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## Gautier, Don oral history interview

Meredith Gethin-Jones

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## **Interview with Don Gautier by Meredith Gethin-Jones**

*Summary Sheet and Transcript*

### **Interviewee**

Gautier, Don

### **Interviewer**

Gethin-Jones, Meredith

### **Date**

March 18, 1999

### **Place**

Lewiston, Maine

### **ID Number**

MOH 072

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### **Biographical Note**

Donald Gautier was born in Portland, Maine on January 21, 1915. His Father was one of eleven children, born in Turner. He owned the Lawrence Music Store. His mother was a Welsh homemaker. They moved to Auburn when Donald was 5 years old. He lived in a residential area near Pettingill Park with no other French families in the vicinity. He attended Webster Grammar School. His family was not terribly affected by the Depression. He attended Edward Little High School and lived at home while attending Bates College, where he graduated in 1936. After graduation, Don owned a filling station. He first had a station in Auburn and then in Lewiston. He also owned a Firestone Tires dealership. He met his future wife in 1939. He enlisted in the National Guard in February of 1941 at Camp Landing. He attended Officer Candidate School. He married in May of 1942 at Fort Benning in Georgia. He served in the military for 5 years. He went to England in 1944, followed by France, Luxembourg, and the Siegfried Line. He remained active with the National Guard and later with the Reserve. He started a National Guard Battalion as part of the 103rd Regimental Combat Team. He worked for the Veterans Administration as a contact representative in Lewiston. He was nominated to be the postmaster of Auburn in 1954. He eventually served greater Auburn, Augusta, and Waterville areas. He was involved with the Rifle Club in Auburn. He has been president of his Bates class since 1956. He is responsible for class reunions and letters. He was involved with the Lewiston-Auburn United Fund. In 1974 he ran for State Senate in district 12 but lost. He campaigned with Olympia Snowe. He was later involved with Kiwanis and Rotary.

## **Scope and Content Note**

The interview includes discussions of: Bates College; track; Muskie's roommate Joe Biernacki; the Navy; Muskie presenting an award to Gautier; Muskie leading a parade in Auburn; the Democratic Party in Maine; differences between Lewiston and Auburn (L/A); "Loiston"; local students at Bates; tension between Bates and L/A; similarities between Bates and a teacher's college; the percentage of Bates from L/A; the division between men and women at Bates; the Depression affecting everyone; cars on Bates campus then and now; Auburn as being Republican, and Lewiston as being Democrat; the postmaster as a political appointment; the ten point preference in civil service; the changing position of postmaster; 1974 political issues; 5 cent deposit on aluminum cans; teachers' salaries; the influence of Kiwanis, Exchange, and Rotary in the 1950s; the Bates transition from conservative to liberal and the possible influence of war.

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## **Transcript**

**Meredith Gethin-Jones:** . . . th, 1999 at the Muskie Archives. Don Gautier is present and Meredith Gethin-Jones is interviewing. Mr. Gautier, could you please spell your full name?

**Donald Gautier:** Spell it? G-A-U-T-I-E-R.

**MGJ:** Thank you. Could you tell me where and when you were born?

**DG:** Yes. I was born in Portland in 1915, on January 21st.

**MGJ:** Could you tell me- you grew up in Auburn, correct?

**DG:** Yes, I moved to Auburn when we were five years old, and I went to Edward Little High School and then came to Bates.

**MGJ:** Who were your parents?

**DG:** Who were my parents?

**MGJ:** Their names?

**DG:** My father's name was Henry. And he was one of eleven children and was born in Turner, and had a store in Lewiston, Lawrence Music Store while I grew up in Auburn. And my mother's name was Olive and she was, Olive Wilson, her mother was Welsh. Of course my dad was French.

**MGJ:** What did your mother do?

**DG:** She was a homemaker.

**MGJ:** Were they politically active at all?

**DG:** Not really.

**MGJ:** Did you grow up with any political influences in Auburn?

**DG:** Not at all.

**MGJ:** No? Okay. Could you tell me a little bit about what it was like growing up in Auburn, what the atmosphere was like for you?

**DG:** Yes, I lived on Shepherd Street, which was a good residential area. And there were no

French kids around, there where, I didn't grow up with any people that could speak French, for instance. And we lived near Pettingill Park, which was a recreational area with a skating rink, particularly in the winter time. And I used to spend a lot of time down there. And I went to Webster Grammar School and spent a lot more time with sports than I did studying. I went to Edward Little [High School] and honestly did the same thing. But it was during the Depression, and my dad was doing very well in the store and we really had no, we didn't have a lot of money, but we didn't have any monetary problems at all. And I had a very happy time in school; I enjoyed it very much.

**MGJ:** Did your, you said that your friends did not speak French. But did you find that there was a large Franco population?

**DG:** Now, because there was then, too, but I was just not, in the area of the city that I lived there, I don't think, I can't think of one French family within a quarter of a mile all around me. and I never played with any French speaking kids. In high school I ran into some, but my basic friends were, all spoke English entirely.

**MGJ:** Did you find that you became more aware of it as you grew older in Auburn? And was there an ethnicity gap, did you find?

**DG:** I never found any gap at all. I had a lot of friends in high school and there were a lot of French families, but there was very little French speaking in school I would say. My, we had a small farm outside of Auburn that we used to spend a lot of weekends, and, like, my folks would go up there very often just to supper with friends. But we owned it, or dad owned it with his sister and her husband, Phillip McGraw, and that family spoke French a lot. But, again my mother, and my grandmother lived with us and they spoke no French at all. And we, I just have no ability at languages, and I came as close to flunking French as I did anything in school. But again, we had a lot of contact with the French-speaking people, and my dad had a store in Lisbon Street, which was predominantly French, in Lewiston. I think the division between Auburn and Lewiston was very much more noticeable in those days than it is now. Now, at least I'm not conscious of any, whether people are French or they're English. In those days most of the people were English-speaking in Auburn, and a greater, much greater percentage in Auburn, in Lewiston, spoke French.

**MGJ:** Did you find that there were tensions between the towns?

**DG:** No. Always felt it was a better place to live, in Auburn, than it was in Lewiston, but I expect the Lewiston people say the same thing. A lot of competition. We had a good baseball or football season if we beat Lewiston, and that was, and we always said "Loiston." My wife came from Lewiston and she always picked me up on that "Loiston" pronunciation.

**MGJ:** How did you and your wife meet?

**DG:** We met when, I had a friend that went to Bates, [E. Ronald] Ronny Gillis . . .

**MGJ:** I'm sorry, who?

**DG:** Ronny Gillis. It was the class of '37 or '8 I guess, and I had a couple of filling stations after I graduated from Bates, and Ronny was selling Firestone Tires. And then we, he stopped in the one of the filling stations and suggested we go out to his Firestone store manager's camp at Range Pond and, for dinner. And he had a friend, and he was going with my wife's cousin at the time. And so it was Ronny and Don and Margy and Mil, and we went out to Range Pond and had supper, went swimming, and started going together then.

**MGJ:** What year was that?

**DG:** Well, must have been about '39. Then the war was coming on, and I decided that I'd go in and get my year over with. They were drafting, and the National Guard was going in for a year's training, so I enlisted in the National Guard in February of 1941 and went to Camp Landing with the National Guard. We were engaged then and I went to OCS and, Officer Candidate School, and then I thought we were going overseas right away, and Margy and my mother and dad drove down to Fort Benning, [sic] Georgia, and we were married in May of '42.

**MGJ:** So, because you went to Bates, did she know many of your college friends?

**DG:** I guess I wasn't going, I was, I'd been out of school for, out of Bates for three years. And then, she did not know many of my classmates.

**MGJ:** Why did you choose to attend Bates College, do you remember?

**DG:** It was cheap.

**MGJ:** Did you live at home or at school?

**DG:** I lived at home. Actually, I had a great time at Bates and I enjoyed it very much, but I didn't really take part in much of the Bates activities, except I played football and got to know the football players very well. And then I hung around afternoons in the gym and did not do much of anything else at Bates. I had a lot of things going on in Auburn that I was interested in and . . . .

**MGJ:** What were some of those things?

**DG:** I was very active in the Rifle Club. There was a young lady I was quite interested in, then she was away at school and I was so it, that didn't take much. But I really had very little contact with the outside activities at Bates while I was here.

**MGJ:** Except that you played football.

**DG:** Yeah.

**MGJ:** Did you know Joe Biernacki in football?

**DG:** Yes.

**MGJ:** I did an interview with him a few, last month.

**DG:** Oh, Joe and I, Joe was the same year. I see him at reunions, yeah.

**MGJ:** Yeah, I believe. . . . He was Ed, I believe he was Ed Muskie's roommate for a while.

**DG:** Yes, yes, yeah, yeah.

**MGJ:** Did you know Ed Muskie?

**DG:** I knew him, but not well at all. I always was aware that he was a pretty capable fellow.

**MGJ:** Okay, do you know what he was like other than that? Did he have a reputation on campus?

**DG:** I didn't know him. I used to see him, I used to see, he run a little track I think, and I used to see him over at the Cage once in a while. But I actually did not, I just knew him casually and was much more interested in other people then, so.

**MGJ:** Who were some of the people at Bates who you were friends with or knew?

**DG:** Well Randy<sup>1</sup> and Happy Webber<sup>2</sup> were very, I was good friends with them. And in fact, I was, this last two years my wife had Alzheimers, and Brian [sic] and Happy and a couple other friends used to come over every Friday for noon, for lunch, and were very kind to us. And I was over when Randy died and, Happy was at Schooner Estates. And I'd call on her pretty regularly, and she died just last month.

**MGJ:** Oh, I'm sorry.

**DG:** And there were a lot more town people at Bates than there is now. We, most of my friends were townies, and, very friendly with Tracy Chandler<sup>3</sup> and Don MacBain<sup>4</sup>, and Dave Whitehouse, Bob Childles, Chalmers<sup>5</sup> (?), Lonnie (*name*), and [Virgil] Chick Valicenti<sup>6</sup> and Bill Stone. My grandmother lived with us and she was a, had been a cook for a long time for a family in Boston. And I used to bring home two or three Bates people, say, four times a week

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1 Randall E. Webber, born in Lisbon Falls, ME, grew up in Whitefield, NH. Former president, Bates Class of '36, honorary member, class of '35. 22 years, Dickey-Raymond. Local School Comm., Melrose, MA. Bates alumni secretary, 1968-1979. Died April 20, 1997 ([www.bates.edu/pubs/mag](http://www.bates.edu/pubs/mag)).

2 Priscilla "Happy" Walker Webber, class of 1936. Class secretary, 1951-56. Red Cross, United fund, PTA, YWCA, Melrose, MA. Lewiston YWCA, Board of Directors. Died March 6, 1999. ([www.bates.edu/pubs/mag](http://www.bates.edu/pubs/mag))

3 Tracy Chandler, class of '36, adjustor, Liberty Mutual Insurance Co., Boston, retired 1975. Died January 6, 1996. ([www.bates.edu/pubs/mag](http://www.bates.edu/pubs/mag))

4 John D. "Don" MacBain, Bates College, class of 1936.

5 Robert M. Chalmers, class of 1938.

6 Virgil "Chick" Valicenti, Bates College, B. A. class of 1935, sportswriter, "The Patriot Ledger."

without any warning to my folks at all. It never bothered anybody, we just set three more places. In fact, when I went in the National Guard there was a little fellow in there that worked for one of the grocery stores and he says, "Oh yes, your father ran the boarding home." We used an awful lot of groceries.

**MGJ:** Did you find that there was a large division, being the go-between, between Bates and Auburn? did you find that there was a large segregation? Was there tension, or did the townies view Bates students differently?

**DG:** I don't think there was any tension at all. I think that probably there's more tension now.

**MGJ:** Really?

**DG:** Bates then was essentially a teachers college, I think, and probably Bowdoin and, Bowdoin particularly had much more, had a much better reputation I think, as a college, than Bates. Most of us went to Bates because it was very inexpensive. Then the tuition was something like a hundred and twenty-five dollars a semester, and books would go fifty dollars.

**MGJ:** Wow. I won't tell you what it is now.

**DG:** Compared to what it is now, there's no comparison. But there are a lot of us here, there were fifteen or twenty in each class of Lewiston-Auburn. And it was a good experience. But I think that most of us, if would could have afforded it, would have gone to Bowdoin.

**MGJ:** Did you find that, you said that most of your friends were still in Auburn, but you also had friends at Bates. Did you find that there was, did you discuss politics at all with them?

**DG:** Very little. I'm surprised as I look back, but we were much more interested in sports and the current problems of surviving and making a living, what we were going to do, and find jobs. Jobs were scarce in those days.

**MGJ:** So that was a major issue?

**DG:** Yes.

**MGJ:** Did you find that there was any particular job that most people came out wanting, or desired?

**DG:** I would say that almost any job, period; to just get in there and be working somewhere. Wages were very low, and it was a question of surviving. Wages, you can't believe, when, I've got a friend, that's Dave Whitehouse was in my class, and he went to Harvard Business School for two years afterwards. And he come out and he worked for thirty-seven dollars and a half a week. That was a good job.

**MGJ:** Did many people come out of school and go into the service?

**DG:** I, not initially, but a lot of people went in of course in '40 and '41.

**MGJ:** Did you find that there was, what was the Bates atmosphere like when you attended?

**DG:** It was very wholesome I'd say. It was just (*unintelligible word*), but they, they just allowed dancing on campus three or four years before then and things were much, much stricter. And there was a great division between men and women students I think, and rules and regulations. And people followed them without, that's the way you're supposed to do it, and there was no problem at all, really. But I notice the biggest change over here is how active the women are in sports. It's amazing how, you know, and how many more men are involved in sports, too, and working out and keeping in shape. And, Lord knows you've got a lot more cars than they-, we had. Most everyone in those days was the product of the Depression one way or another, and even people who had money were very careful with what they did with it. When we had our sixtieth reunion we did a study on automobiles and we figured that when we were at Bates, there were five cars with a total value of something like three hundred and fifty dollars. Randy Webber had a car that he bought for twenty dollars and kept it for six months, then sold it for twenty dollars and a pair of hunting boots. And I went through the files of the guys that were registered at Bates; I think there were six hundred and four. And there were like ninety-seven current model cars of the year that were brand new, and I don't have the figures exactly but we figured that there was more money tied up in automobiles now than the total endowment and the worth of the, Bates completely, back in 1936. There's a great difference. Bates has changed a lot in the last sixty years.

**MGJ:** Can you tell me what some of the major issues were on campus when you attended? I know you said that you were pretty withdrawn, but do you remember anything in particular that stands out? Any events or issues or people even who influenced the Bates community?

**DG:** I don't remember any great issues. There was a lot of debating about the possibility of war, but, and Hitler, but I don't remember any great issues at all really.

**MGJ:** Now, I read somewhere that you worked on the Ivy Day Committee? Could you tell me what...?

**DG:** If I did, I've forgotten it completely.

**MGJ:** Really? Could you tell me what that is exactly?

**DG:** I don't know.

**MGJ:** Oh, you don't remember? Okay, that's fine, I wasn't sure. Now, you were president of your class from 1956 to 1961, correct? Is that right, the dates right?

**DG:** I guess from then on.

**MGJ:** Oh really, okay. What did that entail?

**DG:** Primarily running the class reunion and getting out a class letter. Ruthie Rowe [Wilson]<sup>7</sup> was in my class, and her father was dean of men for years at Bates, and she's worth her weight in gold. She gets out a great letter and keeps on people. And, actually, I guess it's a great honor to be president, but it's a pretty easy job to get if you're willing to do any work.

**MGJ:** Can you tell me, were you in touch with many of the people that you graduated with over the years, or did it just begin again when you became president?

**DG:** I was in touch with maybe eight or ten, you know, with a Christmas card deal and corresponding some, and seeing them occasionally.

**MGJ:** What did you do between 1936 and when you entered the Army in 1941, was it?

**DG:** When I came out of Bates, jobs were pretty scarce and I had a chance to lease a filling station in Auburn. And I then leased on in Lewiston and had a key dealership in Firestone tires and was making thirty-five bucks a week. Think I was in pretty good shape, which, then when the war came rationing was starting and I decided that I'd better get my year in and not have to worry about it. And of course the war, Pearl Harbor came, and I was in for about five years.

**MGJ:** How did, what sorts of experiences did you have in the Army?

**DG:** I went into the National Guard in a rifle company and went to Camp Landing at Florida, and I'd had a lot of experience shooting. I'd, when I was kid at Edward Little, Dave Whitehouse and I tried out for the Maine Civilian Team. I went to the national matches in Camp Perry, and we fudged a little bit on our age and were picked to go out. So we'd go out there for three weeks in the summer time and take a training course for a week and then have individual matches for a week, and then team matches for a week. And I went out there a couple of times. And the last time, in 1940, they'd introduced a new rifle, an M-1 rifle, and so I had had the training in the M-1 rifle but they hadn't issued it to the troops yet. And when we went to Benning, we had the old Springfield rifles. Then they issued the M-1 and I'd had probably more experience than anybody on the, on shooting an M-1 rifle. So I was assigned to a detail that was running the whole division, a familiarization course with the M-1 rifle. So I missed all the basic training and I got to be, I was made a sergeant right off, and then about six months later was made a first sergeant. I could do left face pretty good and right face pretty well, and about face was pretty tough, but I managed to keep going and went to officer candidate school, Fort Benning, Georgia.

And when I graduated, we thought we were going overseas right off so my dad and mother drove down to Fort Benning, and Marg and I were married in Fort Benning and, St. Clemens (?), Georgia. And then we had a where, I was assigned to a division that was at Fort Mead, Maryland. So Marg and I stayed down there, my folks went home. And I had a, I was in a rifle company, and I stayed. I went to maneuvers in Louisiana and then maneuvers in northern Michigan for winter training, and we got all ready to go overseas and they needed replacements so they levied (?) the outfit. And we'd lose most of our people and we'd start in another training cycle of thirteen weeks. We did that a couple of times, so although I went in the Army early, I

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<sup>7</sup> Ruth Rowe Wilson, class of 1936.

didn't really do much except training and maneuvering until Thanksgiving of '44.

And we went overseas in '44 and went to England, stationed (?) in England, and then went to France, and went on boxcars across France to Luxembourg to the Siegfried Line<sup>8</sup> and started fighting there, went, then really chased the Germans back across the Rhine. And we ended up near camp- and, I then had a rifle company so my job was rifle company commander all the time we were fighting. I came back and stayed active in the National Guard for a while and then went in the Reserve and then finally retired about, when I was fifty-two or three.

**MGJ:** Now, you were given many awards in, quite a few awards during your term, right? And I believe that you received an award from Muskie, right?

**DG:** Yes, yeah, yeah.

**MGJ:** Can you tell me a little bit about that?

**DG:** As I told you, I did a lot of shooting when I was a kid. And I went out to Camp Perry I think five different times on the rifle team, once as team captain and once as team coach, and then I didn't do any shooting for a long time. And when I was a (*unintelligible word*) colonel, I guess, and had a battalion, I, they wanted someone to handle some rifle shooting assignments for the National Guard. So I went down to the First Army rifle matches at Camp Drum (?), and it was a twenty-round off-hand match. And a good score in shooting off-hand would be forty-five out of fifty, would be an excellent score, and forty-six or seven would be outstanding. And again, I hadn't fired for a long time. And then I fired at a twenty-round match, and I fired thirteen fives in a row, which is unbelievable particularly for me. And I got so damned nervous that I was shaking like a leaf and I shot a couple of threes and a couple of fours, but I still ended up with a ninety-four which was a very good score. And I finished, I forget, second or third, and had forgotten all about it. Then they had a ceremony at Fort Drum on Governor's Day when Ed Muskie was there and they gave me an award, a certificate or something, I don't know. Or maybe they ordered a medal from First Army or whatever it was. But it was not the most important thing in the world.

**MGJ:** How did Ed Muskie end up going down to Fort Benning?

**DG:** He was at Drum when the National Guard, every year the National Guard had two weeks training somewhere, and we were at Drum, I think. And they always had a Governor's Day, when the governor came down and reviewed the troops, and that's why he happened to be there. And it happened to be the years that I'd been at Fort Drum shooting and, I may be wrong. Actually, it's not the greatest thing in the world.

**MGJ:** Did you remember each other?

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<sup>8</sup> Siegfried Line: Fortified lines of defense built during both World Wars. WWI: Poulvon Hindenberg and Erich Ludendorff (1916-1917) built across northern France and Belgium- Allies called it Hindenberg Line. WWII: Hitler built it along border of Germany and France opposite Maginot Line. (school.discovery.com/homeworkhelp/worldbook/atozhistory)

**DG:** Oh yes, yes, yes. I knew Ed Muskie well enough to know him right then.

**MGJ:** Did you have the opportunity to talk to him a little bit?

**DG:** Yes, yeah. One time afterwards, the Democrats were having a meeting of some kind in Lewiston. And Margy and I were at the church, so Margy was chairman of the Altar Committee and we were fixing the altar. And we heard a band coming up and a parade coming, and we went out on Spruce Street, I guess, outside of the church doors, and Muskie was leading the parade. And there was a band behind him and he looked over and saw us and he came over and we talked for five minutes, and the band marked time, and the parade held up, and then he walked off with them again. A very nice gesture on his part.

**MGJ:** Do you remember what year that was?

**DG:** Oh, Lord, no.

**MGJ:** But it was before he was governor?

**DG:** No, no, he, after. I expect he was there because he was a Secretary of State or senator. That's why he'd be leading the parade.

**MGJ:** Okay, I understand. Now, you said that there were a bunch of Democrats in town. Can you tell me- where was, what was the, what were the towns like? Was Auburn mostly Republican and Lewiston otherwise? Can you tell me a little bit about that?

**DG:** I never was very active in politics, but I'd say that Auburn was predominantly Republican and Lewiston was predominantly Democratic.

**MGJ:** Were there any major issues that you can remember that split the two parties?

**DG:** Not really. Democrats spent all the money and I heard that a couple of Republicans spend it wisely.

**MGJ:** Do you know of any political figures in Lewiston or Auburn, particularly around the 1950s?

**DG:** I knew Al Gamache very well, and Bill Hathaway.

**MGJ:** Who were they?

**DG:** Bill Hathaway was senator that beat Margaret Chase Smith as a Democrat, and Al Gamache who just died recently, and it was publicized in the paper quite a bit, was his administrative assistant. And then Al, when Hathaway did not win the second term, I think Al went to work for the government somewhere and then retired back here in Lewiston. I used to go down to non-active duty at, in Washington, and I'd always go over and see Gamache and Bill

Hathaway.

**MGJ:** I saw that Charles Nelson had, he was involved in you becoming postmaster, I believe?

**DG:** Who was this?

**MGJ:** Charles Nelson. Does that name sound familiar?

**DG:** No.

**MGJ:** Oh, okay. That's all right. Can you tell me a little bit more about Hathaway and some of his efforts or anything that he did for the town, or cities?

**DG:** Not really. This was a big surprise when he beat Margaret Chase Smith, but as far, Maine was pretty much Republican until Ed Muskie came along and started things going.

**MGJ:** Did you find that politics was a very sensitive subject, or did the community seem very friendly?

**DG:** I never got excited one way or another about it.

**MGJ:** When were you appointed postmaster?

**DG:** I think in 1953.

**MGJ:** Can you tell me a little bit about that?

**DG:** Yes. I came out of the service and went to work for the Veterans' Administration in Lewiston as a contact representative. Then they closed the Lewiston office, and I ended up down in Portland. And the postmaster appointment was a very political, in those days, and Eisenhower had just come in, appointed President. So that meant that Republicans could get appointments and not Democrats to be postmasters. And I applied for the Auburn job, and the postmaster that was acting was a Democrat and the assistant postmaster who was applying for the job, both were applying for the job was a Democrat. And I had been a registered Republican, although not active at all, but enough to be on the rolls as a Republican. And I had a ten-point preference in civil service for getting wounded, a Purple Heart, and the assistant postmaster was a veteran, had a five-point preference, and the acting postmaster was not a veteran.

And the regulations then were that you could not bypass a ten-point veteran by saying that someone else could do the job better; you had to say that that person couldn't do the job. And they had unassembled exams and the acting postmaster had I think a grade of ninety. It was graded by civil service people who were still Democrats that hadn't been replaced yet. This is right at the time that Eisenhower was coming in. And then the assistant postmaster had ninety-two, and I had something like seventy-two with a ten-point preference and I canvassed the Republican City Committee who was going to make the recommendation, and most of them said that they would vote for me if they didn't apply for the job themselves. It was really a political

deal, completely, but there was really no way they could bypass me unless they said I couldn't do the job. And I'd been a contact rep and, you know, the unassembled exam for the postmaster was just like it had been written for me as far as reading regulations and interpreting them and handling people and what not, so.

**MGJ:** What does being a postmaster actually mean? What do you do?

**DG:** Well, in Auburn we, when I went in it was, again, the way the postmaster, post office operated was that postmaster was pretty much a political figure, and then the assistant postmaster ran the office. But we had, you were just responsible for, it's like a business, running an office. Then Auburn was made a sectional center, so then we had I think some sixty satellite offices, and they all came into Auburn. And we put it together and shipped it out, and it came in the same way, and we broke it down to the different routes. Then Auburn was made a management area, and we had the responsibility of the Auburn post office and the satellite offices, and the Augusta post office and the satellite offices for Augusta, and Waterville post office and those satellite offices.

**MGJ:** So you really covered quite a lot of Maine.

**DG:** Yes, yes. It became much more of a business than a government operation. It changed a lot. Postmasters that now do it have an executive-type job and responsibilities and do a lot of work.

**MGJ:** Sorry, could I just, hold on for one moment? I need to turn the tape over.

*End of Side One  
Side Two*

**MGJ:** Okay, we left off talking about some of, you were telling me that the responsibilities of being postmaster have changed. Can you tell me a little bit about that, and what some of your responsibilities were and how you think they've changed since then?

**DG:** I think probably one of the biggest changes, and again, it's been twenty-eight years since I was the, twenty-six years since I was the postmaster, but the, when they changed to a semi-private corporation. Why, there were labor relations; we had to deal with the unions, which we never had done before. That was a big change for most postmasters.

**MGJ:** What did you do with the unions?

**DG:** We had to work up work rules, and each office made their own with the basic guidelines from the central office. And, I guess we were always responsible for the financial, everything that was, the money, stamps and what not, stamp stock, and then the, regulate the work hours. You always have a model, move today's mail today in a businesslike way, and that's overall what we were supposed to do. We had to supervise the, set up the schedules to the satellite offices, we had to have regular union labor meetings and do all the things that you do in really having a big business that handles a lot of transportation. And, have to handle a lot of personnel,

hiring and following regulations. And you get a lot of, you have to have a lot of initiative to handle standard regulations that are made for all size post offices, you have to fit them in to this size post office that you're dealing with. It was very interesting and, but a lot of people very often unhappy about the way the mail was delivered or the time it took to do, to have mail delivered. But all in all it was a very pleasant job.

**MGJ:** Okay, it sounds like from what I know, you did a lot of other things during your postmaster time, if that's correct. You were elected, you were nominated postmaster in 1954?

**DG:** Yes.

**MGJ:** And then, but then in, were you still postmaster in 1957, right? But you were also superintendent of a military academy and did other sorts of things as well?

**DG:** Yes. We, I was actually with the National Guard and we had a Batan, I set up a Batan headquarters right after the war in Lewiston. And we had companies in Norway and Auburn and Lewiston, and, as part of the 103rd Regimental Combat Team. Then I went up to state headquarters and we set up an officer candidate school, which was a brand new deal. And I set that up and did that for about three years where we would take candidates to be commissioned in the Army and the Army National Guard, and that was in Augusta. Then I switched over to the Army Reserve and ran an Army Reserve school down in Saco, and that was a command general staff school. And that would take officers who, in order to be qualified for promotion would have to graduate from a command general staff school, and I'd run that. We would have weekend meetings with classes and then go to, we generally went to the engineer school at Fort Bellevois. And we would set up a two-week instruction course for people from, coming from all over the country. Very interesting work. I did that until I retired.

**MGJ:** How did you manage to juggle that, and your responsibilities as postmaster?

**DG:** Well, of course the Reserve is a part-time deal, and I worked full-time for the post office. But weekends we would, we'd have, once a month we'd have a weekend with the Reserves, and I had to get military leave from the post office every summer to go to summer camp for two weeks. It took a lot of time, actually, outside the post office, but it was very interesting, very rewarding. We got paid a day's pay for each drill.

**MGJ:** In addition to that and your postmaster job, were you al-, you were also involved in the Lewiston-Auburn United Fund? Can you tell me what that was and what you did with that?

**DG:** Well, the United Fund was an agency created primarily to enable people to give a give to, one gift that would handle many agencies, fifteen or twenty different agencies in the Lewiston-Auburn area. And the idea was that it was more effective to give one gift and have it controlled by a committee that would determine how much each different agency would get. And President [Charles] Phillips was chairman of the United Fund for one year. And it was run by, it had an executive director and, then all the rest were volunteers. And we'd break the fund-raising down to, for instance in the mills, we'd get payroll deductions, and businesses, and then we'd have a corporations group that would handle different corporations, and an individual giving group that

would handle individual gifts, and, still very effective and very much in business nowadays. And I worked up at various different jobs in it, and then was chairman one year- good experience.

**MGJ:** You mentioned that the mills, you talked about the mills a little bit. Was that a very large, were many people involved in the mills?

**DG:** Yes. Back when the Bates Mill was at its height, it was a, and the Continental Mill, they were a big part of Lewiston's economy.

**MGJ:** Did you know many people who worked for the mill?

**DG:** Did what?

**MGJ:** Did you know many people who worked there?

**DG:** Not really.

**MGJ:** Or were involved somehow?

**DG:** I knew Louis Laun very well, who was assistant to the president of Bates Mill, moved next door, and I knew Denny Blais who was the union leader. And, the mills were a much bigger factor in Lewiston than they are now.

**MGJ:** What sort of influence did the unions have in Lewiston and Auburn, politically or otherwise?

**DG:** I never got involved much in any influence they'd have. Of course they, they, it was constantly a tug-of-war between Denny Blais who headed the union, and Louis Laun who was doing the labor relations for the mill, but. Again, the mills were very important back in those days.

**MGJ:** Okay. Jumping ahead, in 1974 you sought the District 12 Senate seat?

**DG:** Yes.

**MGJ:** Can you tell me a little bit about that, and how you decided to run and what some of the issues were then and how you became more politically active?

**DG:** Well, long story. A friend of mine, Dick Olfene, had run for the Senate seat in District 12, I guess it was, and had won I think by three votes, and decided not to run again. And I had just retired, and people asked me to run and I very foolishly agreed, because I really was not a politician. And I just didn't, I just didn't enjoy it, running, to tell you the truth. We had a meeting of, teachers wanted a meeting, Teachers Union wanted a meeting. And they came over to, several representatives came over to the house and were, their pitch was that they were going to write a law that they wanted to have affecting teachers and teachers' pay, and wanted to know

would I supported. I said, "Well, I'm not going to support it until I read the law and know what it says," and they were, some of them were kind of upset and they supported the Democratic candidate. But that threw me off as much as, honestly, as much as anything.

There were so many special interest groups that wanted something regardless of how it affected everything else and I honestly did not enjoy running. And there were not really any great issues that I can think of that were at stake. Most Democrats were taking over pretty much in those days, and I lost by I think twenty votes, or twenty-five votes or something like that out of five thousand. That was not the happiest period of my life, let's put it that way.

**MGJ:** Right, right.

**DG:** I would, I just was not cut out to be a politician.

**MGJ:** Was that the period of your life when you were the most politically active. . . . (*unintelligible phrase*)? Right.

**DG:** Yes, by far. I went to a lot of meetings.

**MGJ:** Did you find, what sort, what did you learn from some of the meetings?

**DG:** I think that I learned primarily that I wasn't interested in being a politician. Incidentally, Olympia Snowe was running for the House of Representatives at the same time, so we campaigned together a couple of times. She did much better than I did.

**MGJ:** What were some of the questions that you were asked, or opinions that people wanted to know your opinion on?

**DG:** Well, if there should be a five cent redemption thing on soft drinks I think was the most important thing. Really, I don't, there were not any pressing issues I think at the time, at least that I was concerned with, that people. . . . Mostly people wanted some particular, one group wanted this and one group wanted something else, with no regard for the overall picture, which is, it's hard to compromise on things like that, it seems to me. And of course, and if you would be for or against higher salaries for teachers for instance without looking at the whole picture is, to me is not a reasonable way to do things- to commit yourself to being for this or for that but know exactly what it means. It may not make much sense but it's, you have to have a certain type personality I think to do that kind of thing.

**MGJ:** Were there any major problems in Maine during your campaigning? I realize that Maine has always had difficulty with its economy, but were there any pressing issues that you can remember?

**DG:** A long time ago, I just don't remember any pressing issues really.

**MGJ:** Okay. Now, I have a question jumping back to after you left the Army. Why did you decide to return to the Lewiston-Auburn area?

**DG:** I'd lived here all my life and Margy lived here all her life, my wife, and there was never any question. My mother had cancer and was very sick and I, of course not supposed to come home until the spring.

**MGJ:** Spring of?

**DG:** Of '45. But the, there was a point system in the Army and if you had enough points, you did not, they did not expect you to go to Japan. Then as the war ended, I had a lot of points so I was going to stay in Germany and the rest of the outfit, most of them, were going to go back to the States for leave and then head for Japan. Then the war ended, then everything got changed around so I came home in October. My dad had had a heart attack and he died in December, and my mother, again, had cancer and went to, was bedridden shortly afterwards and then lived for about a year. My grandmother took care of her. So when my mother died, Margy and I bought the house, and there was never any question but we would live in Lewiston and Auburn I guess.

**MGJ:** Well, I have, I don't think I have any other questions. Is there anything that you would like to tell me that I missed out on, that you think is significant?

**DG:** Well I wish I had more information to tell you about Ed Muskie but I. . . . Ed was universally admired by everyone in the class, I mean certainly. And I got to know him a lot better since we were having reunions, and he was always down to earth and just a very fine individual. I know we talked the last reunion about service during the war and he'd gone in the Navy, and I forget what his job was on a destroyer. And I remember saying, "Jeez, I don't know how you, with your background, how you were doing," I think it had something to do with the engines on a destroyer. An A. B. degree at Bates really doesn't help a lot in a situation like that. And I guess a lot of people did a lot of things during the war that they weren't really trained to do, and did them well.

**MGJ:** Did he, what other things did he discuss with you, remember?

**DG:** It was a long time ago.

**MGJ:** Right. Did you find that the, did you find that your friends had changed very much from the time you graduated to the reunions? Did some of their beliefs change or their political views?

**DG:** I don't think so.

**MGJ:** No?

**DG:** I have been going hunting for years with five fellows from my high school class and they have all died except one now. But over the years we would get in the hunting camp, and you'd shut your eyes and you'd go back forty years or fifty years. And these guys were, they were much smarter and they were more sophisticated, but they were just the same people. I think your character is built pretty much while you're young and generally stays about the same.

**MGJ:** What were some of the reunions like?

**DG:** Well, they were never very wild, I would say. It was typically at Bates, old-time Bates reunion-type deal I guess. I don't know how they are now. But, people were very friendly and very glad to get together. Lots of talking and we'd always have a decent program and a meal and a very pleasant time. I think people look forward to them. A lot of friendships were made in college that last a long time.

**MGJ:** Did you find that when people came back for reunions they all, people in various groups coalesced, such as the debate club or the football team?

**DG:** I don't think so. I didn't feel that way at all, no. They, I think they, the thing that impressed me most was that everybody was really making an effort to meet everybody and see them. And one thing that, living in Auburn and Lewiston all my life, the Bates professors that were at Bates when I was here were great people. And I met a lot of them in Kiwanis and Rotary after, after the service. Brooks Quimby, for instance, I didn't have him in a class at Bates, but we got to be great friends at Kiwanis. And he was a member of the Jesters and we did a, improvised a lot of skits just to keep, keep interest in the club. And Paul Bartlett and Granville, and Harry Rowe. I still see, go see Norm Ross. Norm Ross, he was a hundred last year. He was the bursar at Bates for years. The, all the Bates old professors were very friendly with me and nice over the period of the last fifty or sixty years. I think I appreciate the friendship of the professors at Bates over the years as much as anything I could think of.

**MGJ:** You mentioned the Kiwanis Club. What sorts of things did this chapter in Lewiston-Auburn do?

**DG:** What, the Kiwanis Club is a business group that, we used to be very active and did a lot of, we did a lot for children in dental work I remember.

**MGJ:** In where, I'm sorry?

**DG:** We did a lot for improving dental work for children. And they have various projects and, very interesting group. Generally had several current Bates professors in it, and excellent meetings with a program each week. Used to run an auction and have the proceeds for various projects in the two cities.

**MGJ:** Did you find that Lewiston and Auburn, or do you find that Lewiston and Auburn are still in great need of that sort of organization? What is the community based, founded on? I guess that's what I'm asking.

**DG:** I don't have much contact with what's going on nowadays, tell you the truth.

**MGJ:** Then when you were involved?

**DG:** I would say that the Kiwanis, the Exchange and the Rotary Club were very important back

in those days for getting top people together to know each other and work together, and each had special projects to do something good for the city. And how active they are now, I'm not sure. But back, back in those days there was no television and there was a lot more activities that you did to meet people and be around, get around.

It's a different world altogether as far as, when we were kids, for instance, we always had a ball game going in Paul's Woods in the field. And you could go up there any time of the day and the kids would be playing ball. And if you went down to the Pettingill Park, there would always be kids skating. Now, my grandchildren I don't think, they all play ball like mad. But they, I don't think they ever played baseball without a uniform and an umpire and the formal set up. I don't think, they were, had pick-up games and, we did all the time, and we always had hockey games on. But nobody ever, there were no adults around and there wasn't uniforms and schedules and skating times. Kids went outside and played. We went to a Army reunion in Minneapolis a couple years ago and had a tour of the city around, on a Saturday: did not see one kid out playing. And you go around town now and you don't see kids out playing. They're watching television or they're playing games with their computers. Altogether different bringing up of children nowadays. Whether it's better I'm not sure, but.

**MGJ:** You said that some of the professors were involved in the community here in Lewiston and Auburn. Were the professors a part of that community, or were they primarily a part of Bates and chose to integrate themselves into the community?

**DG:** I think they were, of course with living in Lewiston and Auburn . . .

**MGJ:** Right. Were they already established in the towns or did they come to Bates as, from somewhere else and then decided to participate in the community as well?

**DG:** I think they, they, most of them of course came from somewhere else to Bates. But they bought homes so they were, lived with the community, yeah.

**MGJ:** Right. I guess I was more interested in the integration part of it, and how, and if the professors influenced the students at all in terms of participating in some of the community events in Lewiston and Auburn.

**DG:** I would say that they did not do it very actively, at least, I don't know. Bates was not nearly as liberal as it is now. Bates was, I would say, pretty strict in their management of the college. And it was accepted without any real protest.

**MGJ:** What do you think prompted that change, from conservative to liberal?

**DG:** I expect the war probably changed things as much as anything. People got around and traveled a lot and met different people. I know that when we, when I went south with the National Guard, we went by train. And when we went by Old Orchard Beach, we left from Portland, most of the kids had never seen Old Orchard Beach. You know, it's just an hour's trip down the coast. And now you talk to kids and they talk about New Zealand or they talk about Australia or Europe or anywheres in this country, and people get around a lot more. And. . . .

again, Bates has changed tremendously in the last fifty years, much more liberal. Not all for the better, not all for the worst I guess.

**MGJ:** Well, I have no further questions. Is there anything else that you'd like to tell me?

**DG:** I guess not.

**MGJ:** Okay, well then, thank you very much for your time.

**DG:** This is not going to much of a help for anything.

**MGJ:** No, no.

**DG:** You forget a lot when you get old, you know.

**MGJ:** Well, you seemed to remember quite a bit. Thank you.

*End of Interview*