to school to become a lieutenant in the air corps, but he wasn't bright enough to muster. So, the result was that they made him a master officer and he used to fly cargo to different locations. And every time, went into Washington quite often. I never did find out why he used to go into Washington, whether it as always on the way to some training place. And he would drop off to see Margaret Chase Smith. So one of the times he called her and she invited him to Poland Spring; they had an industrial nurse convention at Poland Spring House. And she explicitly indicated that she wanted him to take his campaign manager, that she wanted to talk with him.

So I went out with him and she got me to one side and she said, "Look," she said, "if you can do what you've done with him, you can go places with me." Well, I knew she couldn't win because a woman just don't get elected Senator. There was only one instance where you had an appointed Senator, but as far as going into an election. . . . She was congresswoman, took her husband's place as congresswoman. And to get elected to Senate, she was up against the existing governor and the past governor, Hildreth and the past governor Sewall, who was military governor of Germany. So anyhow, I knew she couldn't win, but it was one of these things, you'd have a good time running and working with her. So my expenses I paid out of my own pocket; I would not let her take care of the expenses. What I did was, I basically ran what's now known as a "push poll".

MB: What does that mean?

SC: I didn't know what it meant either, but they've just been using it lately. "Push poll" is when you ask questions which are intended to influence the person that you're interviewing. So she had a very close friend that was a political writer, and I was going all over the place taking polls and I was loose-tongued in terms of her position in the polls. Now the reason for that was that nobody thought she could win, so the best way to help her was to get the information out that she was winning. And the end result was that it was in the paper, *Bates Student*, and she's three to one over the other, and so forth. So, that was my experience with Margaret, or just part of it.

Then, while I was a senior at Bates taking the one course in the fall, August - September, in through there, Congressman Nelson came with his administrative assistant, sat down with me, offered me a job as his home secretary. Now, home secretary in those days was not what you now know as a home secretary; there was only one. In other words, there were three

congressmen but only one home secretary. Now we've got fifteen. So the significance of being home secretary in those days was, like, dramatic, and particularly where somebody who was only twenty-four, twenty-five, in that range, who was taking care of the campaign for them. Now, the thing, I talked with the political writer, who was also a Bates man, fellow by the name of Lemieux, Lionel Lemieux. He's dead¹, or Don [Nicoll] told me he was dead anyway; I lost track of him. So I talked to Lemieux about it and he says, "If it ever gets out, he'll never appoint you. Number one, he couldn't be asking his friends who to pick; secondly, being Jewish and not ready for it, and also you're too young." He says, "There's only one way that you'll get appointed and that is, allow me to call him and confirm that you're being appointed and get him on record."

So, the next day in the front page of the paper was my picture and all about that I'd won my political spurs working for Margaret Chase Smith. She was all burnt up about it; she did not like that at all, the reference to her. And, see, her rationale was that it looked like she had got the job for me and she did not want to go on record as being the one. So she wanted me to turn around and make a statement that she had nothing to do with getting the job. So I go back to Lemieux and I tell him what's happening. And he said, "Well, she's an ingrate, you know, for all the work you did for her. And if I were you, to just keep her mouth shut, just tell her if she wants to make statements, be my guest. But you're not making any statement," he said, "because any statement you're going to make is going to show weakness on your part and it's going to be a minus in terms of what you're going to be able to accomplish."

So anyway, the campaign came and went and Nelson had a terrific victory, including this county. He got elected very, very strong in this county, which was unusual because this was a strongly Democratic county. Subsequent to that, the thing was over, the election, and I don't remember exactly when they had the election. I've got a feeling it was before November, because right after the election I decided to go down to Simmons to take some courses in graduate school, which was a bad mistake. So, because I took it in merchandizing and I hated it and I didn't stay any length of time. I ran out of money, took all the girls out that were there, and that was the end of my career at Simmons. I went broke and had to come home. So I went back to work for him for a few months. But I had a run-in with him and that has a bearing on a story that I'm willing to tell you that refers to Muskie. Now, Muskie was a very weak candidate for office, I don't know if you realize that. Did you ever look up his background?

MB: I know quite a bit about his background. But why would you say that he was a weak candidate?

SC: Because every time he ran for the lower office, not for governor or beyond that, but when he ran for representative of the legislature out of Waterville, he'd just about make it by twenty votes or whatever. And he got beat by a guy by the name of Squires, that had a ladies clothing store, for mayor. So anyhow, my interpretation of why Muskie won is not identical to Don's and other people who were close to Muskie. In Don's case, if you talk to him or any of the ones that

¹ Correction: Lionel A. Lemieux was still living at the time of this interview. The Muskie Oral History Project has since located him and interviewed him on two occasions in the fall of 1999.

were, they will tell you that he came up with a novel political concept; namely, it's time for two-party government. And it probably had some bearing, but that wasn't the complete story. I was in the inside of the other side, of the Republican activists.

And to give you an example of what was going on in those days, I had a very close friend that was county attorney in Kennebec County, a fellow by the name of Ralph Ferris. And myself and a fellow by the name of J. Dennis Bruno, who was state commander of the VFW, and Ferris was the adjutant. We would always go out together, the three of us. So one night we went down to this Paramount Hotel, which was a nightclub in Lewiston on Lisbon Street. And Ferris could not hold his liquor; he had a very low tolerance towards liquor. Bruno could drink the same amount and be cold sober while the other one reacted very quickly to alcohol. So at the end of the evening, the fellow who owned the hotel said to us, "Why don't you, I've got this private room for you. Why don't you have a party up there? You can buy a bottle of liquor and I'll give you the room free." And so we ended up inviting the girl who was the singer, the girl who was the dancer, and the MC, male MC, and the three of us. So we go up to the room and the, about one o'clock I got tired and went home because I don't drink that much. One drink and I've had it. So they stayed on and so forth.

And the next day or the day after, or whatever it was, I ran into the girl. And she's trying to tell me that he tried to rape her. So I said, "Well, if he tried, did he do it?" And she says, "No," she said, "he pinned me to the bed in my room." She didn't tell me why she went to the room with him, but. . . . "I said I'd like to wash up and so forth and I went into the bathroom and locked the door and he took off." So there was no physical damage to the person and so forth. And I said, "Look, why don't you be a nice person about this and keep quiet about it. The guy's got a beautiful wife. He didn't in any way hurt you and so forth. What about just forgetting about it?"

So later on she goes on to Waterville. The circuit was Lewiston, Waterville and wherever. And right away I found out that there was this attorney in Waterville that was in a nightclub got talking with her, and she spilled the whole business about what happened to her in Lewiston. And the, at the same time, there was a big liquor investigation going on in the state of Maine. The president of the Senate was running, Star Chamber, was investigating the, there was another political writer down in Portland by the name of Talberth, Edward [D.] Talberth, and supposedly they had recordings of him trying to shake down Herman Sahagian, who owned Fairview Wine in [Gardiner] Maine. And it was the desire allegedly for paying to, for so much money and so forth, per case. So anyhow, the end result was that the guy that owned the nightclub notified us. He called Bruno, Bruno called Ferris and they arranged for her to make a sworn statement. It reminds me of the sworn statement that is now involved, and which she indicated nothing had happened. Now, whether there was money passed, I was not privy to the thing.

So anyhow, in the meantime, during the course of this investigation, Ferris shot his mouth off and says, "I am the county attorney and if you've got anything to say, come to me, your county attorney. And this other thing is wrong," da-da-da-da and so forth. And Cross never forgave him. So when Cross found out about the incident, the state police entered the picture because to my knowledge the girl never made a complaint. This was six, eight months later where all of a sudden the state police are down like gangbusters. Now, a lot of it revolved on Herman Sahagian, who was on the outs now in terms of his wine. He still had too many numbers on the

board, but he didn't have the quantity that he originally had. He had such a majority of them.

So, but the thing that was the most unusual thing was that I knew Herman Sahagian's daughter. I was taking out a girl in Augusta and her mother owned a home. She was teaching in Connecticut and she was home during the summers. And her mother owned a home where the second floor was rented to Sahagian's daughter. So one night we were out with them and she made statements to me about what they were doing in terms of Ferris. I should have kept my mouth shut, but I turned around and told Bruno about it, Bruno told Ferris, and it got back to the other side. So next time I ran into her she told me that they had bagged him, and I better watch my step or they'll get me also. Now, where it had a significance to the, to give you an idea about [Burton] Cross, I then turned around and I called Nelson, that I worked for. And I said, "Charlie, I cannot let him hang. If we're going to have another Star Chamber you better tell Cross that he better settle this thing with Ferris because if there's a Star Chamber, I will be a witness." And the extent of being a witness is that she threatened me that, they bagged him and they would bag me.

MB: On what grounds?

SC: Never got to what the grounds were; you don't have to have grounds when there are accusations. So, but they could not afford to take him before the governor's council and remove him from office with that knowledge. But it alienated me from the congressmen, because they were very, very close between Cross and the congressmen. Now, the end result was that Ferris made a deal with that group. Namely, he would make a public apology for drinking and he would resign, and he had done, his conduct was not what it should have been. He'll resign as county attorney, which he did. And they in turn would drop the other morsel. And that's how the thing turned out. But he ran for state Senator and Cross ran for governor, again. Cross was already governor when all of this had taken place. Payne was governor; Payne became U.S. Senator. He moved over to the Senate. Cross ran for governor and got elected for one term. And there was a couple of things that were involved with Cross. Not only this but mean-spirited-type of personality, but also he had some terrific fights with town selectmen where he went out of his way to cross up quite a few people at the legislature.

So when he ran for a second term, the Democrats wanted to run Coffin, Frank Coffin. And this is strictly hearsay because I was not privy to it, but the hearsay that I heard was Coffin encouraged Muskie to run instead. Now, the advantage of running was that you would get your name as a lawyer set out there so often and so forth that you'd pick up clientele later. You'd get to be well-known. That was the advantage of running, because he had very little chance of winning. During that same period of time there was, a few years before that there was only one Democratic state Senator, a fellow by the name of John [Jean] Charles Boucher, who we used to joke that he held the caucus in a telephone booth. There were so little Democrats. So anyhow, you put the whole thing together and all of a sudden there was a lot of Republicans that said, "Let's cut Cross down to size," without any idea that he was going to get beat. There was no suspicion of it. The only one that knew it was Muskie towards the end when he started to see what reaction was when he was getting around. But that in itself don't mean anything because most candidates are told, "Yeah, you're great. We're voting for you," and so forth. So whether it's significant that he had the feeling he was going to win or not I don't know, but from what I

heard he did feel towards the end he was going to win.

Now, once he became governor- First of all let me tell you about a couple of run-ins that we had with him, both as member of the House of Representatives and also as governor. There was eighteen of us down here in Androscoggin County that started the second clean-up movement in the country. The first one was in Rhode Island, if I remember correctly. And there was metals that were being thrown into the river, where we had all of this hydrogen sulphide and so forth from the paper mills. And we drafted a bill, we got somebody to present it and so forth. And Muskie, coming from a town that was living off of the paper companies, was deathly opposed to any bill that came in. In addition to that, when he became governor he still was cool. Gets down to Washington and all of a sudden, he becomes the great white hope of the clean-up movement. So it depends on what the circumstances are in terms of how a person looks at a particular problem. I don't know whether you realized that about Muskie.

Anyhow, the, what happens when somebody becomes governor, the first thing is all of these people who want stuff. If the hand of friendship is pushed out to them, they forget the other party and they rush. And Muskie worked very, very close with the Brewer's Foundation, the paper mills, and Legion. Now, with the Legion, there was at least two people involved and I can remember their names. One of them was a fellow by the name of Gus Clough who graduated Bates. And Gus Clough, everybody was rotating, first he's in charge of the Brewer's Foundation, and then the governor appointed him an industrial director for the state of Maine. And then he goes to work for the paper company in later years. So, and Gus was so close to my congressman. And my congressman asked me to take Gus down to my post, which was the largest post in Maine, which was right here in Lewiston on Bates Street. And he wanted me to get him the votes to be national something-or-other. It wasn't commander, but it was executive committee of the, so, there was this continual circle between . . . And as soon as Muskie became governor, then all of a sudden the weight of the position became the dominant factor.

Now, the other thing that was interesting about Muskie- I can't give you this as a hundred percent factual, but it's just my putting everything together, because I had conversations with Lemieux, and I could see what Muskie was doing as governor. He would call up a particular political writer or editor, one that could influence how the news came out. And he'd invite them to go to Augusta, and he would sit down in Augusta. And the way he would work it, from what I could gather, was, did you ever try a procedure where you say, "I've got a problem. I can, it's either this way or that way and I want your advice on it." And it's so heavily weighed that the person walks away thinking that it was their idea. And that's how Muskie operated as governor. I think. I only know it from Lemieux, but I assume that if he pulled that on Lemieux that he must have done it to other people. So he became a very popular governor. If you've got nothing but good press, you get a fantastic ride in terms of public opinion. Now, all of a sudden, he becomes Secretary of Defense [Secretary of State], and he gets done with that and he's running now for President, and he's the front runner. I think it was that sequence, I'm not positive.²

² The correct sequence is: the vice-presidential campaign was 1968; the presidential campaign was 1972; he became Secretary of State in 1980.

MB: This was the Humphrey-Muskie ticket that you're talking about in 1968?

SC: Yeah.

MB: He was Vice-President, running for Vice-President.

SC: Yeah. And the, before that I think it, was he Secretary of Defense or something like that? He held another job. So after that he became the front runner and it was all in the, Time or whatever; Muskie the front runner and so forth. So, I was down in Florida at a hotel down there that was in, where [Richard] Nixon used to stay. Um, well anyhow, it was owned by a Boston magnate and Sonneben (?) owned the hotel. Sonneben (?) had people who were very influential, moneyed people, as his guests to meet and talk with Muskie, because without money you don't go anyplace in terms of a presidential election. So you have to have a certain something to be able to capture enough momentum through having finances and so forth. And while I'm in the swimming pool I run into a close friend of mine from Lewiston here who used, had started out as a salesman working for his family business. And he started through charity getting into national groups and made very strong combinations, involvements, where if he walked into a place, even when he was selling something, he asked for the owner and could right in to see him. And later he quit his, and his brother ran this Rose (?) woven label company. And he became the broker to sell big businesses. And one of the businesses that he sold, we had this Value House that was sold, it was right here in Lewiston, a whole chain of them through New England. And that was sold to Supermarket General and he was the one, then subsequently sold to, what's the place now called?

MB: Shaw's?

SC: No, no, no, next to, uh, is it called (*name*) now? Well anyway, it's one of those big, and they're still located over in Auburn. But they've changed hands amongst different places. So anyhow, in talking with Bill, I told him I thought Muskie. . . .

End of Side One
Side Two

SC: So, I'm telling Bill, "Boy, he is a natural because he'll get the Democratic vote which is concentrated in the big cities. And yet he looks like Abe Lincoln, homespun, down-to-earth and so forth." That between the two, that he was unbeatable. And Bill gave me the first warning that it wasn't going to come about. And the warning was that he was the one that arranged with Sonneben to have all these people, and he also invited some of these people and so forth. And Muskie laid an egg and didn't get hardly any contributions, so there was something about him that didn't click with the people that had money.

MB: What do you think that was?

SC: I don't know. I don't know. Laid back. Not that Clinton God-love-you type of thing or, whatever. Even Humphrey was, you know, he'd put his arm around somebody and very warm and stuff like that. That's the only thing I can figure. But whatever it was, that was my first

warning that Muskie was on the way out. And then subsequent to that, he goes down to New Hampshire and has that crying thing. But they knew at that point that he was losing ground all the time even, and the only reason why he carried on the way he did was to try to gain sympathy. And how I got that information was, although Ferris was a Republican he had a Democrat working for him in his law office that went down with Muskie.

And he told me that Muskie's appeal and so forth was planned, it wasn't just something that came about and so forth. His crying might have been something on which he got emotional and so forth. But as far, the plan was to influence the people down there, which was real stupid because what should have been done is he should have kept away from New Hampshire. And we had enough people that held office in Maine that were Francos, and that's where the Democratic vote was, in Manchester, and that was the influence from that one paper. They could have gone down there the Sunday before the election and tally-hoed, to have gone to one club after another and talked about Muskie's sisters being married to French fellows. And, "Oh, he loves the French, and he's being attacked because he is French and there's lies being said about him," and so forth. So they didn't effectively counteract the rumors that they had about him. So he won, but the margin was razor thin. For somebody from Maine he should have had a big victory down there. So that was the end of his quest for President. But at least I had the warning way ahead of time that it was going to end up that way. Okay, what are the other questions?

MB: Well, I wanted to backtrack. Why did you decide to become a Democrat to begin with?

SC: Because when you run into somebody, first of all, I hadn't even registered. Come back here, I started Bates in February, and that was the last thing on my mind. When I ran into Dube and I decided to become his campaign manager, I had to be a Democrat to. . . .

MB: And then after your negative experience with Dube, when Margaret Smith approached you. . . .

SC: I turned to be a Republican.

MB: Ah, I see.

SC: And when I worked for the congressman, he and I philosophically weren't on the same board.

MB: Why is that?

SC: He was such a reactionary that, he voted once for aid for India and regretted it and mentioned time after time that he wished he had never voted for it.

MB: So, what were his viewpoints that you. . . . ?

SC: You just didn't, in other words, you just didn't give people aid. He was negative about helping other countries. He did not see that there was a world economy, that the only way that the economy could be strong in this country if we bought, we sold, and so forth. They needed

that push.

MB: What was your view on the aid issue?

SC: Oh, I was definitely for it. But I had to be careful, though, because I was going out and talking to different groups of why I was a Republican. And boy, if you want to see some fast footage. Because they were the party of moderation, not too much to the left and not too much to the right and so forth and so on. But it didn't play well. A professor, at one time I had a debate with this guy and he creamed me because he was able-, see, when you work for a congressman, you can't say too much because if you say the wrong thing, you have to be responsible to the congressman. Whereas if a guy is just a government professor, he can say anything and sound like he's got dramatic thoughts about the future and so forth. So, if I would have had to do it over again, I wouldn't debate anybody. Not in that position. It's one thing being a congressman where if you say something you live with it. But not working for somebody else, if you just don't know what's on their minds.

MB: Why did you, what exactly were your responsibilities working for congressman Nelson?

SC: Running the campaign, going to different post offices, seeing people that have a complaint. Fact of the matter was, I was a little naive that way. A guy comes to see me from Sabattus. He had a plant of a certain type out there, and he wanted some financial help with one of the government agencies that loaned money and so forth. And I said, "Oh, I'll work right away for you," and so forth. And he offered me a payoff and I dropped the thing like a hot potato, never did anything for him. And I didn't realize that people felt that they had to pay for what the congressman should be doing for nothing. I didn't turn him in, but on the other hand I just let the thing drop.

MB: If you were disagreeing with so many of congressman Nelson's standpoints, why did you continue to work for him? Did you feel anything kind of negative from that perspective?

SC: Well, first of all, although my father thought it was terrible me having that job, it was a political job and it was a one-way to nowhere. But as a young fellow who's twenty-five, you're not really old enough to hold that kind of a position. I remember one night that I used the thing in a way that I wouldn't do today. I had this date with a girl down in Gray. And I go down to pick her up and her parents had a, their faces were glum. They found out that they had just contacted the Red Cross here, it was Wednesday, and Junior who went off to Sampson Air Force Base, he was supposed to call them as soon as he got there. And they never heard from him.

And so, I wasn't going to let something like that interfere with my night out and so forth. So I said, "Well, I'll have him on the phone in twenty minutes," I said, "that's no problem." Red Cross couldn't locate him. I got on the phone and I got the operator and told the operator that I wanted to speak to the officer of the day, and that my name was such and so, that I was aid to the U.S. Congressman, Charles P. Nelson, Armed Services Committee, and I want to speak to that fellow and quickly. So, she got the sergeant who was taking the place of the officer of the day. And immediately I asked the sergeant for his name, his rank, serial number, and also his superior officer, where is he, rank, so forth and so on. Within about ten, fifteen minutes, the fellow calls

back, the officer, to let me know that the jeep is being sent. So there was a lot of glory that went with it.

MB: Helped your social status.

SC: Well, I don't know if it helped anything, it just made you feel good. You know, when you're just getting through college and you haven't really gone out and made a living and so forth-, all you been in is in the Army and all of a sudden you've got something that's, where you're well-known or become well-known and so forth. You know, it goes to your head. That's why, did you ever hear of [Roy] Cohn and [David] Shine?

MB: No.

SC: Really? Well, you ought to look up Cohn and Shine. They were assistants to McCarthy, and I knew them. And McCarthy was going after the military, and the military finally had enough and so did Eisenhower. And what they did was they held hearings before Congress about Cohn getting Shine special preferences when Shine was drafted into the Army, and so forth, and there was a big hup-to-do and so forth. This was because McCarthy had stepped on so many people, that there was quite a large segment of people that were out to get him and so forth.

MB: When you joined Congressman Nelson's staff, he was already in Congress?

SC: He was in Congress. He got elected 1948. . . .

MB: And you joined his staff what year?

SC: What's that?

MB: What year did you join his staff?

SC: Fifty. Wait a minute, wait a minute, yeah, it was 1950, in February.

MB: So who had run his original campaign for Congress before you?

SC: A fellow by the name of Kendall, Richard Kendall. Kendall came home, resigned from the job and came home to work for a newspaper, I forget which one. He was a reporter.

MB: Other than the India aid issue that you discussed before, what were some of the Armed Forces Committee issues and so on and so forth then?

SC: I never got involved with that. I spent most of my time politicking, or taking care of things that people needed. But remember one thing: you didn't have as many things that people needed either those days, because the government wasn't as involved as it is today.

MB: When you would have disagreements with him, would you guys ever discuss them, or. . . .

?

SC: No.

MB: You just backed off?

SC: I backed off. I was working him. In a way, I was working for him and he was working for me.

MB: How's that?

SC: Well, it was my job, for instance, to make sure he got elected. So there were certain techniques that I wanted him to do that he would rather not do because it was work. Want me to give you one example? There were books on child care and we would get a thousand or, I forget how many we were allotted in our office. Other people would get the same allotment, but the difference is they weren't using them. So you trade that for something else, and I went to the different hospitals and got them to send in names of new births. And we would send out a letter with the congressman's name and so forth, congratulating them and so forth, and something enclosed that if they'd like a book on child care that we would be glad to send it to them. And it got into a lot of households, the grandparents involved, the parents involved and so forth. It's a hell of a public relation gimmick. So this is the type of thing that I was doing.

MB: Now, did you ever meet Muskie personally while. . . . ?

SC: Oh yeah.

MB: When was that?

SC: I really don't remember. Because I ran into most of those legislators when we were up there in terms of the bill that we had, and whether it was that period of time and so forth. I know one time that I called and left a message at the office. I wanted to talk with him, and within a half hour he had got back to me, that I wanted to talk to him. So I guess I knew him fairly well, but not that close.

MB: What was your impression of him when you first met him?

SC: He was a very likeable person.

MB: Even though you guys were from different parties?

SC: That never cut any ice. I never voted a straight ticket in my life.; I voted all over the place depending on who I knew and how friendly I was with him, or who I didn't like and so forth.

MB: Now, you said you called him to speak with him. What was that about? Do you remember?

SC: I just wanted him to be up-to-date in terms of. . . . When the rumor came out that he was appointing Gus Clough as industrial director for the state of Maine, I called him to let him know how close he was to Nelson, you know, that he was an opportunist from that standpoint. Nice guy, you know, and we all liked him and so forth, but he'd jump on any side that. . . . And also that even in terms of, you know, that, what bothered me was that business with the Legion, the Brewer's Foundation, or this or that, around and around. These people kept playing musical chairs with jobs, and it was always the same chairs.

MB: And you said Muskie did that as well, right?

SC: Yeah. I told him that I didn't think that he had enough experience in that field to be industrial director. So he said, "Well, I'm getting awful good recommendations from everybody else." I said, "Well, you gotta do what you gotta do. All I can do is give you another side of the story."

MB: Now, when he did eventually appoint Gus, was the relationship, did the relationship between Gus and Nelson change?

SC: No. Well, wait a minute, I'm not that sure. Nelson didn't live too long. Whether he was still alive when Gus got appointed, I don't know. He was an alcoholic and his liver gave out. And he used to go on these binges. So I don't know whether he was still alive or not when Gus was appointed to that job.

MB: When did you become involved in the environmental issue with the river that you talked about?

SC: That was 19-, it was in that same period, 1949, 1950, mostly '50. And it was while I was working for the congressman, which made it, it was a radical movement where his aid is one of the charter members. Didn't exactly set well.

MB: What did you think about Muskie's efforts to-, I mean, you said that you felt that it was a lot of politics, that he was kind of playing the political game. But did you think that his environmental approaches and everything, did you think it was working well and that he was doing the right thing?

SC: Once he got down to Washington he did.

MB: What about when he was governor?

SC: No.

MB: Why is that?

SC: Because he represented a state that had too many paper companies, and he was afraid to buck the paper companies. If we passed a bill. . . . See, the way the thing works is this: when you've got a state that passes laws, the lobbyists come down to the hearings. If this ever takes

place, the paper companies are going to move out of Maine and you're going to lose (*unintelligible word*), which if you're running on a state level, that has a big impact if you want to be governor with all this unemployment.

The same, I remember this old cackler by the name of Pierce (?) from down in Portland who was, Pierce was the name of his firm. Anyhow, he would go before the state committee, you know, the legislative committee, and he would talk about state's rights. That if anything happens, if we do something to Maine that's going to have this big effect, da-da-da-da and so forth. And then the federal would hold a hearing and the same guy would be there telling them that the federal government shouldn't be interfering with clean-up. So it was a touchy, we were wild-eyed radicals at that time, you know, when we came across this concept, that you should clean up the rivers.

MB: Did you know Doc Lawrence, the professor at Bates?

SC: Yeah.

MB: Did you have him?

SC: No. Doc Lawrence was paid by the paper company to keep the status quo.

MB: He was? So he was. . . .

SC: He was a harbor master. . . .

MB: But he was on the river committee.

SC: Yeah, I know. And the river committee didn't get anywheres.

MB: Really? What exactly did the river committee do?

SC: It kept having hearings.

MB: Wasn't the idea behind the formation of the committee to clean up the rivers?

SC: Yeah. But it never got done.

MB: And Doc's position was to prevent it from getting done?

SC: While he was on there he never took an aggressive position to clean up the river.

MB: Oh, wow. I didn't realize that. So. . . .

SC: In other words, he was not vocal about it. Now what his, I never did go to him and say to him exactly, "You know, how can you allow all of this to go on?" But my memory of it was that he was not a friend of the clean-up; that he was looking for ways to diminish the problem. We

were looking for a radical, don't dump anything more. He was looking for ways to take whatever was being dumped and neutralize it, keep the industry and keep everybody happy and so forth. And he was paid primarily by the paper companies for the research, I think. I'm not positive.

MB: Were you on the river committee?

SC: No.

MB: Did you ever attend any of their hearings?

SC: No.

MB: When. . . .

SC: Now wait a minute, I might have attended some of the hearings, yeah. They had a couple of hearings that I went to in later years that were over at that technical institute over in Auburn. So I went to a couple of those but I never religiously followed that.

MB: And this was the time that Muskie was governor that all this was going on, right?

SC: Yeah.

MB: So then when he finally got elected to. . . .

SC: United States Senator. Got down to Washington and became a national figure, all of a sudden Muskie became the. . . .

MB: Advocate for the environment.

SC: Yeah. Now, does that shock you?

MB: Yeah, it does. How did people react to that, the people who knew what he was like as governor? Didn't the Maine people, weren't they like, "What's going on?"

SC: No.

MB: Really?

SC: In other words, he wasn't that overly popular amongst the eighteen people that were, well, we were radical. In other words, what they wanted to do was, give us fifty years and we'll clean up, and we wanted to clean up tomorrow.

MB: What ended up happening with the Androscoggin River once Muskie was in office as a Senator? Then he took action, right?

SC: He started with federal laws; the river's still not clean.

MB: It used to be called the smelly river, right?

SC: Yeah. Most of the problem is gone, but you've still got sulfides that are dumped into that river.

MB: Wow, I had no idea. Now, in '56, that was the last year that Nelson was congressman, right?

SC: Yeah. I was not working for him then.

MB: When did you end your career with him?

SC: I spent about a year with him between '50 to '51 and through there. I don't remember the exact dates.

MB: And then where did you go?

SC: Then we had the, you know, the problems started to arise, the philosophical, that business that I told you about in terms of threatening him about Cross. Because I wasn't going to let them hang my friend.

MB: Did you and Nelson end on bad terms because of that?

SC: No, no, I just got done. And, oh, if you, it's either a couple years later or, after he got done, I dropped in to see him down in Bath, he was the industrial director for Bath. And I saw him and he looked like he was overly tired. The little time I spent with him seemed to be taxing him; he wasn't well. He didn't live long after either.

MB: What did you do after you. . . . ?

SC: I, during the same years, starting with 1950, behind the scenes, myself and Bruno were running candidates for mayor. We had a different form of government that you have today.

MB: How's that?

SC: We had a commission form of government. And it was a very un-democratic form of government. In a way it worked well, because it got people involved that normally would not run for election, but they weren't responsible to anybody. And the way the thing worked is the mayor would have a five-year appointment-, Fire Commission, Health and Welfare, Finance Board, Police Commission. My friend Bruno served fifteen years on the police commission. And there was quite a few years that we determined who was going to be mayor, behind the scenes. And then as the years went on, see at that time I was in the clothing store and fiddling around and bored, looking for something to do. And the, I finally came to the conclusion that it was getting too well-known about me, and that I was going to take a beating and I didn't want to

get licked. So I dropped out of politics for many, many years. Besides that, I had, I closed the store down. I had to be on the road making a living.

MB: Doing what?

SC: I went from one thing to another, keeping a multitude of things all at the same time. I was involved with steel, involved with, I was one of the original ones that got involved with plastic pipe, the culvert. I still have underlayment that goes under shingles, black rolls of felt, manufactured under my own label, and it's shipped all over the eastern seaboard. I'm still a major supplier of that. And I was involved with wine for a while. I was involved with hauling trailers. What the heck else was I involved with? Cement specialties. . . .

MB: How old were you at this time?

SC: This is, oh, I'd say by that time I was in the thirties on, from there on in. And then as the years went on I dropped. . . . Oh yeah, I sold gasoline tanks at one time, metal culvert, as well as plastic culvert. So I got, I've been involved with an awful lot of items. But I'll tell you something, you know what you learn in college? First of all, as you get older you're going to retain the bulk of. . . . So the first thing is you get sort of framework, shelves that you can put stuff on in terms of information. But you've got to look it up to refresh your memory on what should go on each shelf. But the thing I learned was that you listen to other people in terms of what they say and the first thing is, you only get involved with people that are real bright. If you haven't got the smarts yourself, you look around until you find people that do have it, that's number one. The second thing is, you kind of listen to each person and what they have to say.

And one day, it was just before I went into, got going on the road and I was closing down my father's store. And I went out to eat with a salesman and his uncle ran a plant in Saco that manufactured linings for shoes. And at that time I was quite impressed with what he was able to accomplish because he was making around thirty-five grand a year, and I was making fifteen. You know, it's a little difference between. And so one word led to another, and he's telling me that some of his agents, people, manufacturer's rep, were making fifty thousand a year, which at that time sounded like a million dollars. And so I said, "Well, from what I hear through our friends," (because we used to play cards together with some other friends) "that you're the one that's introduced him to most of these clients. So what about, how come they're getting fifty thousand and you're only getting thirty-five and you're so much more important to the business?" He says, "Well look, I'm working for my uncle. My uncle figures that he's got me where he wants me. Whereas the other people that are working for him, they come to him and say, 'Boy, are you lucky. I've got two other lines that are making more money than what's, you're, but only out of the goodness of my heart that I'm representing you.'" And he says, "The result is you've got leverage." And it stuck with me and as I went into these different things, I tried to keep and take on more and more and more until something was not compatible and I'd drop it, not important enough. And got a mix which was successful.

MB: When did you end up getting married?

SC: I got married, let's see, 1959.

MB: How old were you?

SC: Thirty-four.

MB: So, did you and your wife end up settling down, was it permanent? Where was that?

SC: We originally settled down on Main Street and College Street and then we built a home on Buttonwood Lane.

MB: So you've been in Lewiston for a long time.

SC: Yeah.

MB: How has the town evolved and developed from the time when you were young and it was, you know, a mill town, what have you, to current times?

SC: Well, the first thing being the, Lewiston was like this. . . . Remember my telling you about the multi-floors of places down Oxford Street, Lincoln Street, you name it? And these people kept the places up real good. And as the years went on the children got good jobs. They got educated; they moved to Greene, Sabattus, Auburn, on the outskirts of Lewiston, leaving this housing downtown. And along with it the federal government came along and started in. "We'll refurbish these things and housing for the poor," and so forth. And this type of thing does nothing but drag the town down, where we have a whole bunch of people on relief. People that can work.

MB: After your experience, your original experience with Dube, what appealed to you about the Republican Party that caused you to change, in addition to the fact that you were. . . . ?

SC: Nothing.

MB: No?

SC: No.

MB: Was it mostly because Margaret Smith was Republican that you changed?

SC: Yeah, only. And then I decided I'd gone so high in it that I kept as a registered Republican for years. Then a close friend of mine was running for state senator in the Democratic Party, so I switched.

MB: So now you're a Democrat?

SC: Now I'm Democrat. But philosophically, I'm, I wouldn't, I probably lean more towards a Democrat than I do Republican, but I don't go for everything.

MB: So, if you don't mind my asking, were you in support of the Humphrey-Muskie ticket in '68?

SC: No.

MB: Why is that?

SC: I don't remember. Nixon ran against them, and I got to know Nixon because he was part of the Marching Chowder (?) Club that formed in 1948 with our congressman, Nixon and other people that were Republican. And when he came into, ran into all of that trouble. Remember his dog situation? Well, the, when he got the approval from Eisenhower that his speech that he gave had done the trick, the first place he came to was Maine. And I was in charge of bringing him in and getting the publicity for him and all of that type of thing, so I just voted for him.

MB: Had you ever voted for Muskie for Senate, any of the . . . ?

SC: Yeah, for Senate, I, yeah.

MB: Was that mostly because of his stance on environmental issues at that time?

SC: Yeah. As the years went on and he became more environmentally friendly, then I became more friendly.

MB: That makes sense. So, how are you involved politically now?

SC: Well, I dropped out completely. And the fact is I hadn't seen Bruno for, I'd see him once a year, twice a year. Drop in, "How are ya?" And then all of a sudden we had a, did you ever hear of MERC?

MB: No.

SC: Incinerator, down at Biddeford. And they were going to build the incinerator right out in ward seven near the turnpike, and I went down to the hearing. And people from Biddeford came in, where they have this MERC plant, and they were telling about their trials and tribulations, what is involved and so forth. So I did some research and found out about newspapers with mercury, the concentration of mercury and how it stewed around and so forth; how dangerous it is to children. So I got a hold of a doctor in town who was leading the movement. He wasn't able to go anywheres with it, it took somebody that. . . . And, so, there were three votes against it, four votes for, and each one of them had indicated that they would vote for each other. Or maybe there were two and four and one that didn't, who was wishy-washy, something like that. I think maybe it was that way.

So I decided that the way to do it is just pick out one of the councilmen and slaughter him, the one that was in the ward that was going to get the incinerator. And he was a representative to the legislature as well as being a councilman. So I teamed up with a business associate of mine who was in the roofing business, and I threw thousands into this thing in terms of going after this guy.

Didn't have to report it because he wasn't a candidate for anything. It was just issue at that point, there wasn't any campaign going on. And we slammed the hell out of him until he changed his position. And then the guy that was on the fence jumped, and all of a sudden the thing got beaten. So the ones that I worked with, I felt obligated to them and I worked with them for a few years behind the scenes and, for different councilmen. And I had one guy that I completely ran his campaign, for about, he was alderman from this ward here.

MB: Who was that?

SC: Lionel Goulette. And that was a real problem-, he hadn't graduated grammar school.

MB: As in elementary school?

SC: Yeah.

MB: And he was running for. . . . ?

SC: Councilman.

MB: And how did that turn out?

SC: Well, we won all the time.

MB: How did you manage?

SC: Destroy the opponent. And after a while nobody runs against you.

MB: So you were good at what you did.

SC: Yeah. But, you know, what good is it? You know, it's something that I enjoy doing but I made an awful lot more money and secured my future by taking the same method and putting it into products that I was promoting, not on this political thrill. But the fact is, the dean is now councilman from the same ward, ward three. [Jim] Carignan or Cattigan?

MB: When did you decide, you said that for a while after the incident. . . . ?

SC: What had happened was, at the meeting they broke up for recess and I went to the men's room. And I saw the councilman for ward seven and I started in on him, how ridiculous he was, in his own ward, to go for something like this in terms of his political future. And he threatened me that, "If you push me too far, I'll go the opposite direction." I said, "You're gonna pay now." And I went after him. And my friend who lived in that ward and was very concerned about having that incinerator, he got me all kinds of people to sign pamphlets, to sign letters. And it all came from me, and yet without my name in it.

MB: And are you still running campaigns for people now, or have you retired?

SC: I've retired. Fact of the matter is, I had a close friend who was alderman from ward seven, and he ran for mayor the last time. And the guy that I, one of the guys that I had beaten for ward three councilman. . . . Wait a minute, which ward was he in? Yeah, ward three councilman, so as to put this illiterate in. He called me and he said, "Look, I was wrong on the incinerator. You guys had the thing right, it's the way it should be and so forth and so on. And I'd appreciate if you don't hurt me running for mayor." So I committed myself not to do anything. He gets knocked out. My friend led the ticket strong, a female who is now mayor, the second; the third one got pushed out of the race. Now we got heads between the two of them, the two top go-getters.

And I contacted my friend and I said, "Look, I'm now in a position to help you." And I said "I'll tell you how we're going to do it if you're willing." And I says, "We're going to go attack the drug companies. We're going to show where if you buy, it costs you so much for four pills and if you buy thirty, it costs you a dollar more; you know, things of that nature. And that if you get elected mayor that you're going to put pressure on the legislature to do something about it. And you're known as a trouble maker anyway so it's only reinforce the fact that you're vocal and that you're interested in people's welfare and so forth." "Well, I don't know. I don't know if I want to do that because I've got a friend that's working for Rite Aid, the drugstore, and he's supervisor for a few of the stores. I'll think it over," and so forth. And I never heard back from him and I didn't do anything. Later I ran into him and he turned his back on me, walked away.

MB: Really?

SC: Yeah. Because I didn't help him during the campaign.

MB: But he didn't get back to you.

SC: No. But the only way, see, if I'm going to get involved with a campaign, I'm not going to get involved with somebody else's idea on how to run the campaign. If I'm going to take a licking, it's going to be with my own ideas on how to run a campaign, and so there's no sense to get back to me, where I had a plan and he didn't buy it.

MB: Well, overall, a couple final questions. Overall, what did you think of Muskie as a political figure? You said that, you know, he was a player, obviously, because he, you know, as most politicians are, personal opinion there. But what did you think overall of him as like a political figure and the job that he did and his skills? You said he was a weak candidate at first, but he evolved a lot.

SC: He evolved a lot, and he became a very strong candidate. Governor, Senator, and as the years went on I voted for him. I had that hesitation at the beginning, you know, because of the, I hadn't seen his being converted in terms of clean-up.

MB: Do you think that he truly supported clean-up in the end?

SC: I believe so. How can anybody not support clean-up? But maybe, in fairness, if I came from Waterville and I wanted to be a prominent attorney and get elected to the legislature, would

I dare to vote against the wishes of the people in Waterville?

MB: So what do you think was his greatest contribution to Maine as a state?

SC: Well, father of the clean-up, and he was an excellent, he voted right on most of the issues that he was involved in.

MB: Such as what?

SC: That's a good question.

MB: You just recall supporting him. I mean, you don't have to recall the specific issue if you can't.

SC: Yeah, I don't remember specific issues at this, don't forget this goes back how many years now. No, what we all do is we have a favorite beef, and our opinions of somebody is on the basis of how they react to things that we feel is important. And to me, the cleaning up of the environment was absolutely essential. Not to have further pollution and so forth, something had to be done, and I'd like to see it even stronger than it is today. We waste so much money on corporate welfare that we could clean up the rivers ten times if we want to put the money into it instead of expect the paper companies to do it for us. If the government had stepped in. . . . And, according to the Constitution, the government has got a right to be in something involving people's health and safety. So I felt even as somebody that goes from being liberal to conservative, that this is a conservative thought. It's not as wild-eyed as, it isn't like giving money to go in competition with the world economy and subsidiz-. . . .

End of Side Two

End of interview