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Jacques, Emile "Bill" oral history interview

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Interview with Emile “Bill” Jacques by Don Nicoll and Mike Richard

Summary Sheet and Transcript

Interviewee

Jacques, Emile “Bill”

Interviewer

Nicoll, Don
Richard, Mike

Date

June 22, 1999

Place

Lewiston, Maine

ID Number

MOH 110

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Biographical Note

Emile Jacques was born on February 2, 1925 in Lewiston, Maine to Florestine (Hemond) and Ovid Jacques, two Canadian immigrants from Plessisville, PQ. He served in the Marine Corps for two years beginning around 1943. After the war, he owned a motorcycle shop and raced motorcycles competitively around New England and Canada for 11 years, sometimes racing as “Bill Peterson.” He later owned Twin City Cigarette, which was a Lewiston cigarette shop. He went to the New York Institute of Criminology for two years, and then became active in Lewiston politics. He served as Ward 3 Alderman from 1954 to 1958, as a Legislator from 1955-1961, as Mayor from 1960-1962, and as State Senator from 1961-1967. While serving as State Senator on the 100th Maine legislature he was a member of the Industrial and Recreational Committee and the Development and Congressional Redistricting Committee. He was also chosen Senate Minority Leader in 1963 and served two terms as Ward 7 Alderman from 1962 to 1964.

Scope and Content Note

Interview includes discussions of: connection between Lewiston and Quebec in the 1930s-1940s; Robert Wiseman; bootlegging; “Wiseman Gang” of Paul Couture, Al Lessard, Jere Clifford,

Robert Caron, Roland Tanguay, and Louis Jalbert; Lewiston political cliques; Muskie as a legislator; Ernest Malenfant; legislative issues of the 1950s; Frank Coffin; Le Messenger; Richard Sampson; running for Senate President; determining Lewiston political line-ups; television; Ed Muskie story: convention 1960; lobbying for Kennedy at the 1960 convention; run-ins between Louis Jalbert and Bill Jacques; urban renewal; difference between Lewiston and the St. John Valley; airport politics; Kennedy visit to Lewiston; Clay-Liston fight in Lewiston; Ed Muskie's impact on Maine; and Androscoggin County jail reconstruction.

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Transcript

Don Nicoll: It's 22nd of June, 1999. We are at the home of Emile "Bill" Jacques at 31 Pleasant Avenue, Pleasant Street rather, in Lewiston. And Bill, we're going to start out by asking you to give us your full name and when you were born, where you were born, and your parents' names.

Emile Jacques: Okay. Well, I was born February 2nd, 1925 in Lewiston, Maine. My folk's name are, my father's name is Ovid and my mother was Florestine Hemond, which came from Plessisville and Pleasantville, Canada.

DN: In Quebec?

EJ: Yes, in Quebec. They came in this country in about 1910. My sister was about three years old. My father had lost a sawmill by fire, his father had died a few years before; he lost his brother on the river. And they figured, “Well, this is the end. The sawmill is gone so we’re going, we’re going to America,” to North America I guess you call it.

DN: Did they have relatives in Lewiston?

EJ: Yes, well, my mother’s, which was my grandmother, had come in to the States because she had lost her husband when, on the Hemond side. And she met her brother-in-law here. Her brother-in-law had a wood yard and a coal yard on, on Chestnut Street where we, where we went to. And she came here but they were going to Lawrence, but they stayed here. My father was also a carpenter so he wanted to, so they settled here. And he worked as a carpenter for, God, he worked for one contractor for twenty-seven years I guess, and then the other one, (*unintelligible phrase*), they built University of Maine in 1938, when they built the dorm there I guess in Orono. He was gone for the week and come back at the end of the week. So that’s, that was the story.

They, they were well-to-do in Canada, they were doing well. They were selling, they were making shingles and they were selling that all over, all over the province. My grandfather died from delivering a load of shingle. It would, took him a week by horse and he had pneumonia, so he died from that. He went to, it was to Brockton which is about, oh, I don’t know, twenty, thirty miles from Sherbrooke. So, but he died from that pneumonia. And then they had, they had seven girls and three boys. And the boys were taught by the girls because they were all schoolteachers; they became schoolteachers. And the boys were working and at night the girls would teach them, so that’s how they got their education. They taught school in Windsor, Windsor Mill, Germanville, yeah, German-, some went to Germanville, Victoriaville, and Plessisville. Victoriaville was. . . . Sacred Heart College there, you know, Brothers of Sacred Heart. So, but that, that was, well the biggest town in there was Victoriaville, that was a good-sized town. They made cheese and, I don’t know, commodities that they made. But it was, Plessisville is a, is a town of, they tell me that anything will grow there. It’s one of the best soil in North America and I believe it. There’s so many farms there, and beautiful clean place, you know.

DN: Did you go there a lot as a boy?

EJ: Well, I went, I used to, my father, the family used to go once a year, the whole family. My father in ‘31 purchased a Nash from money he got from an estate that one of my uncle died. And matter of fact, money came from DeLord’s bakery out of Biddeford when that, when that closed down, I mean stopped, in that, in that bakery. Well anyway, he said to my oldest brother, he says “Somedays we’ll have a car, too.” He used to sit on the steps at the drug store there and see all the other going. And so he bought a 1931 Nash and he kept that thing, didn’t go out in the winter, he’d lift it up, jacked it up and it was, it was quite something. And he took care of it. And so, but he got himself a job with Pelletier and Rivard, Mailhot first, Mailhot was the one that built the University of Maine, down in Orono. And then he went and worked for Pelletier and Rivard and he worked for them for twenty-seven years. He’s a finish carpenter. I wish I’d of had him when I bought this house.

DN: When you went to Canada, did you stay very long or was it a week. . . .?

EJ: Yeah, weekend, weekend, but I did go many, many times after that because I used to race motorcycles in Canada. And my name was Bill Peterson, because, well, because American Motorcycle Association didn't honor the Canadian Motorcycle Association. You know, they didn't get along. So by having another name. . . . But I was in Montreal, every Saturday night at Richelieu Park and raced there. The next day I'd either be in Cornwall, (*name*), but I'd always stop at my aunt. She was like a, well, a grandmother to me I guess; my father's sister, the oldest one.

DN: She was a schoolteacher?

EJ: Yes, oh yes, she was. Yeah, yeah.

DN: Now how long did you race motorcycles?

EJ: About eleven years.

DN: When was that?

EJ: Oh, let me see, back in '46. When I come back from the service I got, oh I got pictures of it and everything, yeah. Matter of fact I was, well, I held the championship but I don't know if they recognized it or not because I was a, what do you call it, an illegal rider?

DN: When did you get the nickname "Bill?"

EJ: That was when I was kid. I always thought it was a farmer's name and my uncles were farmers out in Minot, you know the Hemonds?

DN: Oh, sure.

EJ: When you talk about the Hemonds, that's, those are my cousins. Their father was my mother's brother. And he came here and he stayed at my mother's house then. I wasn't born then, but they, that's where they all came in, congregated here. And matter of fact, in those days the girls were working and they'd come up and eat at our house. And my mother used to feed them because there wasn't many restaurants in those days.

DN: Were they working in the mill?

EJ: They were working at Eastern Distributor, selling beer there. Remember Eastern? That was in Wiseman, Wiseman, well there was Wiseman farm also, Wiseman ice cream, you know, in those days. So anyway, that's how she brought up five kids. I was the youngest one. And the carpenters didn't work in the winters, so my father would go work cutting ice for Wiseman on the river or the lake, and, or shovel snow for Grand Trunk for, to bring in money. And then Federal Aid, Federal Food, they were butter and, butter and canned beans and all that stuff they

were giving away, surplus I guess. There was still some of those in those days, too, you know.

DN: Did politics play much of a part in your family's life?

EJ: Well, I tell you, right next door to me was a shoe store and then there was Dr. Wiseman. And Dr. Wiseman [Dr. Robert J. Wiseman] became mayor in 1927 [*sic*] [1926], and, you know, so I, I got a little bit of whiff from them, and there was a lot of bootleggers around in those days. I knew where their. . . . Well I knew, as I got older I knew. And that's, that's really, and then I ran, because they got after me to get rid of [Ernest] Malenfant. I don't know if you remember him or not.

DN: Oh yes, I remember Ernest.

EJ: And they wanted to get rid of him and so they made me run. I lost the first time by very slim margin, but the next time I won. After he got done for mayor he ran again, and then that's when I beat him, you know, I got. . . . Well that's how I started.

DN: Now what year was that?

EJ: That was in the '50s I think. When Ed Muskie, when Ed Muskie got into the House of Representatives.

DN: Well he was elected to the House in 1946, '48 and '50.

EJ: No, when he became governor, I mean. . . .

DN: Governor of '54.

EJ: Yeah, well that's when I started.

DN: Okay.

EJ: I can remember walking in, into this, his office and sitting down there. And this big tall guy, for God's sake, he was tall as you could, looking up at him.

DN: And that was the year he ran for governor, or '55 he ran for governor?

EJ: He was governor then when I, first I took John Reed's seat in the House because John Reed I think went to the Senate. And I had the same seat as he had in the House.

DN: That would have been when? Mike, you did some research.

Mike Richard: Well I'm not sure if my research is correct actually. Because, I've got you, I looked up, you said from '56 you were in the House; does that sound right? And then from '60 you were mayor? But that would be, '60 would be after Muskie's already senator.

EJ: I can get you my, when I go back to the house I got all my dates down, you know.

DN: I think though. . . .

EJ: Millie, have you got, you know, the sheet that I have my years that I served?

DN: The, in the. . . .

EJ: The dates, it's the same thing with me, you know, they go to a hundred and six and 19-, it makes a lot of, trying to get those dates together, you know, the 106th or 101 or, you know?

DN: Now you went, you went into the service toward, what, in the middle of the war?

EJ: Forty-three.

DN: Forty-three.

EJ: Nineteen forty-three. April, I think it was April in '43.

DN: What branch of the service?

EJ: U.S. Marine Corps, yeah.

DN: And you got out in '45?

EJ: I got out about six months after that. It was almost over. Well, matter of fact they sent me home and they tried to get me. I was in the naval air station in Brunswick. I stayed there until I had all my time in. And then I, here (*showing doc*) you can look in this (*unintelligible phrase*).

DN: What did you do after you got out of the service?

EJ: I took it easy for a year, rode my motorcycle. Had a hell of a time. I had a two-thousand dollar, two one thousand dollar bill on my strap. That's all I had in my. . . .

DN: In your belt.

EJ: In my belt and I carried that close to me. I decided I was going to buy a plane; I'm going to fly. So I went down on Central Avenue and, my God, nineteen hundred dollars. I says, "Christ, that's all the money I have. What am I going to do?" So I didn't buy it because they say, "Well, it's going to change. Planes are going to be like cars." So I waited, and it never got that way; it got to be more and more expensive to fly, so I didn't. But I became a pilot though. I was flying, yeah. Matter of fact we owned, me, Roland Mailhot and a few other guys, eight guys I guess, and we took over the, we formed State Aviation so we were owners of State Aviation for, I don't know, four or five years. And we had Piper Cub dealership and we used to fly to Canada. We had a charter to fly back and forth to, in Canada, you know, approved by the FAA. And so we, you know, because there was, there was some business. I see the airlines there says they're the

first ones. They weren't. We were. Yesterday I heard that on TV.

DN: So after you took that year. . . .

EJ: I had a hell of a time.

DN: And you're riding your motorcycle around.

EJ: Well they'd send me home for ninety days and then, see I had rheumatic fever and malaria. So they'd send me home for ninety days and I'd just report there, New York, and come back home, and get my money every month, and all the girls I wanted I guess. And we were a gang; we had, nothing destructive, you know. I mean we were, and we had a good time, because all the guys were coming back too, you know. I was one of the first ones to come back. And, yeah, we had a, we had a good time.

DN: Now you referred to the "gang," Is this a group that stuck together. . . .?

EJ: Local, local guys, no, not really, men and wife and, you know, we'd go riding. And, we were about thirty-five, and going to Booth Bay or whatever, yeah. But on Sundays, weekends I was gone, every week.

DN: Now what did you do during the week?

EJ: Well, I had a motorcycle shop. I'd do that. And then I had a tobacco company. I opened up Twin City Cigarette, and I sold cigarette and tobacco. And, God, I was making four, five hundred dollars a week clear. Where the hell could you get that money then? That was a hell of a job, you know that? So I'd take, see I- first of all I went to work for Bates Street Cigar so I learned the business, you know. Matter of fact I was truck driver and got to know the people so when I started on my own I had another dealer that. . . . See, franchise for cigarette, it's not, there's not too many, you know, you have to be, you know, to be able to buy from them. So Lucien LaBrie which was, oh God, Maine Cigarette I guess on Park Street, used to loan me about two or three thousand dollars a week in cigarette and tobacco and cigar. And then, couldn't get gas either. Gas was hard to get; they had coupons. So if I had cigars, I had cigars, they'd give me, the big shots, you know, the people that owned some of those businesses, would swap cigars for gas. So I'd get all the gas I want. It was hard to get gas, you know, and these people had all they wanted.

But that's what I did, I used to go down to the island; Boothbay and all of those places. Well I didn't go as high as Boothbay I don't think; no, I went to Harpswell and some of those places. And Brunswick, Brunswick was a good place for me. And then I was in Readfield, in Waterford, Lovell and those areas. Norway, South Paris, those were all, walk in and introduce myself, "Oh yeah, that's right, yeah, oh yeah, I can buy a few things from you." That's how it went.

DN: Now this was in the '40s and the early '50s?

EJ: Yes, yeah. And why I let it, go I don't know. Then, oh no, I know why, because I decided that I wanted to be a criminologist. So I went to New York Institute of Criminology. Well I was home every weekend. I'd drive to New York and back; I was going crazy. I hated that, you lived like an animal down there. And, so I met a guy in school with me. His father ran the New York Life Guaranteed, and London, Guaranteed Company. I don't know how come I remember all those things. And he says, "Bill," he says, "my father's willing to, why don't ask my father?" he says. "He'd hire you." Well I went to work but good God, you know, going to school and working, that was a load, you know. I lived in Brooklyn and I lived on 70-, my school was 71st and Broadway so, you know the things that happened to us, it wasn't as bad as it is today maybe, but it was bad, I'll tell you. And, you know, coming from a small town like I had, I know everybody and talk to everybody, it wasn't easy. Anyway, we managed it and finally after two years I let go. Then that's when I ran for the legislature and got elected. Matter of fact, I was going to go work for State Police. They asked me to take my physical and, hey, I was a member of the legislature; I just got elected. So what do I do? I said, now they recognize me because I'm a member of the legislature.

DN: What was it like dealing with Ed Muskie as a legislator?

EJ: It was- it was fun. It was interesting because naturally, you know, coming from a smaller town like this, and all of a sudden, you know, you're wanted and you're needed. You know, everybody, every vote counts, you know? But I did, I did a lot of side work for Ed Muskie, you know, I mean getting people to communicate with us, to get back, you know, back in with the Party, you know, not to jump and naturally work also with the Albert gang from up north. You know, I don't remember that. He had a, they were Republicans and they had that little group that used to screw up the whole Republican Party, you know, when they (*unintelligible phrase*). So I don't know, well you know him.

DN: [Robert H.] Albert?

EJ: Yeah, he worked in Washington with you. He was a postmaster or something; I mean working with the post office.

DN: The Postal Service, yeah.

EJ: Yeah, he got himself a good job, see? Politician, you get a Yeah, we sat in the back together and, oh, we messed up a lot of things, I'll tell you.

DN: Now you, there were several factions. I remember Ernest Malenfant used to refer to them as the "cliques" in Lewiston. Were you part of a clique or were you on the outside of. . . .?

EJ: Yes, I guess maybe I was because I was- I'm on the Board of Aldermen, too, you know. So I was one of the big fours; seven members and I was one of the fours, against Malenfant actually.

DN: Who were your allies in that?

EJ: Paul Couture I guess was, Clifford, Jere, Jere was one. I got, we got together one year. Not

that he wanted that, but he was ward one and I think Robert Caron, you know. We had to elect our president of the council, so, you know, I became, oh, two or three times I guess I became president. But we used to argue too. We'd put Paul Couture, you know Paul Couture, you, you, I can always remember the time Al Lessard, when, can I talk about that?

DN: Oh sure.

EJ: Well, we were going to vote on the busing for children, schoolchildren. So, actually it was a very impressive thing that was going on. I mean, you know, it was, so Al Lessard comes up. Al Lessard was floor leader, he was majority, minority leader then I guess, when the vote for parochial school transporting. So he come up and he says, "You guys don't say nothing at the caucus." Paul Couture says, "I'll say what I want to say." He says, "Paul," he goes there and he says, "you're going to do and you're going to kiss the bishop's ring, too." I've never forgotten that. He didn't say it exactly that way you know, but he says, "You'll vote for, and you'll kiss the bishop's ring." I've never forgotten that; that was, these guys are all gone today, matter of fact. Because Tanguay [Roland D. Tanguay] and Jalbert and Cote and Paul; actually, Paul's gone.

DN: When did you first have run-ins with Louis Jalbert?

EJ: Well, Louis always liked to take over. He'd go to, "Don't worry, I've got the Lewiston vote." Well that got back to me. I says, "Look Louis, you don't have the Lewiston vote. You don't have my vote. You want to discuss it with me before you have my vote." Well that really, that was the, that was the time that we. . . . But then, I didn't drink. And he'd go around the beer joints saying that I was a dry, not to vote for me. I'd be right behind him at those beer joints, the same place. And I'd say "Hey, maybe I'm not a drinker, but I'm not against licensing people and running a good clean place." That's all I had to do; that was it. Because you know, a lot of votes in those places, and they had clubs too, now more than there were, but then they had the clubs in there. And, and you know, you can't, you couldn't do that anyway; you couldn't close up those places. And Paul Couture was the same way. I mean, you know, we, we had, I wasn't dry, you know, but I, I wasn't wide open for the kids to go drink and everything else either.

DN: In the, do you remember any of the big issues in the legislature? You mentioned the money for busing. Did you get involved with. . . . ?

EJ: Well, I think the sale tax, I think the issue on the sale tax. The first one, there was a guy from Lewiston that voted for the first sale tax we had, which was Turgeon. And boy oh boy, they didn't want to see him again. That guy never ran. He was a Senator, father owned a pharmacy. And that, that really did him some harm. But, we didn't vote for it but finally I guess they got it through anyway. So that was a big issue. And the other issue, oh, the District Court, when we. . . . Well I don't know if it was a big issue because Alton Lessard was instrumental in getting the District Court through; you know, changing the, the way of appointing. Then the appointment were made, municipal court changed to District Court, and that was, that was an important issue. And funding actually was always an issue. We wanted money for parochial school, because if they'd ever close the parochial school in Lewiston, the state would go

bankrupt. We had nine hundred more kids going to parochial school than there were in public school, nine more, nine hundred more, so you see what that would have done to our city budget. But see, that didn't count, as you know, that didn't count for funding from the state, which to me is unfair. But that's their belief, so.

DN: You mentioned meeting Ed Muskie and being impressed with how tall he was. Did you ever have any arguments with him in those days?

EJ: No, never, never, never, and the same thing with Frank Coffin. I can remember when Ed Muskie, when that, when we, matter of fact I was in the room when Ed Muskie decided they'd run, Ed Muskie, Frank Coffin. But they didn't intend for Ed Muskie to win; they didn't think he'd win, because he had just gotten beaten in Waterville by what, one vote for mayor? See, I remember that, too. And so, you know. Or, that would break the ice a little bit, and then Frank Coffin would come in. But it didn't work that way.

DN: Were you involved in the '54 campaign?

EJ: Oh, definitely.

DN: What were you doing?

EJ: Oh, God, everything. Absentee ballots mostly. Yeah, I did a lot of those. And then I took Muskie and Frank Coffin down on the River Street and Oxford Street. And I can remember Frank looking, walking in the alleys, you know, behind them, and looking, and saying, "Jesus this is neat, this is incredible. I can't believe how clean these places are." Well they had to, because if they didn't, they would deteriorate and then fires and everything else. It's a lot different today, than when they let other, well, I don't know what you call them but, they have, start having fires and as you see the buildings are, a lot of buildings are gone. And I used to deliver the newspaper there, too, the French newspaper.

DN: *Le Messenger*?

EJ: *Le Messenger*. I had all of Lisbon Street down, I had Park Street, too, some of it, but down on River Street, way down to River Street. Rosaire Martelle, you remember Rosaire? Well way, his house was, well not his house, his mother, was down, way down where the plant is today, the treatment plant. That was a walk for a kid to do, used to do that. And then they used to haul the snow with, with horses, those, those, and that isn't that long ago, really, you know? I did that. My brother did it for seven years and I did it for seven years.

DN: And how often was *Le Messenger* printed?

EJ: Every day.

DN: Every day.

EJ: Every day, yeah.

DN: And was Louis Phillippe [Gagne] editor at that time?

EJ: Oh, I don't think so, he became one. No, I think, I think Faust Couture, (was it Faust or Valdar?), no Valdar was just, Faust was the writer I think, he's the guy, Faust was the tall fellow and really the guy behind it, you know, and a good man, good guy. Yeah, I delivered that *Messenger*. Hey, made money to buy my clothes. Then I'd work in the A&P, bagging potatoes, you know, and damn I hate potatoes today.

DN: Because you had to bag them?

EJ: Oh, God, did I bag potatoes. They came a hundred and sixty-five pound barrel. They used to put them in back, you know, they used to pile them up. I'd put one side of it, you know, in back of my belt and get it down from, you know, where it was. I remember how to do that. Then, oh yeah, then I was ten, twelve years old then. And the A&P they had little stores then, and they had one not far to where we lived. And I used to go with the truck driver to help him unload, you know, when he'd come in once or twice a week with a load of canned goods and whatever, they'd bring them in for him to, for them to sell. And I'd help him and he'd give me a dime. That was all right. You had to survive, right? You know?

DN: Did you used to save that money?

EJ: Yes, oh yes I did, darn right, and buy my clothes. My newspaper used to pay for my clothes. I think I'd make, oh, three or four dollars a week with my newspaper route, you know, plus tips. Some people would give you a tip. Some people would give you grocery. Some stores gave me grocery for, for my newspaper. Yeah, right in front of the Grand Trunk there, there was a store, Verville, yeah.

DN: Did you encounter Ernest Malenfant in those days?

EJ: Oh yes, yes, yes. I wanted to beat him up one time. He goes down, we had voted to rebuild Water Street, in back of the Greek Church there. It wasn't accepted. I put up, I put the money in the budget for it, and he went down there and when they started rebuilding it; "I did that." And I was behind him telling them "No, he didn't. I put the money in; he didn't." Oh yeah, he's the conniver, you know, him and Frank Bussiere. I remember Frank, yeah.

DN: When did you first meet Frank Coffin?

EJ: Oh, Frank was a lawyer here; we knew Maury, you know, his father, was a mayor also.

DN: His grandfather [Frank A. Morey].

EJ: Yeah, his grandfather. Oh, God, it's hard. I was a Frank man, not a Muskie man really, you know, when they ran, because I thought Frank was incredible. And matter of fact, four years ago, we're coming back from St. Martin, he's on the same plane as we are. And my wife sees him go by, "Gee, that looks like Frank." So I go up and there was Frank. He's coming back, he

had gone to Mexico I guess. He's a District, U.S. District Court. . . . ?

DN: A Circuit Court judge, yeah.

EJ: Smart man, huh? Have you ever met a smarter man?

DN: No.

EJ: I haven't, I don't think so. This man was a, did he go to Bates, too?

DN: He's a Bates graduate in, he was in the class of 1940.

EJ: See, the Morey's were worth money, you know. They were one of the rich people from Lewiston, and they did a lot for the city. Matter of fact they were on the New England Water Power I think, too, and the Skeltons and all of them.

DN: Did, now you were in the legislature and you were talking earlier about the election of Bud Reed as Senate president. What happened in that? You were a candidate for Senate president and. . . .

EJ: Got beat.

DN: How did that happen?

EJ: First of all I had met, well let me go back a little bit. Richard Sampson, you know Richard Sampson? The supermarket, real personal friend. We'd go to dinner together and I never put my hand in my pocket; he says, "I don't want to owe you." He used to say that to me. I don't know if you know, if you heard about, they've had stores in New Hampshire, too, Sampson. Anyway, Richard says, "You run for president? If you're going to run for president, I'll pay for it. Go ahead and do it." But every day we'd go eat together, you know, when we were in the House, Senate I mean. Sat right next to me, and the other one was not Crandal Myer, who was that insurance guy there, big guy, was that before him? Anyway. . . .

DN: I'm not sure.

EJ: He used to get drunk as a son of a gun. I remember him pulling his drawer out of his desk and dumping the books over me, all the stuff on top of me just to be funny, you know, drunk as a skunk. Anyway, so one day Richard stopped at the stock market. I used to stop at the stock market every day. He says "put five hundred dollars on this here," on Diamond Match I think it was. I said, "Gee Rich, where do I get five hundred dollars?" "Don't worry about it." So I says, "Okay, let's put it in, all right." So we go to dinner, I come back, that stock had made me five hundred more, so you see? You know, that's how good a friend he was. He knew the stock market, too.

So anyway, I ran, hired a plane and flew to those places. I don't know if you remember, you remember Jim Dudley. Well, one of the senators was running Democrat; they elected all

Democrats up that way. And these young guys, matter of fact he was involved in an automobile accident and he killed someone, remember that? One of those senators that was elected. Anyway, so, we visit, with Jim, I landed, matter of fact, Jim, Jim's (*unintelligible phrase*), when we landed then. I was with Henry Hollis, Henry Hollis was a . . . I was a pilot but, you know, it wasn't my plane; it was Henry's, (*unintelligible phrase*), and, a two hundred. So we landed there and talked with these guys and assured me that, well, they weren't that sure, because they didn't know how the liquor bill would go, the Sunday sale. So anyway I says, "Well." And I'm chairman of Liquor Control; I'm also a chairman of the Industrial and Recreational. I told you I took whatever, I didn't want Appropriations; I didn't want to be part of it. I sat on there, though. That's the year that I beat Louis; I don't know if you remember that. You know, I was the senior because Louis had gotten beat one year. And, you want me to go on with that?

DN: Keep going.

EJ: Okay, so naturally he went to Clinton Clauson and says, no, he went, he went to see Lucia. He says to Lucia Cormier, he says, "You know, I'd like to get back on." She says, "Nope, Jacques is going to take it and he can handle it; I know he can." So anyway he went to the president of the Senate which was Haskell and Haskell says, "Jesus Louis, what do you want me to do? You know, if you're. . . ." Matter of fact Lucia, wasn't she, no she wasn't, was she speaker?

DN: No, she was majority leader.

EJ: Majority Leader, well the governor, he went to the governor after that. Couldn't get nothing with, and you know, him and Bob Haskell were real close in a way, because Louis used to go spread everything that the Democrats did in caucus back to, back to him. And I think you know that. Well, Clauson calls Lucia in. She says, "Governor, you can accept my resignation. If that happens, if I have to accept him, I'll resign." "Oh, don't do that," he says, "forget it." That was that for that year. And I didn't like it because, you know, you're, you're involved a lot. I have to come home and work, you know, and this way I couldn't work. But anyway, I sat on, [Norman R.] Rogerson was on then and, well I got a picture upstairs of it, I kept all these things. Anyway, so we did, we did all right. We did okay that year. I was on two other committees, too. But. . . .

DN: You indicated when we were talking earlier that before the vote on the Senate president, you had. . . .

EJ: Oh yeah, okay. I had four more than what I needed, so we caucused and I was one less, so that was that. I walked out of there mad as hell.

DN: Who engineered that?

EJ: I figured Louis. Louis and Floyd, is it Hardin?

DN: Harding.

EJ: Yup, Floyd Harding, because him and Louis were like this, from Aroostook county, you know. Because Don Carter [*sic* John], Don Carter [*sic* John], I never even been up to his place to see him, I figured I had him anyway. And I think maybe that Don, they might have had Don. And I can't, I don't know if Shiro was in then, out of Waterville.

DN: Burt?

EJ: Yeah, I think so. But anyway, I didn't have the vote. I didn't have the vote, and I don't know if I had the Lewiston vote either. Because Romeo Boisvert was in then, you know.

DN: What determined the lineups in Lewiston over the years? Was it just personal loyalties or different interests in the community?

EJ: I would say popularity, how popular you were. You know, go to every club, which we, you know, we had a lot of clubs. And that was another thing I used to do for the candidate, with Ed Muskie and Frank Coffin, is, naturally I belonged to American Legion and, I belonged to all the clubs. And matter of fact the, the one on Lisbon Street, second floor, a French name. Oh my God, why can I forget that?

DN: It was on the corner of the building.

EJ: Yeah. I belonged to that, too. And the French newspapers were on my side, you know. But that, that was, you had to work; you just couldn't lay down. And I didn't do that last election.

DN: Now in the, in those early campaigns starting with the '53 gubernatorial campaign, television was just coming in. How important was television, and how did it compare in importance with the work that you did taking people to the clubs, talking to people in the clubs, getting the absentee ballots?

EJ: It, it, television did a lot. Matter of fact, my wife was on the county, ladies' county Democratic Committee. And they raised money for Ed Muskie and all local candidates to be on TV. And, maybe you remember that. We used to get on, you know they paid for the, and just the major candidate would talk. The others, well, you know, what else are you going to do with them, you know?

DN: And who were some of the women leaders in the group?

EJ: (*Calling to Millie*) Millie, Mil, who was the chair of the women on your committee when you were. . . .

Millie: I don't remember.

DN: Was it Rose Gilman?

EJ: Oh yeah, Rose Gilman was then; oh yeah, that's right, Rose, yeah. Rose Gilman and Mrs.

Coffin, Mrs. Coffin was with them. And Romeo Boisvert's wife and, not Georges Rancourt, but, oh, yeah, and Terry Turgeon from the drugstore there, you know. She still participates too, by God. She called me up and she says, "You know, I had this letter from this candidate and she want-, I want to give money. But," she says, "Should I give them any money? That's how some of these people are loyal, you know."

DN: Now. . . .

EJ: I still have people call me up and asking me to go vote them, you know, when it's time. But then when my name was on the ballot, which was stupid when they did that.

DN: What was that? Tell us about it.

EJ: When they, when the candidate couldn't vote these people in. You know I have, I'm a notary and I have to go by the law. You know, I don't see, you know? They passed it. That was Gerry Berube I guess that wanted that. It hadn't been very long.

DN: When, in the 1940s, '50s, into the '60s the textile workers' union was very important in this area. . . .

EJ: Definitely.

DN: how were your working relationships with. . . .?

EJ: Very good, very good, because I was a working man, too. Not with the union, but, you know, I was, yeah, Denis Blais, Denis Blais and DeMers. I guess DeMers came, he had gone somewhere in New Jersey to work down there with the union, and then he come; you remember him? Yeah. And Denis Blais. Denis Blais and Paul Couture, naturally he was with the carpenters union. Then Paul Junior was there before him, remember the fighter?

DN: Yeah.

EJ: Matter of fact Paul Couture beat him, when he ran for the union job. Yeah.

DN: Do you have some questions, Mike?

EJ: Can I tell you a story about Ed Muskie?

DN: Oops, excuse me, let me just pause for a minute and then we'll start an-. . . .

End of Side A, Tape One

Side B, Tape One

DN:side of the June 22nd, 1999 interview with Emile "Bill" Jacques at his home, 31 Pleasant Street in Lewiston. The interviewers are Don Nicoll and Mike Richard. And Bill is just about ready to tell us about the 1960 Democratic National Convention.

EJ: Well, matter of fact it was a chartered flight out of Boston. And we had to meet, I guess it was in Portland, to take the plane, no, to ride, to ride to Boston. Well, going down, Ed Muskie got kind of hungry. And he wanted to stop in, you know the ship; what's that restaurant there? In Portland?

DN: It's a, the Ship Restaurant in Saugus. No that's in Saugus.

EJ: So he wanted to stop there to eat. I said, "Ed, we're going to be late. There's no need to stop. Let's get down there; the plane is going to take off." "No, no, no, you're going to take care of it." "Yeah, sure I'm going to take care of it." Well, I was a delegate as you know, so I called them up and I told them we'd be late. Because, I guess half of the plane had to be reserved for anybody that wants to come on. I mean, that's the way they used to do it then in those days. So, but anyway, as you know, we got there late and we got on the plane. And, took his time, it didn't bother, phase him at all. You know Ed Muskie. So we got, we got to Boston and got on the plane.

So, Jim Oliver was with us then; he was a congressman from, from, elected from Portland. And they liked to drink, I mean, what are you gonna do? Anyway, they ran out. Well, they said, "Well, we've got some under the belly, you know. We can't get there, so." Ed says, "Well, we'll stop in Nevada." I says, "Ed, you're crazy. How can we do that?" You know. I says, "Christ, we're going to be late," you know. We didn't stop anyway; they fell asleep and that was it. So thank God we didn't, you know, because every time we land the plane it's always dangerous to take off again and. But we got there.

But, then we got to California; we were staying in Hollywood. And Jack Kennedy was, Nat King Cole is here, the hotel we were in is here, and Ed Muskie was about maybe oh, two hundred yards from us. And I can remember that night. Well, first of all we tried to get all the delegation together to vote. So that night we saw, we saw a gang from LBJ meet with the Kennedy's and then they went to meet with, I mean, it was about two A.M. in the morning. And then Ed Muskie the next morning wanted to meet with us. And, you know he always met with us in the morning so, in case we'd get lost during the day; you know, we did other thing. Well, he says, "I guess you know that we're going to, we're going to turn our vote to Vice President LBJ. Nobody wanted him really, you know, because of the dirty things that were happening, you know. Because, but that was agreed. Whatever Kennedy wants, we want. So that was that. But our car, my car was involved in an accident. When I say my car, the mayor's association had a car for me there with a driver. Involved in an accident. So, professor from Bowdoin?

DN: Paul Hazelton?

EJ: No.

DN: Herbert Brown?

EJ: No, he ran, was near, a congressman, didn't he win? Or he ran for Congress. Oh come on. You've got; he's very well known.

DN: Well, the, oh, John Donovan.

EJ: There we go. Did he serve?

DN: He ran in 1960 for Congress and lost to Stan Tupper.

EJ: Okay, anyway.

DN: He was then a professor at Bates.

EJ: Yeah, oh, at Bates?

DN: And then later he went to Bowdoin.

EJ: Okay, you're right. So we decided we wanted to go to, to Tijuana, but we didn't have a car. Professor says, "You know the Kennedys. Why don't you call them up?" So I called Bob up. He got back to me right off; I waited in the hotel, in the motel, in the hotel. He says "Yeah," he says "I'll have a car for you." And he says, "But God I want you on that floor for four o'clock," he says, "don't you forget that." "Nope, we won't." He says "You're going awful far," you know. And he says "You've got to move." Okay, well, he send us a car and a driver, and he was a Mexican and spoke Spanish and everything else. Melvin Lane was with me, Jim Dudley; a good gang you know. We were sick in that freaky car.

DN: You were traveling in dangerous company.

EJ: Oh God, oh God, you know. So we went down to Tiajuana and we got back all right, we got back. But we were taken care of, I'll tell you. I, I was never so impressed in my life with what went on there, how politics is played. It's incredible, oh, tsk, tsk, tsk, tsk. Everything, you know, anything would go. The buttons and everything, you know, they wanted, and food you wanted. Anything you wanted you had. As soon as that vote was taken the next morning everything was, everything done; you're on your own after that.

But it was interesting, believe. . . . Oh yeah, we had our caucus and we talked. And then, the vote was, was, you know, they were, the Maine delegation was asked to vote. Well then Pennsylvania was, well anyway whatever it was, governor, Pennsylvania, anyway, they weren't in their seat; they were still caucusing. And Muskie says, "You want to go get them?" I was the errand boy. He says "Why don't you go get them?" So I walk in that room and, you know, hey, am I going to tell the governor of Pennsylvania, I says, "Sir, they want you out there and they need you." Because, well, they voted and they didn't need them; they didn't need the delegation from Pennsylvania. They walk in, the vote was just done, you know? But that was okay, so anyway, he didn't like that too well. But they were Democrats anyway, so.

But it was interesting, believe me, it was int- Oh, thing is, I lived in Hollywood and that was an hour and a half ride to Los Angeles, where the, you know, forgot my pass. Got to the door, everybody was going in but me. He says, "Well, we'll tell Ed Muskie and he'll come up and let

you in.” I says, “No, don’t bother him.” So I saw one of the detectives there and I told him and I says, “You know, it’s an hour and half and I’ve got to be in.” And I says, “I’m a delegate, you saw me with the rest of the gang.” He says, “You just stand there; I don’t want everybody to see you, you know, going in without a pass.” That’s all he said. So he let me in. But, even on the floor then, they didn’t bother you. Now they do; now they’re strict as hell. But it wasn’t then. But, boy, that was another experience. I thought I was going to be left out.

DN: Do you remember Dick Dubord from that trip?

EJ: Oh, definitely I remember Dick Dubord. Yes, I remember him. That’s right, he was another one that used to like it, right? Yeah, yeah? Yeah, we had, oh, I got to tell you, they caucused over here who was going to go to the convention. So Ed Muskie was there, no, Ed Muskie wasn’t there then, local, who was going to the convention. They were going to send, what’s his name up the street here, Girard, Omar Girard [Omar Girardin]. You remember him?

DN: “Blackie”?

EJ: Yeah, so, and which he was Al Lessard’s good friend. Al Lessard promoted him and got him a job at the bank and everything else, you know. I wasn’t going to the convention; he had taken my place. Jalbert made sure. So Ed Muskie walk in the room. He says, “Yeah, I’m going to give Bill Jacques my seat on that plane. That’s the way you guys want to do it? He’s the mayor of this town, and he should be representing the city there.” You think they listened to him? They listened to him all right. So that’s, that’s, that was another time that I beat my friend Louis.

DN: So “Blackie” came off the delegates. . . .?

EJ: Oh definitely, he didn’t go; he didn’t go, yeah. Matter of fact, Al Lessard got fifty dollars for me to pay my expenses. Gave me, didn’t pay for it much. You know, that was a. And then I was with Melvin and we stuck together, me and Melvin and Jim. Jim would have paid for it anyway; Jim has got money. You knew that, huh, he’s a millionaire. This guy made money selling eels during the war, imagine that? To New York. I miss Jim. I miss Jim. Well, that was another episode.

DN: Lots of, lots of exciting times.

EJ: Yeah, I had to fight every, every step. This guy Jalbert was on, didn’t want nobody to take over, I’ll tell you, you know. It was a, like you said, a power struggle, you know. I guess it’s always been anyway. I see the, I see they have in Livermore there, they have a problem with selectmen, and they’re resigning. And Mechanic Falls the same way. I guess they’ve grown, they’re getting to be, you know, saying “Well, you’re not going to take my vote; I’m going to vote the way I want to,” you know. So. Yeah, the city council, you know, when Lewiston High School here, when we built the new high school they wanted to build a gym, you know, with a swimming pool. Well, I’m the seventh one on the board, I’m number seven, you know, ward seven. So come out and vote and I voted “No.” Charlie Day had called me, he says “I just gave five thousand dollars to the YMCA to build a pool,” You know, which they were building on

East Avenue, right next to the high school. He says “They can use that every year for twelve thousand dollars, you know. They can have it any time they want to. He said, “Why?” “Well, I told him that, but anyway. So I defeated it. So Mrs. Shapiro, up on that stage, she’s going to beat me up.

DN: This Ernest’s wife?

EJ: Yes, yeah, yeah. But we were friends after that. I used to go repair her television, and. . . . I don’t know if she’s still living. He’s dead; I know that.

DN: Yeah, I think she’s dead, too.

EJ: Matter of fact he used to go to the health club with me until three or four years ago.

DN: His sister is still living.

EJ: She had a sister living right across the street from my cousin in Lowell; imagine that?

DN: Oh, is that right?

EJ: Yeah, matter of fact when my aunt died, she took over and come up and help for the, for the breakfast, you know, when they come after the funeral parlor to go up the house and get a lunch. She was there; they told me that then. That was Mrs. Shapiro’s sister in Lowell, Mass. That was a Hemond, too. That was another Hemond.

DN: Oh, is that right?

EJ: Yeah, we had three Hemond families selling milk in the city: one on East Avenue, one on College Street, the one on College Street’s the one that gone to Minot. They’re, they’re, Roland’s still doing it, you know.

DN: He is?

EJ: Yeah, he had, this is his third set of knees they put on him. The tractor wears them out.

DN: He’s still going strong, in spite of it. Wow.

EJ: Yeah, you know, many people been after me to write a book. They say “You should, you should write a book.” I say, “Well, how many people would want to know about that old dirty politics,” you know? (*unintelligible phrase*).

DN: Not so much of it is really that dirty.

EJ: No, that’s true. I mean it was just, you know, playing, that’s all, that’s true. I can remember going to Melvin’s camp, and I think maybe you might have been there that night, when Ed Muskie got, Muskie was governor then, and Melvin gave a party and, is it Broderick?

DN: Dick Broderick.

EJ: Dick Broderick, from Cali-, matter of fact, he got elected he was in California. You remember that?

DN: Right.

EJ: And his wife was French, Fortier, Fournier or Fortier? I think she's still living, and he's living anyway, eh? He's a judge still? Or retired?

DN: No, Dick retired and I thought he had died, but I'm not sure.

EJ: Yeah, I remember going there and, boy, what a time. That Melvin, steaks, you remember when Aaron ran for governor? His brother, matter of fact, they had different names. Money, eh? Levinski, you ever hear of Levinski clothing?

MR: I think I've heard the name.

EJ: Yeah, they had a big store in Waterville and Portland, too, I guess.

DN: Portland, it was part of the family, yeah. What was it? Melvin Lang [*sic*] [Lane] and Aaron Levine were brothers.

EJ: I got to tell you coming back from California. Melvin didn't make the plane to go, so naturally coming back he got bumped off again, not bumped off but got onto another. But he wanted to come with us. So they say "Sure, we'll put you on but your baggage is not coming." Well, when we got to Boston, my police commissioner picked me up in Boston. Melvin said, (*mimicking Melvin*) "You think you could wait?" (you know how he used to talk), "You think you could wait for me?" I said, "Look, you get home the way you want to get home; we're leaving." "Ah, the hell with it; I'm going with you." So his baggage had to be delivered to his house. Poor Melvin, he was always, yeah. Those were the days, I tell you. It was fun though. I enjoyed it. You know, there's a little guy from Lewiston, you know, and not knowing that I'd ever got where I was, I think I done a lot with my life.

DN: Now, let's talk a little bit about your life since the '50s/'60s. You were, you had the cigarette store business. . . .

EJ: Yeah, and I had the motorcycle and the cigarette both at the same time. And somebody had squealed on us, and, that we were selling cigarettes without tax on it. So naturally the Federal Bureau of Alcohol and Tobacco come in and got into my gar- I lived, my shop, my place was on Hines Alley right next door to Fulton Cigarette or whatever it was. And they come into the garage and they says, "*(unintelligible phrase)* and we want to, we want to examine your stock." So they opened all the boxes. That was proof, you know, that I wasn't. You know, it was stupid, you know. How can I do that, you know? So somebody had, had put a bug in somebody's ear for that.

And then I had another one about income tax. Well, I used to race motorcycles in Canada. Well, they claimed I had money there, I had left it there. But, you know, I, I'd spend it as soon as I'd have it over there. The people were around us and it was parties, and you know. But I didn't drink though, but they drank. So he calls me one day and he says "I'm going to be in your house in two weeks; I want to examine your books." And he tells me he's from Blue Hill and all that, and "I'm an agent from the IRS." Hey, I didn't believe it. One day a knock at the door. I think we li-, no, we didn't live here, I lived on Lincoln Street, that's right. I got elected downtown, too, and it was in the poor section. We were poor anyway, and matter of fact I got elected. Every time I got elected I had a hell of a vote, and

MR: Was this in Ward three?

EJ: Ward three I started, yeah, ward three and then war-, well then I became mayor in ward three. Then I moved up here. I bought this house, and I fixed it up. See, this is just half, that part wasn't there. And we had one boy, my oldest boy. He's downstairs now, which is, works in my shop downstairs, my TV shop. So, where was I?

DN: You were talking about the IRS.

EJ: Oh yeah. So he shows up at the door, he knocked at the door and he shows up, not even remembering it, you know. Then it came to me. He says, "Well, we understand that. . . ." And you know who done that, it was one of the aldermen downtown, because I voted for Urban Renewal. I brought Urban Renewal to Lewiston, matter of fact; I brought that back here. I was on the Urban Renewal Committee, and the National Committee, and I belonged to the mayor's association. So I brought it to Lewiston and gave it to the people and said, "Vote." They voted, and they voted for it. And when we cleaned, we cleaned Oak, Ash Street, remember across the post office, remember the buildings there? Matter of fact they found a man there, his leg was so infected they couldn't get him, the stink, oh God, when they were tearing that down he was living there. And that leg, they had to amputate it. And, that's how bad it was, you know, over the stores. Anyway, so we brought urban renewal in. He was so goddamn mad at me because I brought Urban Renewal, they had to tear some of his buildings. And he used to have, used to have a lot of rent, you know, in that area. And you know, where the fire station is today. It wasn't intended for that. The fire station should never have gone there in the first place, but anyway. And the court house either. Now we're still, I see in the paper this morning we're dealing with that court house again. They want to build, as you know, they want to build a new one.

So anyway, so that, that's how, he told me, too. From Blue Hill. "Blue Hill," I says, I ask him, matter of fact I knew the rep from there, representative. I don't remember who it was now; I mean how can you forget Blue Hill, right? I said, "Oh sure I know him," so he let go, you know. He told me everything after that, you know, because I knew a friend of his; that was a friend of his. So we talked about that. "Well," he says, "they just thought that you had money in Canada and you weren't reporting it." "Well," I says, "if he knows, I don't know and I wish I knew." Well, it seemed that one of his nieces worked in the bank in Danville, Canada, and saw my name there, on the books somewhere, or like my name. And she told him and he, in return, never

know, eh? You know if, I never had any money there, believe me. We got paid in cash and we'd come home after, you know. But, just to show you how people, you have to watch your step all the time, all the time. Make sure, you know after what is it, thirty-nine years. If they have anything on you by then, if they didn't have anything on you it's got to be very clean, I think.

DN: So you, did you get out of the cigarette and the . . . ?

EJ: Yes, I did. I had a young friend of mine that was on the road with me and he had had a car and he used to do some of that. Well then, you know, I went to school, criminology school; I figured that was it for me. Matter of fact I got a son that's a cop now.

DN: Oh, is that right?

EJ: Yeah, he graduated from college and took political science, matter of fact, University of Maine, lived in, went to Orono then in Portland. And he lived in Portland, then he come back home and, "Where do I get a job?" you know, you know. Oh you can get a job but anything that would pay. . . . I says, "Well, and this is, I don't know, not too long ago; I was a county commissioner then. I said "Well we need people to serve papers." I says, "you know, if you want to do that, talk to the sheriff." Sheriff says, "Sure." Then the sheriff liked him. He says, after four or five weeks, he says, Jimmy is six, six-one, nice appearing boy, smart, not too talkative. Well you might, you met him because he was a page, he come up in the legislature, David and him, and my daughter too. So they said, "Okay." Jimmy says "Yeah, I think I'd like it." So he went to the academy for what is it, a hundred hours first, and then he could take a car and go out. So then they decided they'd send him to the academy for his twelve weeks of training, so he went there for that. And decided to get a dog and now he got a canine dog that's been trained you wouldn't believe. Oh, my God, gets more training than he does. I think he's going to train, he lives across the street, you know. My other son lives next door, and my daughter lives in Lisbon.

DN: So they're all nearby. And is you son with the sheriff's. . . . ?

EJ: He has a TV business. Yeah, Jimmy is with the sheriff's department. He's a corporal.

DN: Androscoggin County.

EJ: Yeah, he's a corporal. And David went to Wentworth, graduated from Wentworth in whatever; I don't remember now. Then he did this co-op, electrical, electronics really. But electronic and electrical is the same; I guess you have to go through electrical before you get your degrees in electronic. So they wanted him to do his co-. . . . Well, he had three places to go: with Cambian, which is Midland Ross, or go to Harvard and repair medical equipment, or, oh there's was another one, anyway, his, oh, and New England Telephone, New England Telephone then. His friend went with New England and David went with Cambian. And she contacted [sic] leukemia. They weren't; yeah, they were married. They had a nine-month-old boy. And they come back here. And then she went to Mary Hitchcock when the governor's son was there. He was coming in; he was there three or four days before he died. My daughter-in-

law was there, just before they moved into the new hospital, yeah. Mary Hitchcock, or Brown or whatever you call it.

DN: It's the Mary Hitchcock, it's the Hitchcock-Dartmouth Medical Center now.

EJ: So, but he, he, they were smart. He wanted to go to MIT, but everything held him back. You've seen him, he was a page in the boy, I mean in the Senate and in the House. I brought him there many times, and they liked him.

MR: I'm not sure, but I was just wondering; I don't know how much we covered this already. But back, going back to your days as an alderman in ward three, when you first ran. I think it was '52 you first ran for alderman in ward three? What made you decide to run in the first place, or what factors. . . .?

EJ: Well, you know, in those days you had a lot of bootleggers. And this guy Malenfant had his gate tending; he was a gate tender. I don't know if you read about that; he was a gate tender. And he was always kicking us off the track or telling us to get out and get off of the street, or get off around the house, and I could tell you other things, but I won't. I don't think you want to publish it. Well anyway, I really hated the guy. And then he sent the liquor inspector up our house, that we were selling booze. Well, you can imagine all these Irish and Yankee coming into a French house. My mother couldn't speak English and my father, well he could understand it a little bit, you know? Now where are you, you're caught and then, and what do you do? I mean, so he just, "Hey, go ahead and look; I don't, I don't have any liquor here. I don't, you know, I don't deal with that." So, and he was the one that sent them. And that really pissed me off when I got older and I've never forgotten it.

So that's why. And this guy Veroux, Veroux was part of the Wiseman gang, which I became one. You know, of, you know, there was a lot of opposition in those days. But Wiseman was considered French anyway, you know. It was a French, Irish, Greek, you know, had a Greek church down to Lincoln, you know. But let me go back, about the French, you want me to tell you that, about. . . .?

MR: Sure.

EJ: You had a Greek church on that end and the French church on this end. So, a hundred years before, the Irish went and burnt the church there, you know. They didn't want the Greek around. It was the same thing when the French came. You know, they didn't want them here. I mean it's just like the Italian going into New York. You know, I mean they don't want them there because "They're all criminals," they said. And, well anyway, they were burning the church. So, they couldn't stop it because they were throwing rocks at the firemen and stop, you know, stopping them from putting out the fire. So they went to Mr. [Benjamin] Bates, Bates Mill, and they asked him to send people to help and he did, and they did save, save the church. But that happened. And I mean, you know, there was all ethnic, you know, you're talking about Kosovo, you, you, not as bad as over there, but bad enough, you know what I mean?

DN: There was a lot of feeling between the French and the Greek? How large. . . .?

EJ: Not the French and the Greek, the Irish. Not with the French, because the Greek came and then the French came. And it was the same thing with the Irish and French, you know, because the Irish didn't want the French here.

MR: Was this pretty evident in your neighborhood? Like, did you notice it when you were growing up?

EJ: Well, you know, I, maybe Don don't remember this but, we, even in the legislature we had prejudice. You know, if you were a Catholic or a Democrat or a Frenchman, and stop me if I say wrong, but you weren't considered one of them. So, and, and try and get a job with the state, it wasn't easy. And you go down and, well, Jim Dudley used to tell me anyway, he said, "You know, we used to burn the cross." And then, it didn't happen not too long ago that they were burning the cross down there. And Jim says, "You know, you're a good friend and I like you and you know, we're- we did a lot of things together." But he says, "You can't live in my town," you know. Jim owned the town anyway, you know. And it was, really, you know. And there's evidence of it in the legislature. I don't know now, today, but there was, there was, maybe ten, fifteen years ago. And, I don't know, it's a, I didn't pay no attention to it because we were used to it. You know, "Frog," and, we were called. And you know, hey, we were brought up into it so we don't care, you know? But I see this happening over there, I sympathize with them, you know?

DN: Did you feel that the folks up in the St. John Valley were a different group?

EJ: Well, yeah, they were a group of their own; you know that. I mean, you know, legislation that got through. Matter of fact I was telling her the other night. I says "Look, Presque Isle gets money for their airport. What the hell is the matter with Lewiston? Why can't we get money to support ours?" you know. And I don't know if you remember, Don- Ed Muskie was there, and Ed Muskie was ready, matter of fact he was in the U.S. Senate, we wanted to make the naval air station as an area airport, you know? And I was on the Highway and Transportation, and Industrial and Recreational too, you know? And we, Ed Muskie was willing to introduce legislation so we could use that airport, you know? And we had, Sydney was, didn't want that, Portland didn't want that, oh, who else. . . .

DN: Bangor.

EJ: Bangor, that's right, Bangor was another one. You know, that would have been a perfect area. Today they wouldn't have to worry about expanding that airport in Portland. They got no room, they got no room. And if the state, if I'd have been in the legislature, I would introduce legislation to the subsidized airport, really. You know, like Lewiston here we have an airport that's superb. You know, we got everything that they can use here and place to expand, and nobody's doing anything with it. Oh yeah, well you got private planes and, well, we did get UPS. But, we thought UPS would bring the place business. No, it hasn't done nothing. But that would have been the thing, and no cost to the state, right, Don?

DN: Right.

EJ: You know, you know, it would have been, I mean, you know, we'd have to spend some money. But the federal would keep that airport open. Matter of fact they're, maybe they're waiting to close it and then take it over, I don't know. But, and then, naturally Bowdoin maybe didn't like it either, right? College?

DN: I'm not sure. No.

EJ: Anyway, we were opposed and we were opposed big, I'll tell you. So, you know, when you don't have the vote, you don't have the vote.

MR: I guess one other thing, getting back to I guess Ed Muskie's personality. I've heard a lot of stories about his temper, or his alleged temper. Do you have any anecdotes or stories about that or another take on that maybe?

EJ: No, I, I imagine that he had a temper. In Washington, I don't know. But over here, he never showed too much of it here that I know of. Maybe Don would know more than I would know. But, I mean you worked for him, but not, not with me anyway. We were good friends. Matter of fact I wanted to tell you that. When I had the house half-full here, I was so proud of my little house here, that I could buy it. And, you know, I was, when I was mayor. And Frank Coffin and Ed Muskie come down and sat right on the wall; the couch was on the wall here. And they sat right there and, wondering what they were doing here maybe. But I was proud of my house, so, and it was an old house, one of the oldest one on the street here. Matter of fact the one on the corner up here is the oldest one; these two here are the oldest.

DN: Is that right?

EJ: Yup, yup.

DN: This was when, 1960?

EJ: Yes, yeah, yeah, we were campaigning, yeah. Matter of fact LBJ went by this house and my son had a sign: "Welcome LBJ." And Mrs. Johnson turned around in back, and you could see her face in the window waving her hand. He used this highway here, you know? Oh, oh, the most important thing I didn't tell you, I didn't tell you. When J. Kennedy, Jack Kennedy came to Lewiston, well, I was mayor. And they had everything, and I think you were on then, they had everything set up at the airport; the platform was there and everything else. Al Lessard says, "Now you got to get ready." I said, "What do you mean, got to get ready?" He says, "Well, you know, they're coming in to the airport and that's where we're going to. . . . I said "No-no, no-no, he's not coming, he's coming to Lewiston. And if not I'm not taking part of it at all." Oh boy, he got pissed, I tell you. He says "What?" You don't remember that do you, or do you?

DN: Oh yes.

EJ: He says, Alton says, "Well, I'll see what I can do." But it's a good thing they didn't move it to Lewiston, didn't they? They had the biggest crowd they ever had there, better than twenty-

five thousand people.

DN: Describe the scene that night.

EJ: Oh yeah. Well, we had, Deschambeault, the mayor of Biddeford came down. And we had all the big Democrats were down here. And naturally they were at the hotel having a drink and having fun, well they were gambling, too. Pat, I remember Pat Boulet saying to the mayor of Biddeford, he says, "Hey, you got worse than that in Biddeford." He says, "Christ, they gamble with open doors." The mayor got mad; he wanted to poke him.

Anyway so we got back, Jack Kennedy got in what, twelve, about twelve o'clock, snowing. I mean, light snow, not much. And I can remember him, no room to get through. He came in from Bates Street, (*unintelligible word*) the American Legion, I don't know if you know what the American Legion is. You walk in there and, you know, no place to go through. So he'd step on cars, on the hoods, bang, bang, bang, bang. In the meantime, Ed Muskie and I are on the stage waiting for him to come in. And Ed Muskie decided, "No school tomorrow." Well, Jesus crow, so that went on until Kennedy got back. So naturally I called the superintendent and I said "What do you think? He said, "Whatever you want to do. All the people that are there, they don't want to come to school, you tell them no school tomorrow, that's all." Okay, so, come back and that's what it was, "No school tomorrow." That, we had- we had people out, eh, Don? Oh, it was good to see, you know? And the other one was when we had the fight, the big fight. You don't remember that.

MR: With Muskie?

EJ: No, no, the, the Cassius Clay and [Sonny] Liston.

MR: Oh, no.

EJ: I was here, I was on the Department of Recreation and Industrial. And we, Sam Michael brought them to fight here. Nobody else wanted them I guess, whatever. Nobody was involved because of the NBA or whatever it was. So they came. I've never seen so many people in my life. Did you come down, Don?

DN: No, I wasn't here for that. I remember the, all the news got it.

EJ: I had seven tickets, I had eight tickets that cost seven hundred dollars a piece, right around the ring, given to me. So I had to choose my friends, you know. So I come in, I went to sit down. The fight is ready to start, you know, I was middling around with everybody. I turn around, the guy is laying flat, knocked out. I haven't even sat in my seat yet! Then I asked for the investigation, to look into it. But hell, who the hell knows. How can, if you told someone "I'll knock him out in the third, I'll be knocked out in the third round," you know? And it was left that way. But we had, we had people living at Poland Spring. Matter of fact Patterson was up there, I went up there to visit him, and a few of the others. And then we had Route 66. They filmed, they made a movie here.

MR: Oh, right.

EJ: Yeah, yeah, that was back when things were moving at. . . . You don't remember the convention there, do you, with (*unintelligible word*), at Poland Spring? The state convention?

DN: Yes, it was a Jefferson-Jackson dinner.

EJ: Yeah, yeah, okay, that's what it was, yeah. Keith [?] came down, and what a smart man, eh? Boy oh boy. But you don't hear about people like that, you know, they don't talk about them. It's too long ago, I guess. Maybe they don't want to hear about it either; I don't know. But, anyway. Those were interesting. Hey, that's quite a thing for a young guy like me to be, you know, I was pretty young then. I think I was anyway, to go through all that.

DN: Well, you were, in 1954 you were twenty-nine.

EJ: Twenty-nine. Matter of fact, that's when I got married. We been married forty-five years a week ago last Saturday, yup. Forty-five years. My, her brother went to Bates and became a doctor in Massachusetts. Saugus, he's in Saugus. Then I raced motorcycle in Massachusetts. Let's see, I raced in Topsfield; I took, I took the fastest time trial there. And then I got knocked out; I got bumped and I fell off the bike. And, no, I didn't do that there. Anyway, I had the fastest time trial and they tossed me out. They haven't raced there since, on Sunday; there's no racing on Sunday in Massachusetts. Then I raced in Sturbridge; that was where I broke my leg. This guy cut me off and I went over. They took me to Beverly and repaired my leg and sent me back to the hospital here. I come down, they put the sling on, and drove back there. I was racing under the American Motorcycle Association then.

DN: Were you racing as Bill Jacques or as Bill Peterson?

EJ: Bill Jacques, Bill Jacques. No, I started to tell you about my name being Bill. See, because, I thought it was farmer, you know a farmer's kid, I didn't think much of farmers, you know. Because I had my cousin over there and we'd go over there; we'd always fight. So, that's why the name "Bill", you know, they thought it was a farmer's name. And it stayed with me ever since then. I don't even have "William" in my name, but that's what they called me and that's what it was.

DN: Does anyone call you "Emile"?

EJ: Now they do, more than ever. But the governor still calls me "Bill". Governor King, he'll call me. Matter of fact he calls me sometimes on his cellular phone. I was going to be appointed by him but I don't know what's happening, I just.

DN: When you look back at Ed Muskie's time as governor and as senator, what do you think his major accomplishments were?

EJ: Well I think, I think Ed Muskie built up the party, I think he made a two-party system in the state. I think he done a great job. I mean, had a lot of guts; sacrificed himself. I mean, you

know, and I liked Ed Muskie and I think, I was sorry to see him leave. And I know he was a supporter of me, too, you know. Not that I asked any help of him when I ran for mayor, but I imagine in his own way he might have helped me, no doubt. But I respected him and we never had, never, never have I had any, any discussion, I mean bad discussion with him. Like I said, I walked in his office, I felt so small. Yeah. I was really glad that he won. I was glad when Clauson won, too. But, Jesus, we've been so unlucky, the Democrats. I hope you're a Democrat.

MR: I'm actually not registered.

EJ: Yeah, you can register to vote locally, too, huh?

MR: Yeah, that's true.

EJ: Yeah, and like I said, I'm a good supporter of Bates too. Anytime they had anything going on I'd. . . . Like, matter of fact I, Zerby, you ever hear of Professor Zerby?

MR: At Bates?

EJ: Yeah.

MR: What does he, which department is he in, do you know?

EJ: Well he's not there now, but his wife is still there. She lives right on the corner of Central and College. Not College. . . .

MR: Campus?

EJ: Campus.

MR: Campus Ave.

EJ: Yeah, Bates owns that place. She lives there and she's ninety-, I think she's still there because I made a service call there two years ago. I repaired her television.

DN: Do you remember who used to live in that house? One, let's see, it's 106 College Avenue, not College Avenue. . . .

EJ: Campus?

DN: No, no I'm thinking of Central.

EJ: Central, this is Central and Campus, right across the street from the high school.

DN: Okay, that was Frank Hoy's house.

EJ: Oh for God's sakes, he's related to my wife, you know.

DN: Oh, is that right, yeah?

EJ: That's right, you worked for Frank Hoy too, didn't you?

DN: I worked for Frank and Parker.

EJ: And there's a nice, Parker is a nice guy. Not like his father.

DN: His father was a little tough.

EJ: Oh God, yes.

DL: All set?

EJ: I can't think of anything else. But I enjoyed all my time that I served with Ed Muskie, I'll tell you. And like I said, Ed Muskie always supported me, and Lucia. So I must have been a pretty good politician.

DN: Yes, you were. I won't put that in the past tense.

EJ: Matter of fact, I still, I'm on the work force development, you know, with the Department of Labor. Yeah, matter of fact they had a meeting yesterday; I'm still on there. I was on juvenile last year; I served there for ten years I guess, juvenile justice, yeah.

MR: So you've stayed pretty much continuously involved with politics?

EJ: I'd like to, my-, you know, it keeps, it keeps your mind active. And, you know, and I go to the health club three times a week. And I, I'm doing too much. Really, because I get so tired when I get back from there I have to take a nap. But I go at a quarter to five, a quarter to six.

DN: In the morning.

EJ: Yeah, with my son. Yeah, so we, we, well I had a heart attack. Matter of fact, building the new jail. Can I say that? I was instrumental in getting a new jail for the county. And we went to the voters naturally, and they decided they- not by many votes but we made it. And so, where are we going to put it, well, figured we'd leave it where it is, you know, and build it. . . .

*End of Side B, Tape One
Side A, Tape Two*

DN: . . . second tape, June 22nd, 1999, interviewing Bill- Emile "Bill" Jacques at his home at 31 Pleasant Street in Lewiston, Mike Roy [*sic*] [Richard] and Don Nicoll.

MR: I think we were just talking about you were on, some of the committees you were on in the

'80s and '90s; your more recent political work. Was it the Appropriations Committee?

DN: And you were talking about the jail, the local jail.

EJ: Oh, yeah, so we went to the voters and finally we got it through. But now, I mean we had to decide where we're going to build it. So we decided we'd put it on the same land that the old one is, but not use the front part. You know, connect it on to the old, which was, the other one is 1976. So we went to the voters and we worked like a son of a gun. So the last, the last meeting, it was about, oh I don't know, seven-thirty, the legislators were there and so, and naturally we'd been working. Now, we had people like an architect on the committee, a retired architect. I had good people, I had appointed, they gave me the, you know, of getting these people in there. So, we had Bill Rocheleau is an attorney as chair, and anyway, we had about fifteen members.

So the day, that day we had gone to York County to visit that jail, and then we were going to New Hampshire, oh, Rochester, right next to Rochester, New Hampshire to visit the new one they just built there. Matter of fact, the senior citizen cooks the food for the prisoner and they bring them over, they just truck it over, across the driveway, you know. So we went there and, jeez, you know, beautiful jail; there's no yelling, no squealing, and everybody's calm. And, a young guy, well I felt kind of bad, see these young guys; they got picked up and wouldn't call their folks because they didn't want them to know they got, they're in jail. And there's some of them in there thirty days, and they're waiting to be tried to go to court. See, if you're not bailed out, you stay. And the state of Maine did provide for that, though. We did find a place so they could, the state would allow money to loan them until they, and then get bailed out. Well anyway, and I kind of felt bad, you know.

So I got back here and we talked for about an hour. And John Aliberti gets up. He says, "Well I don't think we're building a jail at the right place and I don't think we should build it there." I walked out. I says, "You take over, Bill Rocheleau; I'm leaving." So I went to the health club. I'm in the health club, quarter of nine. I'm, just walked out the sauna and I said, "Oh God, I'm burping. Oh," I says, "God, that Red, Red Nadeau, I went out to eat with him that day, you know. We had a rib eye, or whatever. You remember Red Nadeau?"

DN: Yeah.

EJ: So, he's a legislator, was, also county commissioner. Anyway, after I mean. So, I get in, I didn't finish my shower; I got into my clothes and come home and sat on that couch over there. And I had my, my knees against my chest and I said, "Oh God, oh God, if I can only burp." And gee- if you don't know what a heart attack is, what the hell, you know? Feels the same thing as you're having a. . . . Well, my wife come home about two hours after. I should have gone to the hospital anyway. So, next morning I get up, I do a service call on Webster Street. Then I go to John Libby, fix his TV. Remember John Libby?

DN: Yeah.

EJ: Knew you knew him. Didn't you work for him, or?

DN: No, John worked at, at WCOU, I was at, yeah.

EJ: You worked WLAM. That's right. So I did that call there. And that first call I made I was going to take the set out and bring it downstairs. I didn't; I said "Well, you give me a call if it don't work right." So, I says, "I got to get to Morissette." Now it's twelve o'clock. I hadn't eaten my breakfast; I had not really big problem, but I was sweating. So I get to Dr. Morissette. The girl looks at me; she says, "Oh my God, Mr. Jacques. What's happening?" "Oh," I says, "I don't know; I don't know." So, the doctor comes out and he says, "Oh my God, put him on the EKG." So they put me on there and there it goes. He says "You're having a heart attack; let me call the ambulance." I says, "No, I'll call up my wife." Five minute ride for her to get there, so she picks me up and takes me. You remember Red Laverdiere?

DN: Here in Lewiston? No, I guess I didn't know him.

EJ: Yeah, anyway, he was a guard there. But he was with the Derby's and all them, you've seen him. Anyway, he says "You're coming right up here." The girl at the desk, "No, no, no." She's holding me back and he's pulling me and she's holding me. So finally my wife, she says, "I'll handle it." They're all waiting upstairs to put me, you know, in the, on the, what you may call it. And there I was. Two days after that I'm in Portland, or maybe the next day, had my bypass. Yeah, yeah.

DN: How many years ago was that now?

EJ: Let me, Mil, twelve years, Mil? My heart attack? Twelve years in November, eh? My heart attack?

DN: You've done very well.

EJ: No problem, not a bit of problem. No angina, nothing, Don. Matter of fact, I'm a test patient for Dr. Weiss. He's been using me. Oh, I had little other things, though.

DN: You've had an eventful life.

EJ: I never thought I'd live to seventy, seventy-four. Went jet-skiing Sunday, with my new jet ski.

DN: Where do you use that?

EJ: Taylor Pond. And, matter of fact I'm, last year I skied; not much though. But the year before I trick skied too.

DN: You haven't changed. They'll refer to you as "Bill Peterson."

EJ: Yeah, yeah. I had, I had a nineteen, (again, all the money I had then to; I mean, no, I had a little more than that), I had a nineteen forty-eight Packard convertible. These were the first ones with the automatic roof, you know what I mean? You press the button. My brother was working

at Packard; now you don't know about Packard, right? Packard car? You ever hear of them?

MR: Heard of it. I don't think I've ever seen one.

EJ: Anyway, he sold me one of those that year; that was a beautiful car. When I get into Canada, into the pit there with that car, everybody was around it. "There comes a millionaire from Maine," from the States I mean.

DN: Think we're all set?

MR: I think we're all set, yeah.

DN: Thank you very much for. . . .

EJ: Well, Don, very nice to see you. Christ, I'm so amazed that you're still working at it, too. You must be what, sixty-?

DN: Oh, I'm just two years younger than you.

EJ: Really?

DN: Yeah, yeah, seventy-two this summer.

EJ: Huh, now Don, you're married naturally.

DN: Yes.

EJ: And you're living. . . . ?

DN: In Portland.

EJ: Portland. That's where all the action is.

DN: Well that's, we came, when we came back to Maine in 1977 I was working at the Maine Medical Center and I've been. . . .

EJ: What year now?

DN: Came back in, I came, actually I went to work for the Medical Center at the end of '75 and was there until the end of '86. And then I retired, theoretically, and have been working as a consultant ever since.

EJ: Oh, that's nice, that's nice.

DN: And we've lived in Portland since then.

EJ: Well they got all kinds of new guys down there doing the. . . . See, I sat, I was president of the county commissioner association for I don't know how many years, and also on the insurance board. You know we're self-insured; we run our own insurance business. Twelve, thirteen, thirteen counties I think. So, I tell you, I been, we been busy; we been busy.

DN: That's what keeps you young.

EJ: Well, I mean it keeps, you know, they were showing the brain the other night of Einstein there. You know, I can realize that that man was (*interruption from other people in room.*)

End of Interview

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