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Beliveau, Cynthia Murray oral history interview

Andrea L'Hommedieu

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Interview with Cynthia Murray Beliveau by Andrea L'Hommedieu

Summary Sheet and Transcript

Interviewee

Beliveau, Cynthia Murray

Interviewer

L'Hommedieu, Andrea

Date

September 15, 2000

Place

Hallowell, Maine

ID Number

MOH 231

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Biographical Note

Cynthia (Murray) Beliveau was born October 15, 1947 in Bangor, Maine. She came from a very active political family. She ran her brother Frank's campaign and later was a state chair for the McGovern campaign in 1972, as well as being active in several other campaigns. When she graduated from John Bapst High School she became a nun, but did not take the vows and left to attend St. Joseph's College. She was a founder of the Maine Women's Lobby. She was elected to attend the International Year of the Woman convention. She has traveled around the world in order to raise money and do community service.

Scope and Content Note

Interview includes discussions of: family political history; Bangor political history; brother's election campaigns for secretary of state, Maine House of Representatives and Senate; McGovern campaign in 1972; Maine gubernatorial campaign, 1986; Watergate; 1954 Maine gubernatorial campaign; prejudice against Catholics in Maine; Women's Rights movement; Maine Teacher's Association Women's Caucus; Maine Women's Lobby; Gore campaign; personal meetings with Muskie; changes in the Democratic Party; Severin Beliveau; Janet Mills;

and Albert Beliveau.

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Transcript

Andrea L'Hommedieu: This is an interview on September 15th, the year 2000 at about 10:00 A.M. at the home of Ms. Cynthia Murray-Beliveau at 2 Litchfield Road in Hallowell, Maine. This is Andrea L'Hommedieu. If we could just start by you giving me your date of birth and where and when you were born?

Cynthia Murray-Beliveau: Okay, 10/15/47 in Bangor.

AL: And what is your full name?

CMB: Cynthia Anne Murray-Beliveau.

AL: And did you grow up in Bangor?

CMB: Un-hunh, yeah, lived there most of my life.

AL: I understand that your parents were politically active as well, what were their names and what were their occupations?

CMB: My mother's name was Laura L. Guite Murray, and when I was a kid she was at home quite a bit with us but she also worked in various sort of numbers kinds of things. She was the treasurer, the first treasurer I think of the University of Maine Employee's Credit Union. She worked at Dow Air Force Base in the credit union as well when that was a SAC base in Bangor. Earlier I think she had worked at Western Union and a couple of places downtown. But both she and my father ended up, I guess it was my dad that ended up in later years on the board of the Bangor Federal Credit Union, so they both had some exposure or experience in that area. My dad's name was Robert Emmett Murray, also born and bred in Bangor, both of them were, and my grandparents as well were, came from Ireland on one side and France on the other through Canada so there were many generations in Bangor.

My dad worked in his day job primarily at Sears & Roebuck in many different capacities. Sales person, he was a service manager for a while, he was a buyer. [He] flew to New York when I was a little kid and it was a big thrill to come, go out to the airport and watch the plane land, the Northeast Airlines. And in his avocation I think one of his primary loves was always working on the political scene. For, during the sixties, kind of the height of some of that, he was the Bangor city chairman and I think the county chairman as well, but I remember the city committee. He was the chairman of the city committee in Bangor. And that was a big contested battle between a university professor and my dad for the chairmanship. And it was a city committee, in the days when people by the hundreds would turn out to a meeting. So, yeah, that was

AL: Who was the professor?

CMB: I think at that time it was either Ken Hayes or, the guy he was running against though, I think was Stone. I want to say Hugh but I don't think that's right. He was Stone, Bill Stone, his name was Bill Stone. Nice guy, I think he's maybe still around somewhere. And, you know, they became good friends years after that and certainly worked on the same issues. But it was a big city committee and at that time there were factions in it, so. But my dad always did that. And the interesting part was my mom often did a lot of the work behind the scenes. My dad has died, too, so, and my mother has Alzheimer's pretty bad so neither one of them can battle with

my assessment at this point, but my mum was always on the phone making a lot of dad's calls for him.

But there are five children in our family, I'm the oldest, and all of us grew up with the idea that politics was not a dirty word, it brought people good stuff and . . . So from the time we were pretty young we were always involved in, you know, making calls, dropping leaflets, finding parking lots and putting things in and on people's cars before you had to ask them if you could do that. Now people would die, but anyway. So we always grew up with that being just sort of an activity that we were, thought was perfectly legit and normal and that everybody did that. It wasn't until later that we probably realized that wasn't the case with a lot of kids growing up.

AL: Did all of you kids, all five were active, are all five of you still active?

CMB: Some more than others, but I think more or less. We have often, even if it's been just on a certain issue, remained pretty astute and pretty active. My other two sisters are probably not as active now as they were at one point, but we all have had various experiences over the years. When I was in college one of my brothers, we had to wait until he turned twenty-one to file his nomination papers for the Maine house of representatives. And I think at the time he was the youngest person ever to have run, and I ran his campaign.

AL: Was that Frank or Buddy?

CMB: Yes, that was Frank, when we were in college. And then, so we've had, we've all had various experiences. I mean, my brother Buddy, too, was also a member, a house member for a couple of terms and then went to the senate for another couple of terms and he's just finishing now. But Frank was in the house a couple terms and ran for senate, and lost by a quarter of one percent. And then ran subsequently for secretary of state and lost by one ballot, one vote on the third ballot, led the first two ballots.

AL: Close.

CMB: Yeah, very close, yeah. So we've been through some races for sure. And I've worked on a lot of other campaigns over the years.

AL: Like what campaigns?

CMB: Well, I was one of the state chairs for the McGovern campaign in '72, that was one that we didn't do all that well in. I've just worked on a number of legislative either issues or campaigns, and I've chosen not to work on some just because of times. And I remember Sandy Maisel, when he ran for congress, asked me if I would chair his campaign and I just, I think I had two or three little kids at the time and I was like, 'oh, whoa,' so I didn't do that one. But I've always been at least a worker type and I've never minded doing some of the more tedious stuff like phone calling and, as well as some of the reception kinds of things, and filling in for candidates and that kind of thing. My husband also ran for governor, I was pretty active in that

campaign, that was in '86. And so I certainly know what it's like to also be at least the wife of a candidate.

AL: What is that like?

CMB: Well it's pretty tough. I think in many respects a lot of what you're asked to do bears no, or holds no bearing on the job that you're trying to get. And I think in his case Severin probably would have been a very good governor but wasn't necessarily the best campaigner. And it's hard, the hoops that you sort of have to jump through really have very little to do with the job at times. And there were, and we threw ourselves into it big time. We had three children at the time and we, they were very active although they were young. And I can remember actually, a couple days ago when I was in Lewiston to see [vice president Al] Gore we parked in the parking lot of a Knights of Columbus Hall or an American Legion Hall or something like that, where we had had a bean supper type of thing when Severin had been running for governor.

And I remember that night; there was a pretty good size crowd. And at the end of it our son, who was either eight or ten at the time (I could figure that out but that's probably not important), I remember that after the supper was over he was talking strategy for this and that and whatever we were doing the next day or the next week or something. And he basically understood more about what it was we were doing and what points we had to make and why, than a couple of the people that we had hired to work for us. And we had a discussion in that building where we had just parked yesterday. And I remember that story, thinking about how serious he was and how he really understood it better than the people that we had hired who were at least, you know, ten or fifteen years older than he was at the time, young people in their twenties, you know, who really, Emmett got it better than some of those.

So we, and during that campaign it was pretty hectic, it was, you know, twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week type of thing. And we often kept separate schedules and I would fill in for Severin often. I remember one night having to go to the coast and fill in, in a very Republican area, and I probably was just naive enough to not be that worried. And a woman drove me down and I tried to get my stuff together. And it turned out to be like one of the most successful nights I had ever had, got great press the next day in the Bangor paper and, about, you know, Beliveau's running but which one, or we think the wrong one or something like that, you know. But, and it was great. But the, but part of what made it great was that I wasn't the candidate, so the buck didn't ultimately and always stop with me. So if there was an issue that was either real touchy or one that I really couldn't be the person to answer the question, I mean I generally knew where Severin was on all issues and could handle myself pretty well in the political arena. But, you know, I always knew I had that as an out as well. I mean, I always could find out the answer and get back to somebody or he could deal with a person that really wanted to deal with him and not with me. But that didn't happen very often. So it was hectic.

But I remember coming home one night and we were coming from different places but we had met at some function. And, so each, somebody was driving each of us, so we sent the two drivers home in the car together, and we just rode home together just to see each other and just to

be together. And when we were coming down Western Avenue in Augusta and we sort of were almost home, we lived in Augusta at that time. We sort of looked at each other and went like, "What are we doing this for? What is the point of this?" you know. It just was really tough at times, real taxing to try to keep up with your kids and go through this primary process, so. I think, it was long but I think it was great and I think the system works.

I was real encouraging for Severin to do this because I just feel like if it's something you think you want to try you always should try it, you know. Losing is the least of the issues in terms of doing it. I mean, if it's something that's on your mind and you think you'd be good at it or you think you want to do it or you want to serve, or you ought to pay back, you know, whatever the reasons or the rationale, if it's something that's in your blood, as we say, or whatever, then by all means you should do it. So I strongly thought he should, even though I knew it would be quite a challenge. And he was getting into it fairly late and I think that was one of his downfalls, he did come in second out of five people and I think that was a lot of the reasoning, a lot of the reason, rationale.

AL: Did he come away from it feeling differently about politics?

CMB: I don't think so, no. I think he's always been active. I mean, he too had a couple terms in the, maybe I think one in the house and one or two in the senate, in the Maine state senate. And he was also chairman of the Democratic Party and then he was a county attorney. And he was also president of the state chairmen's association in Washington during the time that the Watergate bugs were placed. And there were two phones bugged in Washington. One was Larry O'Brien? I'm drawing a total blank here; senior moment. Not O'Brien, not Strauss, who was the chairman then?

AL: I'm not thinking of the name either.

CMB: Yeah, well, the bug that worked, and the other bug was placed on their telephone in Washington. And the bug that worked was the one on Severin and Spencer Oliver's phone. Spencer was the executive director of the state chairmen's association, so he was sort of a staff person for that whole association in Washington. And it was that bug that actually worked and that's what began the undoing of Watergate and . . . So that was a Maine, big Maine connection as well.

AL: Did that consume a lot of Severin's time, being involved in that?

CMB: Oh yeah, I mean that did. But that was in '72 and then of course it went through a few years after that before they basically, that association sued the committee to reelect the president (CREEP), which was Nixon's group that had done the dirty tricks stuff. And it was a few years before that suit was settled and each state chairman received, or the state chairmen who were affected, you know, whose phone conversations had been tapped and the privacy had been breached and that sort of thing. I think Severin received I think it was thirty-five hundred dollars. which he gave to the Maine Democratic Party.

(Telephone interruption.)

AL: Okay, so we were talking about Severin's receiving thirty-five hundred dollars and donating it to the Maine Democratic Party.

CMB: Right, that's right.

AL: And that was in the mid-seventies, around that time?

CMB: Yeah, probably almost towards the later seventies, I think, before that was finished, yeah. So I'm kind of jumping all over the map here, but.

AL: That's okay. I did want to go back for a minute to your parents. Do you remember how early your father did get involved? You said sort of the climax was in the sixties, but was he, do you have memories or recollections of him being active in the fifties when Muskie ran for governor?

CMB: Oh yeah, yeah.

AL: Any stories about that?

CMB: Well, there were lots. I was aware of who that was and the fact that he was from Waterville where my grandparents were from. And in Rumford even vaguely, more, less in the forefront than the Rumford question, because my dad's uncle Ned Murray was on the law court with Severin's father, Albert Beliveau. So long be- (and Severin and I met in politics as well), so long before we met our families had known of each other. And my great uncle, my dad's uncle, and Severin's father served on the law court together. And, because, and he was a judge from Bangor, so I would see Uncle Ned every Sunday at Mass. So, you know, I was aware of Muskie and I was a little girl then during, in '54, when he was elected.

So I don't remember specific stories about them, but I know my parents were involved in that election as well, probably making phone calls, that kind of thing. My dad just, you know, as far back as I can recall it was just always, you know, politics and the Democratic Party were always part of it. I mean my grandfather, my dad's father, Frank Murray, (my brother's named that, too, but both my grandparents were named Frank, so, but anyway) he lived during the Depression and all, I mean he passed out WPA jobs, so he was politically connected as well. So I'm sure it was probably from the time my dad was a little kid I'm sure

AL: Where it was instilled.

CMB: Right. He grew up also having a real sense of the political process from his parents. So I don't remember specific Muskie stories from that time, other than just sort of a general knowledge that he was running for governor and that he won. And, you know, later on it

became, I mean it was funny because, ironic, I ended up knowing him pretty well and spent some time with him. And Jane's niece was one of my best friends in college.

AL: Who, which one?

CMB: Judy Harvey, who just lives down around the corner now. We each have four kids. We are very, you know, we've been very close for a long, long time. So I knew, you know, even when I was in college at St. Joseph's, not at the university, and Judy was there, there were connections to Ed Muskie, you know. So it's sort of always been, you know, I've always been aware of him my whole life. But I don't as a kid remember specifics other than their going to see him or going to something at the Blaine House later on, you know, if he was in town they would go to where, whatever function he was at, that kind of thing. And we probably did, too, I just don't remember it. I'm sure they took us, because we do that with our kids now. They've always grown up being in these places and seeing that as a part of normal life. We were at Al Gore yesterday or the day before with Liam who's thirteen, and his buddy, and you know, we got them in the front of the line and they shook his hand and, you know. So that's just always been a part of life for us.

AL: Now growing up in Bangor, what schools did you attend?

CMB: I went to St. John's Catholic School on State Street from kindergarten through eighth grade, and then I went to John Bapst High School which was at the time a Catholic high school; it's a prep school now. And that was the same school that my parents had been to, and that my grandparents built during the Depression, during the time that Father John Bapst was a Jesuit, was tarred and feathered by the Ku Klux Klan from Ellsworth. That school is named for him. During the time when they built St. John's Church in Bangor, my grandparents basically stood guard around that church at night with torches and stuff, to protect the building from the racist issues that were going on in Bangor at the time.

And Bangor had a lot of small, and there's a real strong Irish community, a real French community, Jewish community, there were lots of ethnic pockets. And growing up there I just really kind of, I was pretty aware of that, I always felt like I had friends from other places. Dow Air Force Base was a real SAC base at the time and a lot of those kids came to Bapst so. I mean, there were black kids in my class that, you know, now is really not the case as much in Maine.

AL: So you felt you sort of got to see a lot of the world.

CMB: Well, enough of it. I mean, I'm sure in some ways it was a very sheltered life compared to what my life has become as I've moved into, well into middle age. And I've really been lucky and had a chance to not only do lots of traveling; I mean I did even as a kid in school, in college, you know. I kind of went off for one summer with a friend of mine which was, now is pretty common but at the time was kind of, my parents were beside themselves to think I was going to Europe, you know. But now I've had chances and done work in places like Port au Prince in Haiti and South Africa and Jerusalem and Tegucigalpa in Honduras and, you know, places that

aren't just the typical tourist spots. And so I've been really lucky to do some of those kinds of things, too.

AL: So, you've gone there in the capacity of working, other than just to vacation?

CMB: Yeah, yeah, or visiting. I've raised money for people sometimes, that's what I do now in certain projects. And sometimes I've been lucky enough to actually see the, some of the fruits of, you know, where the money goes, and it makes you a better fund raiser if you have those senses, so. And you know, so there, I just generally like to get my hands into things instead of just sort of staying at the policy level, so I've had a lot of lucky chances like that.

I've been a, for ten years I was a board member at St. Joseph's College in North Windham, I just finished chairing that board this spring. I was the chair the last two years. And they first started an association with a group called Community Action, uh, Christian and Appalachian Project, CAP. And the first year that this college was involved in that I went to Kentucky and, with eight college kids. And we met two hundred others there from other schools during spring break and we built houses and hung upside down on roofs and, you know, so I've had a lot of those kind of experiences, too. The South African thing had to do with an educational, looking at the system since apartheid and what has happened since those laws have changed in the last five years. That was just last summer, so that's a more recent one.

But I never felt deprived in Bangor, Maine growing up of having a world view. I mean, I think the news was always important every night and, although as a kid didn't necessarily like to watch it. I mean it was just sort of a thing, my father had to have the news on and I couldn't see what was that interesting about the news every night, but anyway, you know, whatever.

AL: So your grandparents really were facing the Ku Klux Klan? What year was that, do you remember what -?

CMB: It would have been during the Depression, so I don't know exactly.

AL: Was it in the thirties?

CMB: In the thirties, yeah.

AL: Not the twenties?

CMB: No, I think it would have been in the thirties. But whenever that church was being constructed, which is a huge, huge edifice. And you know, it was really built on the backs of a lot of immigrants, you know, people that really gave nickels and dimes I'm sure, to put that place up, and to build that high school, John Bapst. So, I mean, it, my parents and grandparents, too, on both sides. And one of my grandfathers, my mother's father, was the chef there for years. I mean, they really worked hard; it was their life, I mean that was very, very important to them. And also anything that had to do with the church, you know.

Even in my dad's last years after he'd retired, I mean he was on things like the cemetery board, the St. Michael's Home board, the credit union board, you know, they're all like associated in some way with his Catholic community, and always on the Bapst board or doing fund raisers or something. A couple of my brothers taught school there as well for a period, or served on the board. So for them that was really their life and in some respects they were, they were that Irish group that did that, you know. And Francos, too, from my mother's side.

AL: And your brother is now a minister.

CMB: He's a priest, yeah. Catholic priest, yeah.

AL: He's a priest.

CMB: Catholic priest, yeah. Yeah. And actually when I first left school I entered the convent, I was a nun my first foray out of Bangor, so that's where I started, too. And I think, I think in those days that was, you know, a very acceptable, you know, a very, a thing that Irish or French Catholic families were very proud of: my son the priest or my daughter the nun kind of thing. So that was a real legitimate, not so unusual choice back in the mid-sixties or, you know, pre Vatican II, I guess.

AL: Well what changed your mind?

CMB: Well, that's another story. But it just, you know, it, at the time that I would have taken vows I really wasn't sure enough to take them for life, so basically I felt like I didn't have too much other choice at that point but to leave. But I sort of stayed around long enough to convince them that I could come back when I had it together. Now they do that all the time, but at the time that wasn't done that way so I never did go back. But when I went to St. Joseph's College in North Windham, that's the school that they sent me to actually when I was a sister student, so, and that's when I met Judy Harvey. But it, so I only really could afford to go there, which was kind of ironic that I end up being on the board and the chairman of the board, you know, thirty something years later. But I, after I left the convent I really couldn't afford to go back there so that's when I went to university and got involved in sort of the typical sixties things. I was, kind of demonstrated against the war in Vietnam and was definitely a child of those times, kid of those times.

AL: Now when did you get interested in women's rights?

CMB: I guess it would have been, I was probably always interested and -

AL: And active?

CMB: Yeah, active even. But, you know, again, in the late sixties and early seventies when those things were at the forefront, professionally after I, after I had my bachelor's degree (I'm

trying to remember, I can't remember exactly which years I did which things), but I was the first chair of the Maine Teacher's Association Women's Caucus. It was a newly formed part of the MTA, that I think was probably '73 because I think I was down here by then.

AL: Were you there at the time David Bustin was?

CMB: Yeah, un-hunh. And I worked in Winthrop for five years. I taught in Old Town a couple years. When I was in Winthrop from '73 to '78 as a guidance counselor, I was also like the affirmative action officer for the school system. And also in and around that time, a little bit later I think, '75ish maybe, or '6, there were five of us who founded the Maine Women's Lobby¹. I was one of those people that originally founded that and that's grown into a pretty good organization at this point, doing lobbying on behalf of women's issues, kid's issues. So I was always kind of active.

In '76 I went to, I know the time because I have a poster over there on the wall. I was a delegate from the state of Maine to, it was the International Year of the Woman from the United Nations when they had a, when they had a conference in Houston that was, brought peop-, women together from all the states, and that was pretty exciting. There were ten of us, we had, twenty of us I think, we had to run at large from the whole state and that, the election was at Husson I remember on a Saturday or something. It was an all day thing in Bangor. So through the seventies I did a lot of that kind of work.

And my friends used to kind of think it was funny because I was sort of at the height of my independence when I met Severin and decided to get married, and that was a political thing, too. And then when I ended up having children, you know. So first it was like she caved on getting married, then she caved on kids, and then not only just one or maybe two like most of my friends had but four, and they were all boys. And we wanted girls because I figured boys would make it in spite of you and girls could use the extra, you know, awareness. Plus I was also doing curriculum review, like for sexual stereotyping in textbooks and stuff, some for the state department and some for local towns and committees. So, you know, it was kind of funny, that they went, "Oh yeah, right". So in spite of all that I figured if I can't have girls, I at least can raise boys to be aware of what good spouses they ought to be. They all iron their own shirts and clean and all that kind of stuff. And, and our kids are pretty active in politics too.

AL: They are?

CMB: Yeah, yeah. For them, they've grown up with it like I did as a normal natural thing. Our oldest son is working for the Gore campaign right now and he's flying all over the country doing crowd building. And so he's out in California this week and was in New Orleans last week, no, New York I guess last week. And he's been all over the country and he's been

¹ The Maine Women's Lobby is still in existence as of 2001. The current contact information is: P.O. Box 15, Hallowell, ME 04347 ; Tel.: (207) 622-0851.

working full time for him, almost a year now.

AL: How does he feel about the campaign, does he feel the momentum?

CMB: Oh, he's, yeah, he's very excited, yeah. He calls me after every event and tells me what's up and, yeah, very excited.

AL: So you also get to have a sort of a finger on the pulse of the campaign.

CMB: Oh yeah, oh absolutely, I mean that was really fun. I mean, Tipper was here a month or so ago and we talked to her about it and she mentioned him in her speech, about all the Maine people that work, you know, for them. And, yeah, so we sort of have that perspective as well, and we're pretty, both pretty active in this campaign as well, so.

AL: You and Severin both?

CMB: Yeah, yeah, so we have a pretty good, but we have it from a variety of viewpoints, which is kind of fun. And our next son is a senior at Colby and he's a government major and has worked on, his passion is making films and he's making video films for a couple candidates right now. And, yeah, so he, you know, they've all sort of grown up with this, with the general . . . This kid here who's, just went to France, he's eighteen and he just, his duty last week before he left was to, you know, be a bartender at a reception for somebody. So they've all done all kinds of stuff and, you know, so pretty, pretty active.

AL: What sorts of things do you and Severin do as part of your activity with the Gore campaign, do you host things, or make calls?

CMB: Yeah, we've done that. We raise a lot of money, and that's always a tough job but real necessary. We've done some, you know, policy discussions, Severin more than I. I haven't been as particularly active in that area. But he went to Washington and had breakfast with the vice president in his home to discuss, you know, what Maine should do and how we should do it and that kind of stuff. So the last couple of days we, a couple nights ago had dinner, went to a reception, we hosted the reception actually in Portland, for the new chairman of the party and then went to dinner with him. And it was really terrific hearing where the campaign is in every state, and in the battleground states particularly, although I don't like that phrase. I know it's the one they use, but. So we, you know, do have a pretty good sense of what's going on there and it's a lot of fun.

And it's, you know, it's really important, this election is hugely important in terms of what will happen to the Supreme Court, you know, who will be appointed there. And, you know, there's a huge, there are huge differences between these two people so I feel it's very important. And I've had a number of Republican friends of mine even call me and say, "What can I do?" you know, "I'm scared to death. What if this other guy gets elected?" So, you know, it's nice to hear that kind of support coming from all around. Right now I think Gore's doing really well. I'm sure

there'll be some ups and downs between now and election day, but he certainly would win if it were held today. And I think he'll do it in the end.

AL: Especially with your views on education, do you feel Gore's viewpoint is in the right direction?

CMB: I do, I do. I think, I think he really, I mean I find it a little ironic that Bush uses the phrase, you know, 'leave no child behind' and that has almost come from him, although you hear that phrase from both camps for sure. But I think it's sort of ironic that [George W.] Bush seemed to start that because, I mean I think that, you know, his, what's happened in Texas in education and, you know, is deplorable. And I think that Bush [*sic* Gore] is much more tuned into the real realities of it. He [Gore] just spent an entire day, when you realize how many stops they make in the course of a day, and to take an entire day. And this isn't the only time he's done it and it won't be the only, you know, he'll do it again. The other day he said he'll do it after he's president as well, and spend, you know, a whole day, sleeping overnight in a teacher's house and talking to kids and teachers and, you know, really trying to understand issues as well. I mean that's, yes, that's a public thing to do, but it's also meaningful and I think that he's definitely headed in the right direction.

AL: Let's go on to your meeting Muskie for the first time, or the first impressions you had of him. Do you remember an occasion?

CMB: You know I don't, I don't remember when I met him for the first time. So it wasn't one of those, you know, defining moments that, like where were you when Kennedy died.

AL: Right.

CMB: Yeah, I don't really remember. I had, have seen him, you know, many, many times over the years.

AL: Well maybe your first real contact and -

CMB: In a personal way?

AL: Solid impressions of him.

CMB: Well, I think maybe one of the earlier times was one time we went skiing with him. And it was Severin, and it was before we married, Severin and I and Ken Curtis who was governor at the time, and Ed and, somehow I want to say I think Vincent Tatarczuk, Monsignor Tatarczuk from Portland. If he wasn't with us then I know another time he was when we skied.

AL: How do you spell his last name?

CMB: I'll have to show it to you written down, I will, it's a Polish name so even though I've

worked with him many years I never can write it myself.

AL: Is he still living?

CMB: Yes, yup. He's retired and he lives out in, on Sebago Lake in Raymond, way out in the middle of the woods. He's a riot, and you definitely ought to, matter of fact I'm, no, I'm not going to see him until the next couple of weeks. But I'd be happy to help you try to get to talk to him because I'm sure he probably has a lot of good stories and he's very articulate and funny. So I think, I think that's the first time that I kind of remember, you know, spending the bulk of a day with them and skiing with them and, you know, just sort of knowing them as real people, both Ken and Ed. And it was fun, I mean we had a good time. I'm not sure he was as good a skier as he might have liked to pretend he was but, I think we did start on the baby slope, maybe not, maybe we went straight to the top. Somebody said, "Well all right, see you at the bottom," you know.

But, you know, I remember him being fun and just kind of big burly guy that was probably used to getting what he wanted and, you know, we had a great day. And it was kind of, I remember people on the slope, it was at Saddleback and people kind of doing a double-take, you know, when the governor, and now again that's done more often but I think that might have been one of the first times that people were actually, (gesture mad of doing a double-take) that the governor would be skiing. And, I think he must have been, let's see, that would have been '72ish or so.

AL: So Ken Curtis would have been -

CMB: I think Ken was the governor, I think Kenny was governor so he would have been in the senate, right? So that was probably one of my first just sort of regular experiences with him. I mean I'd see him at a lot of Democratic functions but those are usually, you know, you shake hands and you say hello and you make a little small talk and that's, you know, the end of it pretty much. I mean certainly I always, you know, knew who he was and knew him and I pretty much would, I would guess, pretty much agreed with most of what he did most of the time. But it was, usually you didn't get to spend, you'd go to the Christmas party or something and that would, you know, be a function with a lot of people and you wouldn't really sit down for dinner that often type of thing, or go skiing, you know, so that was the first time.

AL: Did you have occasion over the years to get to know him a little better?

CMB: I think I did, yeah. I think once I was kind of legitimized by marrying Severin then, you know, I, then sort of, he was still chairman of the party and so I was at a lot more events. And I wasn't just, you know, the girl from Bangor who would only show up at the Bangor events, or the girl from, you know, which used to be Severin's method. So once it was real I had gotten by the "Oh we know what's going to happen to her" kind of thing, you know, then there were plenty of events, fund raisers and things for the, what did they call that club, Five Hundred Club? The, sort of the, the people who had given to the Democratic Party in Maine and then they'd have a lobster bake at their house or that kind of thing, so I did a number of those sort of

things. And, I mean one, one night there was a, we were at a dinner party at someone's home and there were only about eight or ten of us sitting around the table. And we'd been there for hours, this would have been in I think probably around '78 or so, it was when Brennan was governor. No, Brennan was attorney general, because the issue that came to the forefront at the table was a discussion of the Indian Land Claims case, so would that have been '78 or '80?

AL: Yeah, around that time.

CMB: Anyway, we got talking and we were all talking about it and, but as we got deeper and deeper into the conversation I realized that more and more people were dropping out of the conversation, and it got down to me versus Ed. And I was not on the same side of the issue and, you know, I realized after a while. Of course he was a wonderful debater and known for that and so, just his physical presence was huge and he could intimidate anybody that he felt like it, because he could get very gruff and loud and sort of indignant if you didn't agree with him. But I thought, oh my Lord, Cynthia, look where you are now, you're really out on a limb here. Because I didn't know that much about it and just knew that what he was saying I thought was not right. And I sort of challenged him a little bit, it was kind of like, well, you know, you're not an Indian, how do you know, you know, those kind of challenges, how do you know how they feel about X, Y, Z or. And he was very perturbed at me for sort of saying this among, you know, and everybody stopped to listen. And I thought, oh, I am just going to die here if somebody doesn't help me out. And Frank Coffin helped me out, Frank Coffin came to my rescue. I will forever be grateful to Frank. And probably he wouldn't know me now if he fell over me, but at the time he sort of took my side and whether he fully believed it or not I don't know, but he saved me anyway and dissipated the situation and I was able to live through it.

But, and it sort of, you know, it resumed okay but Frank was, you know, was really, I was really grateful to him. But Ed was furious at me and he got up and stormed away from the table and went upstairs. He was a guest in this home and he was just perturbed enough that he was not happy with me and he left the table. And after a while he came back down and he showed me . . . He had recently been to Rome and had had an audience with the Pope. And he knew that I was sort of a big Catholic and that, knew my own personal history. And so as a way to making up to me I think, or for his behavior at the table, you know, he basically came down and showed me the medal that the Pope had given him. And, you know, maybe he just had to go to the bathroom, who knows. But anyway, so, you know, he sort of tried to I think apologize in his own way for that discussion. But generally I agreed with what he said but that was one time I remember, at least not, I certainly agreed with the Indian land claims issues but not the spin he was putting on it that particular night. And of course he was voting on it, I certainly wasn't but (*laughter*) I was a constituent, and I figured I should give him my opinion, but anyway.

AL: I think I'm going to stop and turn the tape over, this is a good stopping point.

End of Side A
Side B

AL: We are now on side B of the interview with Ms. Cynthia Murray-Beliveau. And we were just talking a little bit about your experiences with Ed Muskie, some of the times you met up with him over the years. And that was in the, probably the late seventies, were there other times as well?

CMB: Yeah, I'm trying to remember. Well again, another personal time that I remember, they weren't, I guess I recall lots of times when they had to be, when it was on an issue or at a meeting or in a more formal setting, or at a social setting that was just again like kind of cocktail party chatter things. And so I always felt like I knew him well and could speak to him about anything or, issue wise. So there were lots of those times. But I guess the times that stand out were the times that, little vignettes that were personal or different or, you know, ones that weren't the normal course of events.

And I remember one time I was in New York and I was just coming through the lobby of the Plaza Hotel, and I was going out the side door, and all of a sudden there was a great flurry of activity all around, it just happened instantly almost. And there were security people telling us people to back up, and I was just walking out, going out the door, head up Fifth Avenue. And what actually was going on, that Ed was coming in, he was secretary of state then. And you know, it was nothing announced ahead and it was nothing that anybody, and I mean we just happened to be staying in that hotel. And so suddenly I just had to stop right at the entrance at that door and it didn't take long in that hotel for quite a crowd to develop just because that's a busy place. And so I'm standing there still not knowing why I can't go out the door that's about ten feet in front of me. And so while I'm standing there, and there's a rope in front of us and there were quite a few people gathering and the elevator was right there to the left, it was sort of a back elevator, it wasn't the main entrance. Just then this big black limo pulls up by the steps and Secret Service jump out and Ed Muskie jumps out, and of course he's a big tall guy and comes lanky into the hotel and is being whisked straight into the elevator. And of course he was very important at that time, you know, he did a great job as secretary of state, he was wonderful and was a wonderful choice.

But that time I just remember always having known him and having known him personally as well from other experiences for many, many years. Our eyes met and he saw me and he knew me and he, I think he was pretty surprised to see me standing there, just as surprised as I was to see him coming in. And, but it was odd, I mean it felt to me like he was a different person right then on that particular day, and who knows what he was, had on his mind and what he was thinking about. But I was not a happy camper in the sense that he basically came in and saw me and did acknowledge me with his eyes and kind of a nod, but barely a hello. You know, just, more, it was more because he was surprised that he knew me, standing there in New York where he didn't expect to see me there. But I think it was always, you know, he didn't stop, he didn't chat, he could have, I mean he was the guy that, yes, there were a lot of people pushing on the elevator but he was the one in charge. And he could have at least said hello or, you know, how's Maine or something, but he didn't. And I was always a little disappointed just in what the process, what the process does to people at times. And I, that may be an assumption that isn't the reason at all, maybe he couldn't, didn't stop for some other reason.

But at the same time I remember Jane was right behind him, and she came over and we chatted for fifteen or twenty minutes, and they waited for her to go up the elevator, you know. So maybe it wasn't twenty minutes but I mean she made a distinct sort of, maybe it was even an apology, I always sort of took it that way a little bit. She came over and we chatted about her kids and this and that and what was going on in their lives, what was happening and why I was in New York. And, you know, just like any friends would do. And I had just sort of felt disappointed that Ed didn't do that at that particular time. But, you know, I don't think overall he lost his humanity or anything but I think obviously the job, there were times when it probably got to him where he wasn't always the same guy we knew in Maine. And I guess that's reasonable. So those, those were kind of the, some of those sort of stories of the times that I knew him personally.

AL: I'd like to ask you a question about what you've seen develop in terms of, or accomplishments made in regarding women's rights over the years. Have you kept your, you know, really kept going along with what, what's been happening?

CMB: I have to some degree. I now, I'm still a member of various organizations. I occasionally donate some time or some money or something to an effort, but I haven't stayed in the forefront as much. I just think there, it, that kind of intensive work which I did when I was younger, in my twenties and thirties, maybe more, that's sort of where that work seems to fall, on people that age. You still have, you have the energy, you have the idealism, you still think you can make a big difference in whatever you're doing, and you do while you're working there. But I just think it's normal that people either change interest or move on to something else or, you just can't keep up that same intensity sometimes. So I guess that's maybe what's happened to me. Another thing I think, I think we have made big strides. But I think, you know, on a personal level, I think I've just carried what I believe about those issues into all of the areas of life that I work in, whether it's education or, it's whatever kind of work. Just the, sort of the way you meet everybody every day and whether they're male or female. Although I do, I think I do challenge people still on language issues and how you, the things you infer or assume about people whether it be racist or having to do with gender. And I think I still do that certainly because I live with five men, or six, you know, even the dog's a guy. But -

AL: Same in my household.

CMB: Yeah, yeah, the seat is never down, right?

AL: No.

CMB: And so I still, you know, especially with my boys, I mean I still think that, you know, you might teach a new dog new tricks and so I think that they're pretty tuned in to that. And I think that the kinds of, the ways I conduct myself basically, those sort of issues have already been inculcated into me and so they just sort of spill over into whatever I'm doing. So I'm not working so much on specific projects at the moment, although I've been helping on the basic rights issues campaign which is a referendum question but, you know, I guess that's, I do less of

that now.

AL: I have another question about, and I don't know how much insight you would have into this so I'm sort of asking it blind. But your brothers and your husband have all been involved and served in the state legislature either in the house or the senate or both and have been very active in, yourself as well, fund raising for the Democratic Party. My question is, how effective is the state party these days, do you see that it's changed over time, and in what ways has it changed and what role does it play different from what it used to?

CMB: Well I think that it used to have much more, for lack of a better word, discipline. When you were a Democrat you were a real Democrat, you know, you believed in what the party said, platform maybe meant something. I mean, over the years I served on the platform committee a couple of times, went around the state, took testimony from people on certain issues. And so when they vote that platform it sort of meant something, a lot of people had their input and you were kind of expected to follow that if you were a candidate, you were sort of to believe in that. I think over the years this whole idea that independents, a third party or independents are a better thing to be because you're not labeled or you don't have to follow a certain creed. I mean, independents are the most dependent group because I mean they can't, they don't belong to a party so, you know, in some respects that word is even a misnomer. But I think currently we have a terrific party chair, I think she does a tremendous job, that's Gwethalyn Phillips. She works very hard and she represents the party well, she's a really good spokesperson and she can be as tough as the next guy in, you know, in terms of really getting the message across. But I think in some ways the party just doesn't, it lacks the discipline, or people, you know, as an entity to make things happen. It's not as effective as it used to be. I forgot the other part of your question. The impact of . . . ?

AL: Yeah, how, well, just how it's changed and what role does it play, where does its strength lie today? In other words, if you want to be part of the party, you know, the Democratic Party structure in Maine, what is it that you can expect?

CMB: Well now I think in some ways it's much easier to be part of the structure, because now I think they're begging for people to participate. I think in the old days it was more of an honor, you had to work harder to get elected to these positions. I mean county, county committee people were, there were battles for all those races. National committee people, you know, if you wanted to go to a convention. I've been a delegate to a few conventions, I mean you, or a spouse of the delegate, you know, in some cases. I mean you had to really fight because everybody wanted this, these were places of honor and places where you felt you could make a real difference and you could contribute. And you could change the language in something that was really going to make a difference. And, you know, that's, I don't know that people feel that way any more.

It's like I get the sense that, you know, now people will call you and like beg you to go to a meeting, or, you know, don't you want to run for delegate, can you show up at the caucus because we just need, we need some people, you know, those kind of things. Where before, you

know, the state convention was, I mean, I went this year and it just didn't give me anywhere near the same thrill that it gave me when I was in my twenties going to state conventions with my dad as a delegate. I remember one year my brother and my father and I were all delegates. And I made the mistake of sitting with the Penobscot delegation and voting against my father one time on an issue. And it was very, personally very difficult for the rest of the day and the rest of the weekend. And I was in tears half the time and I was like, oh why did I ever sit there, why didn't I sit in my own county, but anyway.

Actually another, this is an aside story, it doesn't have much to do with Ed Muskie or anything. But my father was the, the only time I met my father-in-law was, I was introduced to him by my father at a state Democratic convention. And we were crossing the street, my brother and father and I all heading to some meeting, and Judge [Albert] Beliveau was coming out of the hotel. And my dad said, "Well, I want you kids to meet somebody, back up and we'll wait for him." We crossed the street and waited until Judge Beliveau came out. That was the only time, that was my future father-in-law, it was before I had met Severin, and he died af-, like the next year. So I was like so grateful [to have met him]. So I guess I can thank politics for that too. But, you know, I just don't think the party now has the same stamina. It's seen I think often as just a fund raising capacity, and they do a real good bit of that. People, the candidates and people who think that they can use the party to either get money, you know, I'm sure that they try that all the time. So I think it's looked at more as that kind of thing than a real -

AL: How does the clean election affect that, though, in, you know, the -?

CMB: You know, I don't know enough about how that's run. Sorry, I forgot your name for a second.

AL: Andrea.

CMB: Andrea, I was thinking it's not Joanne. You know, I'm just not a good person to comment on that. I mean I do know both sides of that but not enough, I just haven't been involved in that, I haven't thought that through.

AL: I was just, a name came to me, someone who I believe also worked on women's issues in Maine was Janet Mills.

CMB: Yeah, she's a good friend of mine.

AL: She's someone you've worked with over the years?

CMB: Un-hunh, un-hunh, and she probably has some Ed Muskie stories. Yeah, she's been a candidate and, yeah, a good woman, yeah, she was one of those five founders of the Maine Women's Lobby, too. Yeah, she's a good friend. And she was also a delegate to that Houston conference, we went there together. [She] ran for congress. Yeah, she did well as a A.G., too, I mean as a D.A., she was the first woman I think, or maybe the only woman at the time who was

a D.A.

AL: One of the very early ones, anyway.

CMB: Yeah, right, that would have been the seventies, too. She can tell you a lot about Margaret Chase Smith, too, it was around at the same time that -

AL: Yes, we did talk to her somewhat about that. Is there anything I haven't covered that you've been involved in or you could talk about that you feel would be important to add to the record?

CMB: I don't think so, as it relates to Ed Muskie, no, I don't think so. I mean I think sort of my sense of him as a person, he certainly did a tremendous amount for the way the party became after he became governor. I mean, I don't think he single-handedly got himself elected or changed the course of, that people often use that as a demarcation line kind of before and after he became governor, but I think that there were a lot of people that were involved in that. But it certainly did change sort of the ways that we used to think about politics in the state just being conservative and Republican and waspish. And, you know, a lot of that changed after Ed was elected and it hasn't really ever gone back, it's pretty much a fifty-fifty thing now. So I mean we certainly have him to thank for all those things, but I don't think I have anything momentous to add other than just little personal vignettes.

AL: Okay. Thank you very much for your time.

CMB: Oh, you're welcome.

End of Interview