

7-25-2001

Nicoll, Don oral history interview

Jeremy Robitaille

Follow this and additional works at: http://scarab.bates.edu/muskie_oh

Recommended Citation

Robitaille, Jeremy, "Nicoll, Don oral history interview" (2001). *Edmund S. Muskie Oral History Collection*. 423.
http://scarab.bates.edu/muskie_oh/423

This Oral History is brought to you for free and open access by the Muskie Archives and Special Collections Library at SCARAB. It has been accepted for inclusion in Edmund S. Muskie Oral History Collection by an authorized administrator of SCARAB. For more information, please contact cbell@bates.edu.

Interview with Don Nicoll by Jeremy Robitaille

Summary Sheet and Transcript

Interviewee

Nicoll, Don

Interviewer

Robitaille, Jeremy

Date

July 25-26, 2001

Place

Lewiston, Maine

ID Number

MOH 313

Use Restrictions

© Bates College. This transcript is provided for individual **Research Purposes Only**; for all other uses, including publication, reproduction and quotation beyond fair use, permission must be obtained in writing from: The Edmund S. Muskie Archives and Special Collections Library, Bates College, 70 Campus Avenue, Lewiston, Maine 04240-6018.

Biographical Note

Donald Eugene "Don" Nicoll was born in Boston, Massachusetts, on August 4, 1927, and grew up in the West Roxbury section of the city. He is the son of George and Mary Nicoll. He attended Robert Gould Shaw Junior High School and Boston English High School and graduated from Colby College in Waterville, Maine in 1949, majoring in History with a minor in Government. Don met his future wife, Hilda Farnum, also a Colby student, when they worked in the resort town of Ocean Park, Maine, in the summer of 1944. Nicoll began his graduate work at Pennsylvania State College in 1949, where he received a teaching fellowship in the Department of History. His graduate studies concentrated on American history, specifically the period from the Revolutionary War to the Civil War .. His M.A. (1952) thesis was on the Alien and Sedition Acts.

Starting in 1951, Nicoll and his family settled in Buckfield, Maine where he picked apples and taught part time at Stephen's High School, located in Rumford. Nicoll began working as an announcer for WLAM radio in Lewiston, Maine. He became a reporter and then news editor for WLAM and WLAM-TV. In June 1954, Nicoll left WLAM to become Executive Secretary of the Democratic State Committee at the request of Frank M. Coffin, who has just become chairman. Mr. Coffin was elected to the U.S. House of Representatives from Maine's Second Congressional

District in 1956 and Nicoll went to Washington, DC, as his administrative assistant, continuing in that post until December 1960, the end of Congressman Coffin's second term. Mr. Coffin ran for governor in 1960 and was defeated. After the election Senator Edmund S. Muskie asked Nicoll to join his staff as legislative assistant and news secretary. Nicoll served in that position until 1962, when he became administrative assistant. He continued in that post until 1971, when he became personal advisor to Senator Muskie. He left the senate office in mid-1972.

From 1972 until his retirement in 2005 Nicoll worked as a program and policy planner, first as a consultant (1972-73), then as chairman and chief executive officer of the New England Land Grant Universities Joint Operations Committee (1973-1975), then as coordinator of planning and vice president for planning and public affairs for the Maine Medical Center (1975-1986), then as a consultant (1986-2005). His clients were primarily in the non-profit sector and included, universities, libraries, education associations, health care organizations and social service agencies. He also worked as a volunteer, heading a variety of public policy projects, including the Maine Task Force on Government Reorganization, the Maine State Compensation Commission, the Maine (Mental Health) Systems Assessment Commission, the Maine Consortium for Health Professions Education, the Southern Maine Community Television Consortium, the Maine Special Commission on Government Reorganization (co-chair), the Board of Visitors of the University of Southern Maine's Edmund S. Muskie School of Public Service, the Maine-Aomori Sister-State Advisory Council and the Governor's Allagash Wilderness Waterway Working Group.

From 1998-2005, Don Nicoll was the Director of the Edmund S. Muskie Oral History Project at Bates College.

Scope and Content Note

Interview includes discussions of: Great Depression; Works Progress Administration (WPA); anti-Catholicism; FDR's influence on Muskie; religious influences; sentiment towards the Japanese after Pearl Harbor; anti-German sentiment; High School years; 1936 Alf Landon campaign; 1940 Wendell Willkie campaign; Colby College years; and creation of the United Nations and its controversy.

Indexed Names

Bickel, William
Brewster, Ralph Owen, 1888-1961
Coolidge, Calvin, 1872-1933
Curley, James Michael, 1874-1958
Eisenhower, Dwight D. (Dwight David), 1890-1969
Eisenhower, Dwight D. (Dwight David), 1890-1969
Farnum, Marlin Downer

Fitzgerald, Edward
Fullam, Paul
Hammer, Armand, 1898-1990
Hammer, Victor
Harding, Warren G. (Warren Gamaliel), 1865-1923
Hitler, Adolph, 1889-1945
Hoover, Herbert, 1874-1964
Jenner, William
Landon, Alfred M. (Alfred Mossman), 1887-1987
McCarthy, Joseph, 1908-1957
Muskie, Edmund S., 1914-1996
Mussolini, Benito, 1883-1945
Nelson, Eric
Nicoll, Don
Owens, Jesse
Parker, Theodore
Roosevelt, Franklin Delano
Shaw, Robert Gould
Smith, Margaret Chase
Taft, Robert, Senator
Thomas, J. Parnell
Thomas, Lowell
Tolstoy, Leo
Truman, Harry S.
Willkie, Wendell
Winkler, Irene

Transcript

Jeremy Robitaille: We are here at the Muskie Archives in Lewiston, Maine with Don Nicoll on July 25th, 2001 for what we hope to be the first instalment of several interviews, and Don, to just kind of explain where we'll be going with this, we know that Chris Beam did a set of three interviews which really covered your early life until about the election of 1954, and so we're going to do, kind of follow a periodized, chronological line, first kind of filling in the holes of that first, those first sets of interviews which really went by the usual (*unintelligible word*) of the specific questions, and then go from there to your political career. So, these first couple of questions really rely heavily on anecdotes, recollections from your parents, you know, they're kind of dealing with when you were really young. So some of them, we may not get much out of it but that's okay. So to start out, to kind of get a sense of the recollections that you have from what your parents and other relatives and friends talked about, dealing with the election of 1928, Herbert Hoover, the promise of prosperity, and what sense you got from your parents, if any.

Don Nicoll: I don't recall any discussions of the election of '28. I was only a year old, of

course, at the time, and I don't recall any conversations about that election later.

JR: Okay, very good. This will probably have a little more applicability, how was your family affected by Black Tuesday, October 29th, 1929, and the ensuing Great Depression?

DN: I don't know whether there were any precise or immediate effects. I know that when my father married, he was working with my grandfather in Philadelphia. My grandfather was a painter, he was a house painter, and my father became a carpenter and they worked on the old Ben Franklin Hotel construction in Philadelphia in '25, '26, and then came back to the Boston area, and my grandfather may have gone to Virginia about that time, too, and was working in Virginia on some home construction. And this had followed years in which my grandfather was a painter and varnisher for the Pullman Company at the Readville yards located in Hyde Park, Massachusetts where Pullman had a plant.

The early, the late twenties and early thirties, my father worked for the Great Atlantic and Pacific Tea Company, otherwise known as A&P. This is prior to their developing this, the precursors of the supermarkets; they were fairly small stores. And that had followed his working as a driver for a grocery delivery operation. My recollection is that in the late 1920s and into the early thirties, he was employed at A&P and he was until around 1936 I believe a store manager for A&P, and that was about the time they expanded their operations, put in larger stores, and he lost his job at that time. They had a wholesale restructuring or reorganization, but that wasn't connected with 1929. So my impression is that he was relatively unaffected. These were working class folks, they had no investments in the stock market, and they managed to keep food on the table through the nineteen late twenties and early thirties.

My other relatives, as far as I know, were also fairly free of direct impact. I have one uncle, on my mother's side, one uncle was a delivery man for the Hood Company, he drove a wagon for them for home delivery, and that was steady work and he worked until he retired for Hood. My other uncle on my mother's side, in the Boston area, drove at one time for a laundry company and at one time for a company, it was a milk company, not Hood but another one, I think it was Whiting's milk. And I think he did that earlier, and then later went to work for laundries, and he worked for laundries for the rest of his career. The other uncle on my mother's side in the States worked for the Ford Company, first in the Boston area and then in New Jersey, and he was employed gainfully through the Depression. And my other uncle was a farmer in Nova Scotia and I know that they had some tight times, but by piecing together work, cutting lumber, working on the road for the town, and selling butter and eggs and milk, they managed to survive. My grandfather in Nova Scotia, one grandfather worked, after he finished his career as a sawyer and was a station manager for the Canadian National Railroad in the town where they lived, after he retired he did some work as a watchman.

On my father's side my uncles, one worked for Submarine Signal in Boston, the precursor company to the Raytheon Company. He was a skilled, self-taught electronic engineer and he was fully employed all through the thirties. Second uncle was a metallurgist, also self-taught, and worked for a variety of companies and ultimately for the Boston Children's Hospital Medical

Center where he headed up the orthodic laboratories. And the third uncle was first, he also drove a delivery truck for Whiting Milk Company, and then got into the Merchant Marine and was a Marine engineer for a number of years and into the Second World War. So it's, it, in some, I think you found people coping with the economic changes and less affected in some ways in that environment than one might have thought for the number of people who were thrown out of work in the twenties and thirties, largely because they either had skills, or they were employed in businesses that tended to go on, Depression or no.

JR: Okay, did you really get a sense, probably from your own early life and from your friends and family, how the hard times manifested themselves in, like in your community?

DN: The one thing I remember from the 1930s that really was a product of the Depression was the WPA, the Works Progress Administration, and the number of public works projects that you would see with, particularly I remember road construction, street construction, and the two things that stick out in my mind are the sight of the men working on the roads, a lot of it hand labor, and the big sandwich board signs that they'd put up saying that this was a public works project of the WPA. And I remember one summer another boy and I set up a lemonade stand to sell lemonade to the fellows working on a WPA project in the neighborhood.

The, that was the principal effect. In the area where we lived, we did not see the building projects, big public buildings going up. And, I was trying to think, there was one other part, oh, I remember in the A&P store where my father was manager in the early thirties, of seeing the NRA sign hanging in the window and some smaller signs in the store itself. But other than some vague references to politics and Roosevelt and the Republicans in Congress, there wasn't much talk about it. Late in the thirties when my father had some trouble with getting a job, he lost, well he, after he left the A&P, or was fired from A&P, he did try to work as an insurance salesman for a while. That didn't work well, but he ended up getting a job working for the, a cafeteria chain, Hunt's Lunch in the Boston area that was managed by a family friend who had come from Nova Scotia. And so, getting to know someone, he ended up working as the night cashier for their cafeteria in Dock Square in downtown Boston. And then as we got toward, well af-, this is through 1939, and one thing I remember about that is that by 1939, it must have been when he working for Hunt's Lunch, he had Blue Cross coverage. So fairly in the health insurance business he managed to get health insurance. And then as things picked up toward the war, there were construction jobs that opened up and he went to work in Alexandria, Virginia on house construction because of the expanding federal government. Which probably was partially a product of the anti Depression investments the federal government was making, plus the growth of the defense establishment because it was about then that they were building the Pentagon and obviously expanding the number of employees.

But those, we were pretty much insulated from the bread lines and the people sitting on the, I don't ever recall seeing men sitting on the sidewalk selling apples then. Those pictures, or photographs I saw referred primarily to people in New York and I, direct effects from the Depression are not clear.

JR: Okay, what was your sense of how your father viewed Roosevelt, like Roosevelt's rise to power and like, the beginning of the New Deal and whatnot?

DN: He didn't talk much about politics at home. And in fact I, he was an enrolled Republican and my mother did not get her citizenship until, I think until I was in college, so I didn't hear much about politics from her except that they were nominal Republicans and my mother in particular came, I think she was reacting both as anti Catholic, she was a, not vehemently so but she was a Protestant in a minority in Boston, and to her Democrats were Irish Catholics and therefore suspect. And she had also, interestingly enough, come from a very Liberal family in Nova Scotia, her father was an avid Liberal, and my first election recollection was being in Nova Scotia, both my father and mother were there, and it was the election I think of 1936 or about then when the Liberals won for the first time in some time and my grandfather took my father and me on post election, that is election night after the returns became clear, with a bunch of his friends riding through the countryside in a truck, in and on a truck, harassing the Tories until a Mountie came along and said, "Okay, we've had our fun, we can go home." But that was my first election recall.

Other than that, I remember in school the Landon, you know the Landon election of 1936, I was supporting Landon as a child in a Republican family, and in 1940 I think pretty much, yes, supporting Willkie. Although I also remember particularly during the war being sort of pro Roosevelt. And by that time I was in, let's see, well 1941 I was in junior high school. By the time I got to high school my teachers were having an effect on me and I was much more of a Democrat than a Republican in spite of the family connections. It was years later that I learned that my father, who as I say didn't talk a lot about politics at home, was underneath it all probably voting Democratic and he told me that he voted for Harry Truman in '48.

And so, but politics wasn't a big subject at home. It was highly personal. It related mostly to the mayors of Boston, and particularly to James Michael Curley who was notorious, and to legislators and one family friend who was a Republican member of the legislature.

JR: And who was that?

DN: His name was Nelson, and I'm trying to remember his first name. N-E-L-S-O-N, from the Boston area. His kids were contemporaries of mine, Eric and his sister. No, his name was Eric, too, the father's name was Eric as well as the son. And the daughter's name was Harriet.

JR: This will play to your later knowledge of Ed Muskie, but do you have a sense of the extent of FDR's influence on Ed Muskie?

DN: Well, I think it was substantial for him growing up in a family where his father was a very engaged citizen when it came to politics, and in his memoirs, and I remember him talking about his father. His father loved to argue politics with people and he was a Democrat, and the Democratic Party is the friend of the working people and immigrants. And for him and for people like his son, Roosevelt was a great savior, because they had gone through the 1920s with Harding and Coolidge and then Hoover, and it was really a great breakthrough for the, for

Roosevelt to be elected. And the whole philosophy of the New Deal was important.

JR: Okay, excellent. How was religion introduced to you as a child?

DN: Well that was just, that was just part of life and we were members of a Baptist church in West Roxbury. West Roxbury was at that time, and I suspect it still is to a large degree, a sort of bridge community between lower middle income people and upper income. No, lower middle, middle, and then upper income people within the city of Boston. It's on the southwest side of the city, primarily residential, a few small manufacturing operations and retail and service operations. And there were two substantial Roman Catholic churches, Holy Name and St. Theresa's, and then a collection of main stream Protestant churches. There was an American Baptist church which was then called the Northern Baptist denomination. A Methodist church, Episcopal Church, and Congregational church and a Unitarian church, those were the principal Protestant, and they're all mainstream Protestant churches.

We happened to belong to the Baptist church because that's the church in which my mother grew up. My father's family is Presbyterian and they simply, and there was no Presbyterian church in Roxbury so they simply went to the Baptist church. And that was a part of growing up, you went to Sunday school and a lot of your friends were in that church. It was a community center in many respects.

JR: And that was pretty, a pretty big influence for quite a long time.

DN: Oh yeah, yeah. I also spent a lot of time with friends who were Roman Catholic and I remember we lived for a number of years in Holy Name parish in, very close to Browns Field which was owned by the Holy Name church and where we played sandlot baseball and football. And the priest in that parish was responsible for youth work was Father Leonard, and I think I spent more time with Father Leonard and kids from Holy Name than I did with the minister and kids from the Stratford Street Baptist church.

JR: Okay, now from reading those interviews with Chris Beam I understand that in your winter or summers in Nova Scotia you were pretty limited, you didn't really have access to TV, radio and what have you. But what I want to know is, from, you know, from like your earliest recollections, what was the extent of your exposure to the outside world as far as TV and (*unintelligible word*)?

DN: Well, TV we didn't have. TV, I'm not sure just when television was invented but it certainly wasn't being broadcast. Radio, what I remember most about radio up until December 7th, 1941 was radio serials for kids primarily. I remember listening to Little Orphan Annie, Tom Mix, and then some sort of crossover programs for youth and adults. The Shadow, One Man's Family, The Lone Ranger, oh, and one I remember particularly which has an interesting footnote on it was The Singing Lady, which was a program of songs and story readings for kids. And The Singing Lady later, or she may have been married at the time, but she married one of the Hammer brothers, Victor Hammer, whose brother Armand was both famous and notorious later

as a heavy donor to the, to political parties. He was head of Occidental Petroleum and he and his family bought Campobello Island.¹ And years and years later when I was working for Senator Muskie and we were working on the park, on one occasion I met Irene Winkler who was The Singing Lady, whom I'd listened to as a little kid.

But I don't remember, well excuse me, I do remember listening to radio and news programs, notably Lowell Thomas, and he was a combination news and travel. He did programs on travel, but he also presented news programs, news reading, and the one news item I remember most vividly was the broadcast of the news of the attack on Pearl Harbor. Broadcast of baseball games were also important. My father was an avid sports fan and listened to the baseball game.

JR: In regards to Pearl Harbor, and specifically considering, I recall your later, as far as your interaction with your in-laws and their interesting perspective on that attack, what was like your initial reaction to, and perhaps your family's from what you remember, all that happened at Pearl Harbor and how that would change later on through your interaction with your in-laws and whatnot?

DN: Well, at that time and through the war, of course, Japan was the enemy. I don't think that for my family, and for many of my friends, that there was ever any intense antipathy toward Japanese people *per se*. And in large part this was because of the church connection. And I think I may have mentioned this in the interview with Chris, but in the 1930s, well no, it was 1940, I went to a boy's camp in Ocean Park, Maine called the Royal Ambassador Boy's Camp which was a Baptist camp, and -

(Interview interrupted.)

JR: This is a continuation of the interview with Don Nicoll begun yesterday, and Don, where we left off, we had started to talk about your recollections of Pearl Harbor and you were talking about, you started talking about when you went to get a job in Ocean Park I believe.

DN: Oh, yes, and the question was attitudes toward the Japanese. In 1940 I had gone to the boy's camp, Royal Ambassador Boy's Camp in Ocean Park, which is a camp operated by, essentially by the American Baptist group. And one of the things that struck me early on and fascinated me all the while I was there was a set of exhibits at the front of the dining hall. The dining hall at that time, the building that subsequently burned, had a very large fireplace and very high ceilings. I think the peak of the ceiling in that building must have been about forty feet tall, so it was a light, airy building. But at the front, in a corner made by the side of this very large fireplace, on the wall toward the kitchen end of the building there were two photographs and a binnacle from a ship. The binnacle, which houses the compass, was from the Fukuin Maru, F-U-K-U-I-N, Maru, M-A-R-U, in Japanese, a ship that had been a sailing ship that had been used by a man named Bickel, William Bickel, B-I-C-K-E-L, who was a Baptist missionary in Japan in the late nineteenth, early twentieth century. And Captain Bickel, as he was known,

¹ The Hammer family bought the Roosevelt Cottage on Campobello Island.

was a British citizen who had been a sea captain, then apparently decided he wanted to be a missionary, and actually operated in the inland Sea of Japan as a missionary. The other two items were photographs, one of the ship itself and the other of Captain Bickel and his crew on the ship, and the crew was all Japanese.

Well, it so happens that my wife's father, who was a missionary to Japan from 1927 to 1941, was a successor to Capt. Bickel. There was one individual who succeeded Capt. Bickel and he, after he died, and that individual was a bit of a nut apparently and proceeded to sail the Fukuin Maru in among the ships of the Japanese Navy when they were on maneuvers, and quite understandably so offended them that they told him he had to leave the country and the mission society decided that they would disband the use of the ship for their mission work in the inland sea, among the islands. And so when my father-in-law, later to be father-in-law, went there he sailed on ferries from island to island and they lived on a ship ¹ there.

But in 1940, 1941, and through the war in the summertime, ultimately I worked as a, part of the operating crew for the camp. There were enough connections, both through that symbol of the mission work in Japan, and there were as I recall a couple of folks from Japanese families connected with the camp, that one didn't get a monolithic view of Japan. And the other thing that strikes me thinking back on that time is that at least for those of us who lived on the east coast, the war in Europe was much more at hand, much more something that we thought about, and the war in the Pacific was far away, even though the tales of the island hopping and the battles were carried in the papers and on radio. There was much more intense feeling about the Germans in many ways and what was happening in Germany and in Europe than Japan. And so it was not hard for me later to think of Japanese people as individuals and as part of my wife's extended family and friends.

JR: Okay, and what was your father-in-law's name, (*unintelligible word*)?

DN: His name was Marlin, M-A-R-L-I-N, Downer, D-O-W-N-E-R, Farnum, F-A-R-N-U-M.

JR: Okay, and I guess outside of that, just to kind of get your recollections of how, like (*unintelligible phrase*), maybe like how you were, how students were introduced to the outside world in schools, specifically with the war, with WWII going on?

DN: When I was in grammar school I remember a teacher in the fifth grade. Well let me back up. In the earlier grades, I'd say starting about in the third or fourth grade, we got some exposure to local government. Now that is city of Boston government, city council members, members of the school board. And they used to come and speak to assemblies in the grammar school. And I remember particularly one member of the, well he was a member of the school board and later a member of the city council, and unfortunately at this point I can't dredge up his last name but his first name was Clement, and he would come and speak to us at least once a year. And so early on I had the sense of public officials taking an interest in the school.

¹ The Farnum family lived in a home on the island of Innoshima in Hiroshima-ken.

The other thing I remember particularly was the annual recognition of Veterans Day, or Armistice Day as it was known, and that was a full fledged ceremony at school before Armistice Day, which is a holiday, and we had talks about WWI and sang songs from WWI. I was much more familiar with the songs of WWI than many other songs through the period. And since our parents' generation had experienced that war, and in my case because many of my relatives were Canadian, there was a strong identification with the war in Europe, in the 1914-1918 period. And the big day in terms of thinking about international affairs was Armistice Day, November 11th.

Then the other thing I remember particularly in elementary school was the, in the fifth grade, a teacher talking about Europe and particularly praising Mussolini because Mussolini was making the trains run on time. And that's the only thing I remember from that period. This would have been 1937, 1938. A little bit about Hitler, not an awful lot. I remember the excitement over Jesse Owens winning in the Olympics of 1936, but I don't have any vivid memories of what was going on in Germany at the time. I just remember that business about Mussolini making the trains run on time.

Nineteen thirty nine, of course, the war broke out and at that point there was a lot of interest, or I had a lot of interest, and remember reading the Boston papers and following the stories of the phony war, the breakthrough in the Maginal Line, being recruited or enlisting in the Civil Defense program that started in 1939, 1940. It would have been 1940, '41, when there were fears of war on our side of the country, and I was a courier I guess you'd call, had a helmet with CD painted on it, and a whistle and rode my bicycle as we went through air raid drills.

In junior high we had civics classes and that, some of it was taken up with the war, very little about European history that I remember, and some about American history. A footnote on this, I was, in elementary school I went to the Patrick J. Lyndon School and I don't know who Mr. Lyndon was, I assume he was a public figure in Boston late enough to have been honored, even though he was Irish which was not characteristic in Boston until the days of Edward Fitzgerald and James Michael Curley. But the junior high that I attended was the Robert Gould Shaw Junior High School. That was named for the colonel from Boston who headed the regiment made up of Black soldiers, African American soldiers, in the Civil War. And in our school outside the auditorium there was a replica of, a bas relief, of Shaw leading his troops that, by St. Gaudens, that is on a memorial opposite the state house and on the edge of the Boston Common. And that, I do not recall ever in the time I was there anyone talking about that memorial or its significance. And looking back, I say, what an opportunity was lost.

There were other elements of our area that were of interest dating back to the nineteenth century. Brook Farm, the Transcendentalists home for a while, was located on the edge of West Roxbury, and I remember references to it but very little discussion of either it or the transcendental movement in junior high school. Theodore Parker, famous nineteenth century Unitarian minister and abolitionist, was a minister in West Roxbury and his statue stood outside the Unitarian church, and a school, one of the elementary schools in town was named for him.

But very little discussion of the abolitionists and the role they played, or the history of the people in that community.

But in junior high school, now this is fall of '41, no, fall of '39 -

End of Side A
Side B

JR: Let's continue.

DN: I entered junior high school in 1939, actually started in 1940 because I'd been sick in the spring of '39 and didn't go to school that fall, I was taught at home. And the next couple of, two and a half years, there was a lot of talk about the war but I don't recall any great emphasis on history at that time, either the history of the country or international relations. And none of the teachers of social studies from junior high stand out in my mind.

When I went to high school however, it changed dramatically. The war was in full swing and there was a lot of emphasis on what was happening in the war, and considerable emphasis on the history of the country and our place in the world. And I remember particularly in high school Mr. McElroy who was the American history teacher, and I had him a couple of years in high school. And that high school, Boston English High School, was a remarkable place I think, and it was a great influence on me. It was a school that had an academic emphasis, but it also functioned as a general high school and we used to say jokingly that if you wanted to skim through you could do it, you could kind of float through the school and take a general course and get your diploma, or if you wanted to you could work hard and get a very good education, and I was stimulated by the school. I was also stimulated by the fact that the school population was diverse. It was located in the heart of the south end, the slum section of the city, and kids came to, all boys, but we came from all over the city with a large mixture of ethnic groups. And I think that the socialization experience that I got there was second only to the very fine academic education.

In fact, looking back I, in junior, in elementary school and junior high, probably the strongest educational influences I had were in language, English primarily, and the arts, very fine teaching from the teachers there. And then in high school it was across the board, science, history, and English, and a fair, science and math I should say, English, history, and foreign languages. I had both, by the time I finished high school I'd had a smattering of Latin, French, and German, and taught by excellent teachers. And I think I gained from the fact that women were discriminated against and the only jobs they could get if they were professionals was either nurses or teachers. So very bright women taught, and today a number of them would have been in business or other professions, but then they taught. And in high school where the teachers were all men, they were bright men who in the Depression years ended up in teaching because there weren't other opportunities, and they were very able teachers. So prejudice and economic hardship worked to the benefit of those of us who grew up in the thirties and mid forties.

JR: How would you say that experience, like specifically with WWII in your formative high school years, how was that changing you, like your views politically and religiously if that is at all applicable?

DN: Let me take the latter first. My religious experience in the small Baptist church was principally the experience of being part of a community and an extended family. The way mainstream churches tend to function, the focus is on the individuals and, at least as I observed the Catholic church in our community, there was much more emphasis on the fact that the church was led by the priests and the bishops and the archbishops and the cardinal and ultimately the pope. And the focus there was obviously a lot of religious instruction, but not a, not a sense of community within a particular parish at that time, that was not, at least in that area, that was an obligation, to go to church, to be part of the church. And it was a bulwark against prejudice for a number of the families. But it was not a voluntary gathering of people, and the voluntary gathering of people and the formation of an extended family was very important and much more important to me than the theology. And there were some very good ministers at the church who were intellectually stimulating, and that was important. The church was also the place that the Boy Scout troop that I belonged to, and that was an extended socialization. I was an only child so other than my cousins, the kids to whom I related were the kids I knew in church first, and then secondarily the kids I met in school.

I came out of that with probably more a sense of one's responsibilities to the community than anything else, and that you volunteered and you did things with and for other people, and that was, it was obviously a very important part of my parents' life. They were very active in the church and they received a lot of support at some tough times for them from other members of the church.

The experience in school and its effect on me in that period and in the war, I think also, well first was the importance, coming out of a family that came from rural Nova Scotia and was part of an enclave if you will of Protestants, it was a minority in Boston at that time, the school experience was broadening in getting to know people from other cultures essentially, and beginning to appreciate the fact that ethnic cultural, social background, economic background, and those differences really were quite unimportant in many respects as you thought about people's talents, thought about people's capacity, their approach to life and how you might relate to them. And secondarily, it, the intellectual discipline that I got in school all the way through, I didn't appreciate it so much in grammar school and junior high, but looking back I realize that the foundation was very strong in those public schools and it came to fruition in high school.

In terms of political perspective, I, as I indicated earlier in the interview, I was a nominal Republican during junior high, particularly supporting, well in grammar school, supporting Alf Landon in the '36 campaign, Wendell Willkie in the 1940 campaign, but increasingly moving away from, or not really having much of a sense of Republican versus Democratic philosophy and much more interested in the traditions that Roosevelt was establishing. And so by the time I graduated from high school in 1945 I was essentially a Democrat in my instincts for politics. I did not at that time think of myself as heading for a political career.

In fact, when I graduated from high school my intent was to go to college and ultimately become a minister, because that's a way you could perform service in the community. And I got very little guidance on the selection of a college. All I knew was: a), I wanted to go to college away from home, I wanted to be on my own; and b), I was looking for a school that would be a good base for going on to a seminary. And so I tended to look at Baptist affiliated schools, Colby, Colby and Bates in Maine were the two Baptist affiliated schools, although they had essentially become secular institutions by that time, but the traditions were there. And for some reason I fastened on Colby and applied and was accepted.

JR: Okay, just one last question dealing with prior time in high school and in regards to the WWII era. What sense did you have of how society was changing, I guess how, like the social and economic dynamics of your environment were reacting to, like, the war effort I guess?

DN: You didn't, or I didn't, and I don't recall many of my contemporaries thinking about it in terms of social change. We were not in an area where we were witness to some of the migration that was taking place. For example, in Detroit and the upper mid-west, in the large industries that were expanding rapidly with the, or on the west coast, where large factories building tanks and trucks and airplanes, the steel mills, were attracting large numbers of African Americans from the south to come north. And others seeking employment from the farms were moving into the cities and industrial centers. In Boston and in the Boston area my guess is that the two major focuses for employment related to the war effort, for large numbers of people, were the Watertown Arsenal and the shipyard, and my father worked in the Boston Navy Shipyard during the war.

But the social impact of that was not apparent. Boston was too large, and if you were living in one of the suburban sections, and West Roxbury was essentially part of the suburbs, although it was within the city proper, you didn't see large movements of people and you were not witness day by day to the work going on at the Navy yard. Quite a different environment, I'm sure, than was the case in Portland where a relatively small port became a major ship building center and staging area for convoys during WWII. So that would have had a much larger impact.

What, the impact of the war was personal. Thinking about my father working in the yard, coming home and talking about working on the Queen Mary and the Queen Elizabeth when they were converting them for troop ships. He didn't talk a great deal about what was going on obviously because of the war time security concerns. But, early on, the sense of activity is hours that changed regularly; he worked the nightshift sometimes, the dayshift others. And the stories about friends, relatives, who were either enlisting or were drafted and the impact of their departure, and several deaths of people. A junior high school classmate of mine who enlisted in the Marines fairly early, he was a couple of years older than we and he enlisted when he was seventeen, and learning that he had been killed, I remember the impact of that. But it was more the impact of the war on individuals than the impact of the war on groups of people that you felt.

JR: Okay.

DN: I've always thought, for example, that Tolstoy's War and Peace was very effective because it gave you a sense of how people were affected or not affected by great events taking place around them.

JR: All right, we can kind of shift gears over to your time at Colby, and one thing that Andrea and I are interested in is being at Colby from '45 to '49, which is kind of concurrent with Muskie's time in the Maine legislature, so we wanted to know if, if you had, if, like when was the first time you had heard of him. Like, I know you didn't meet him until, what, 1953?

DN: Fifty three, yeah.

JR: So, I don't know, if like you had, like perhaps through maybe Paul Fullam or some of your other classmates who were politically involved at Colby, what sense you had of Muskie or his time in the legislature?

DN: I'm going to defer answering that question because I just remembered something from my high school days. In, while I was in high school I participated in a speaking contest, in fact won the contest. It was public speaking, and it was held in the old South Church which is on Washington Street in Boston, and the prize for the contest was a copy of a book edited by Sumner Wells about the United Nations and the attempt to create a United Nations, and the topic of the contest was world efforts to build a peace organization after the war. And obviously there was engagement at that time in the questions of how we could avoid another world war, and I was caught up in it to the extent of having been encouraged I think by Mr. McElroy to participate in the contest. And that was considered a part of education. I don't remember any other events.

The other thing that's semi related to the war and is a source of considerable amusement, during that period in Boston where for a long time before it, and for some years after, we had what was called the Schoolboy Cadets program and part of your education was learning to drill, military drill. And in my senior year I became a captain in the Schoolboy Cadets at the English High School, and ultimately the company I commanded won the contest, military drill contest, so I become a colonel. And all the while I was, because of my childhood illnesses, singularly ineligible for getting into the military and that was the extent of my military experience. But the whole effort was designed in part to train young men to learn how to obey orders and how to march, and to tell their left foot from their right foot, etcetera.

Well, off to Colby and in 1945-'46 my interest in American history at Colby, and international policy as well, evolved in the first year that I was there. And the biggest impact on me during that period was the return of the veterans that came back in February of 1946. There were a few who came in the fall of '45 but the big rush began in February of '46. And in fact, in the fall of 1946 two of my roommates were veterans, probably in their early to mid-twenties, and getting to know them and learning something of their experiences and getting the different perspective they had was a substantial influence. As was the impact of the veterans in our classes and the way the

faculty members had to approach students. They weren't dealing just with kids fresh out of high school, so the social milieu was, the education social milieu was very different and again a stimulus to intellectual discipline I think.

Paul Fullam, I started taking a course from Paul Fullam in the fall of '46. My introductory history were in European history, survey courses. Interesting, not exciting. I was interested in them but, and not put off by them, but I wouldn't say I was gripped by them. Paul Fullam was far more gripping and he was an individual who, we used to say didn't, he didn't have students, he had disciples, and he was a fervent believer in the American democratic system, with a small 'd', as well as being a big 'D' Democrat. But the focus in the American history courses was on national history, and it was not on Maine, there was very little attention paid to Maine. I was, we never had a field trip to Augusta, which was only about eighteen miles down the road. Never had much emphasis on politics in Maine or on the political leaders of Maine. The one event I can remember would have been in the early, or late winter of 1947-'48, when Ralph Owen Brewster, who was then senator from Maine, brought Robert Taft, Senator Taft who was running for the Republican nomination for president, brought him on campus as part of a tour. It was a Sunday afternoon and Taft came to speak, and I remember going to hear that and hear Brewster, and I remember Paul Fullam talking disparagingly about Brewster and at that point he was a supporter of Margaret Chase Smith who was running for the U.S. Senate. But I don't recall Senator Smith speaking at Colby at the time. And I certainly don't recall any emphasis on the state legislature or the city government in Waterville. In fact, I think one of the great deficiencies in teaching of history at that time at Colby is the fact that there was almost no attention paid to local politics. And I don't know whether Colby, Bates or Bowdoin today does much in the way of focusing students' attention on the laboratories of democracy that are right next door.

So I didn't have any sense of Maine politics. My focus by then had shifted from thinking about the ministry to the prospect of teaching, and major, and I become a history major and my hope was to go on to graduate school and to become a teacher in college.

JR: So in this shift to a more, a focus on history and politics, how was your, first I suppose how was your view of American politics from like your earlier life, you know, as you're (*unintelligible word*), how's that changing, how is your ideas of contemporary politics changing I guess?

DN: Well, I was, I had in the earlier days, in my high school days when I first began to think more broadly about history and about political science, government, it was less concerned in many ways with contemporary politics or contemporary issues as a, as an academic discipline, than it was a study of the background. And I had a particular interest in American history from the early period, particularly the Revolutionary War up through the period leading to the Civil War, and that was really my focus as much as any period through my college years. And by chance when I, I got a fellowship at Penn State, and by chance I, as a teaching fellow taught four sections in the year I was there in pre Civil War American history. I never taught post Civil War American history, so I become something of a specialist in the period from the Revolution

through, to the Civil War.

And I was, I was interested in contemporary affairs, but that, that was almost episodic in a sense. I did not have a passion for following the daily stories of what was going on in Washington, I was very much concerned about the conflicts over labor law in the 19-, mid 1940s after the end of WWII, I was concerned about our role in Europe and the growing Cold War, and then I was very much concerned with the Korean War and not at all happy about that. I was an opponent of the Korean War and felt very strongly that Truman was wrong on that. And I think, looking back on it, I don't see how we could have avoided it under the circumstances, and it was a difficult time, but that war and the conditions and the circumstances that led up to it are far less clear to me today than they were when I was a twenty, twenty one year old in 1947-'08-'09, that period.

JR: Okay. I recall you speaking about this during your interviews with Chris Beam, but I'd really like to get a sense of how, like, of like the brewing Cold War in the United States, and this would be simply through your contact with Paul Fullam and his, he ran against Margaret Chase Smith, correct?

DN: In 1954, he did.

JR: Oh, okay, it was that late. But, so what sense did you have of him, and I recall from those interviews that you said that he was, (*unintelligible word*) at one point chastised Margaret Chase Smith for not, for like not being as harsh on, or as forward, like McCarthyism, (*unintelligible phrase*)?

DN: Well I think, well, there was growing concern among a number of liberals in this society, in academics, over the impact of the Cold War on civil liberties in the country, and the House Un-American Activities Committee was very active in this period following WWII. A congressman named J. Parnell Thomas was way out in front on this in the 1940s. Joe McCarthy became more prominent around 1950 as I recall the dates. I'd have to go back and refresh my memory on the exact sequence here, but it was in the mid to late period of President Truman's term, full term, and then into the Eisenhower years that McCarthy hit his zenith and then collapsed. And Margaret Chase Smith was slow, no slower than anybody else, to take on McCarthy, but ultimately she was willing to do it. And Paul Fullam was a, an ardent civil libertarian and was offended by the shenanigans of people like William Jenner, J. Parnell Thomas, and Joe McCarthy, and felt passionately that people should be opposing them.

The consequences, but he was also very much opposed to the conservative wing of the Republican Party in Maine, exemplified by Ralph Owen Brewster, and so in 1948 as I mentioned earlier he supported Margaret Chase Smith. And he was an enrolled Republican at that time because he felt that that was the only way he could make a difference in Maine. The Democrats weren't going to win, and if you wanted to have moderate to liberal members of congress and senate, then you better be a Republican and play a part in the primary. And later Senator Smith needed him over the fact that he had supported her earlier. And then he was running against her

in '54.

JR: Okay, well that's probably, we'll stop here and we'll continue on, (*unintelligible phrase*) gave me a sign that we need to wrap it up, so thank you very much and we will definitely continue this further.

End of Interview