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Bradstreet, Seth Henry oral history interview

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Interview with Seth Henry Bradstreet by Greg Beam

Summary Sheet and Transcript

Interviewee

Bradstreet, Seth Henry

Interviewer

Beam, Greg

Date

June 28, 2000

Place

Bangor, Maine

ID Number

MOH 196

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Biographical Note

Seth Henry Bradstreet was born in 1933 in Albion, Maine. He attended the University of Maine, Orono and graduated in 1954. He taught in Corinna, Maine for a year and bought a farm in Newport, Maine, which he still operated at the time of this interview. Under Senators Muskie and Mitchell, he was appointed to serve as the state director for Rural Development (once known as the Farmer's Home Administration), a position he still held at the time of this interview.

Scope and Content Note

Interview includes discussions of: Bradstreet's family and childhood; brief outline of Bradstreet's career; Albion, Maine; early Maine Democrats; Muskie's 1952 gubernatorial campaign; Republican response to Muskie in the 1950s; Bradstreet's legislative elections; Bradstreet's friends in the legislature; influential political families in Maine; Muskie's impact on the environment; Maine sales tax; Muskie's support for Bradstreet and his position as state director for Rural Development; Gayle Cory; George Mitchell; Ken Curtis; John Martin; Elmer Violette; and Perry Furbush.

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Transcript

Greg Beam: This is Greg Beam, I'm at (*blank segment*) office in Bangor, Maine. The date is June 28th, 2000, it's 1:00 P.M. and I'm here with Seth Bradstreet. To start, could you please state your full name and spell it?

Seth Bradstreet: Seth Henry Bradstreet, and that's S-E-T-H, H-E-N-R-Y, Bradstreet, B-R-A-D-S-T-R-E-E-T. I was junior but that has been dropped for thirty years so I'm known now just as Seth H. Bradstreet.

GB: When and where were you born?

SB: I was born in 1933 in the town of Albion, Maine.

GB: Albion, is that A-L-B-I-O-N?

SB: That's correct.

GB: All right, and where's that located?

SB: That is located in northern Kennebec County approximately twelve to fourteen miles east of Waterville.

GB: And did you grow up there?

SB: I grew up there, I lived, I graduated from high school there. Did all my schooling, so at the age of seventeen I graduated from high school, which was known then as Bessey High School. Since then that area has gone into a school administrative district. And then I went to the University of Maine in Orono from '50 to '54. So in 1954 after graduating from high school I taught school, I was a schoolteacher in the town of Corinna, Maine, which is in Penobscot County. And after one full year there my wife and I, in the meantime I'd been married and I had a child, and I then purchased a farm in the town of Newport, Maine in the fall of 1955, that's 1955. So that's where my, that's where I made my living was farming for, well it's been forty-six years that I have, I helped them this year do some farming, so basically my occupation was a farmer for forty-five years.

GB: That obviously explains your interest in agriculture.

SB: That's right, yes. These jobs are, this job is a, that I have is a political appointed job and I did serve as the state director for, well at that time it was known as Farmer's Home

Administration, known today as Rural Development, under the president Jimmy Carter. And then I was reappointed, or asked to serve again, under the present administration of Bill Clinton, and have been here since August of '93, in this position.

GB: All right, great. Now let's back up a little bit. What was the Albion community like when you were growing up, what was the economic and ethnic make up?**SB:** The community of Albion was a small, would be known as a small rural agricultural town. Religiously there were very few Catholics, mostly Protestants, and it was a, I guess a, what you might call it, like a, known as a bedroom community of the city of Waterville, and but it did have a lot of close ties. For example, some of those ties still exist today, like the class reunions, or the alumni association of this high school still has their annual meeting once a year and over a hundred and twenty people turn out each year to attend this evening session of the alumni banquet. So those ties were quite close in the community.

I think probably the- some of the outstanding organizations in that town was, of course when I was growing up, was the grange, that was kind of a social point of entertainment and to get together, and they also had a very active Oddfellows, independent order of Oddfellows, which was the men's group, and the ladies' group was known as the Rebeccas. They used to meet once a week and my parents spent a lot of time, spent, did not miss many of those meetings. I never was a member of that organization.

But anyways, growing up, of course as I grew up, you know, in the, going to this high school in the late fifties, I, my family, my mother and father had twelve children. I am the twelfth of twelve children and all twelve of our, of us, of the Bradstreet family graduated from Bessey High School. And being the last one I guess you probably have some special interest there because you're all, you're, you know, you have had a lot of brothers and sisters go to that school and it was a, I guess, what do I say, when I graduated that was the last of that family that was going to be going to school. And that was a lot of sentimental value at that time.

You know, the town was, is still, you know, I guess I want to go back a little bit and just mention to you about maybe getting involved in not so much in politics but town government. My parents were, my father was involved in town government, always wanted to know what was going on in government. Some of the earliest ones I can remember is, you know, I remember very clearly in 1948 I was, let's see, fourteen, fifteen years old at that time, but I can very distinctly remember when Harry Truman was declared president over Tom Dewey at nine o'clock the following morning after election. And we had gone to bed that night thinking that Dewey was going to be president. And I know that I was in high school at that time and it was probably a predominated Republican area. But I remember learning about it or hearing about it during the noon hour and rushing out of the building and telling everybody that Harry Truman has been elected and the Democrats are still in power. Now I don't know why I said that, but I distinctly remember that. And so the, but other than, I did not have that much contact with, and neither did my family as far as organized party affiliations at that time. In fact I don't believe that the town of Albion had a so-called Democrat town committee. I know that my father did attend state conventions. I can remember in high school of him going to a Democrat state convention with some friends from Unity, that was held in Lewiston, and coming home and talking about Frank Coffin and talking about Ed Muskie, I can remember that. And so anyway

that's, that brings us up to where we were in the late fifties.

And then so, then when I went off to college I know that, I remember coming home on weekends and reading the Waterville paper and reading a lot about Edmund S. Muskie going from being on the council in Waterville, the mayor in Waterville, young Democrat attorney who had married a younger lady from Waterville, Jane Gray [Muskie], and I remember reading that and then knowing that he, and I knew that he had been elected to the state legislature from Waterville. I believe that was in the late forties. And then, but one of the distinct things that stands out in my mind is when Ed Muskie ran for governor against Burton Cross. I was in a fraternity at the University of Maine, Theta Ki fraternity, and here again that was made up of probably ninety percent Republicans. And I can remember the president of the fraternity bringing Burt Cross into the fraternity and discussing, when he was campaigning there because Burt Cross had a daughter that was a year ahead of me in college. And I remember coming in and he was at the, he was in the living room area of our fraternity and I did not know that he was going to be there but they asked me to come in and I bypassed him and went right to my room. Because I was a, at that point in time I knew that Ed Muskie was running against him and Ed Muskie was running at a lot of odds, you know. Burt Cross really had the edge on that.

And so, I guess, you know, my affiliations with the political party, you know, goes back to those years. As soon as I was out of college and gotten married, I know that my wife, immediately when I became twenty-one I registered as a Democrat, I remember that. I enrolled as a Democrat, registered to vote, and that, you know. In 1955 I moved into the town of Newport and when I went down and enrolled that farm, that was in the, it would have been in the spring probably of '56. I remember as I enrolled that the town clerk there enrolled me, I remember her name, Myrtle York, she'd been town clerk [*sic*] [treasurer] in the town of Newport for, oh, I guess thirty-five years. You must remember that Newport was a real, real Republican stronghold. It was the home town of the former governor Lewis Barrows, it had some very, very prominent families living in Newport, the Gilman family, the Fren family who were very, very active in the Republican party, and then just north of us in the town of Dexter was the home town of Owen Brewster so that whole central Maine area there was a very, around Newport, was a very, very strong, strong Republican with very substantial people within the Republican Party.

And I remember going down there and registering, I registered to vote and I enrolled in the Democrat party. And Myrtle York says, "Well isn't that nice. We don't have many people, we don't have many young people registering as Democrats." I remember her telling me that. Now later on in 1961, which was five years later, I was asked to get involved and run for the legislature from that area. And one of the things that I did was that I had to go out and get Democrats to vote for me. I did have a primary the first time, and it was amazing that the number of people that thought that they were Democrats, but they were registered, enrolled as Republicans. They had never been there. Myrtle York, the town clerk, God bless her, as soon as they became twenty-one, legal age to enroll, she automatically enrolled them as Republicans. And this went on and on.

But anyway, I guess I'm getting ahead of my story because, you know, or getting ahead of what I may want to say about, you know, Edmund S. Muskie. I did, I do remember that when he was elected governor, I believe it was '54, again in '56, and now in '58 he ran for the United States

senate against Fred Payne. Now by this time I had been in Newport for about, approximately two and a half years and knew many of the people there, knew many of these so-called prominent Republicans. I was farming and was carrying on my business there, but I had become, I had attended town meetings there and become interested in what was going on and had been involved with some of these very prominent Republicans. And I can remember (*unintelligible word*) that when Ed Muskie, when there was something in the paper about Edmund Muskie considering that he was going to run against Fred Payne for the United States senate, a very prominent Republican told me, he said, "My God, what does Ed Muskie think he is, God? I mean, he did get elected as a Democrat governor, but now he can't imagine that he's going to take on Fred Payne and be a United States senator." And I can remember answering that question to the effect that, "Well, he's done very well and he's a pretty popular person today." And so that was some of the discussions I had back then.

I don't remember the first time that I met Ed Muskie personally, but you know, whenever you had the, whenever you heard him speak on the radio at that time, and some on the television, one of the things I think he instilled in me as a young person was that every single person has a place in life. And he made you feel important. No matter how insignificant you was, in his speeches and his, and listening to him over those early years, he made you feel that it was, that you were important, your vote counted. Really, he did that. And of course it proved, it, he proved to be right on it. I mean, this is how he was reelected and reelected and reelected.

I think that he is a, well, let's see, how do I want to say that. I did have the opportunity, of course this position that I'm in is a political appointment. It's made by the senior senator, or the senior congress person of that party of whichever power is in the White House. And of course I've got to say that, you see I've had two of those appointments. One was made by Ed Muskie and Bill Hathaway, and that's something I might just relate upon a little bit. And then the second time in 1992-93 I was asked to served, or appointed by George Mitchell. So I tell my counterparts across the country that, you know, my two, the two supporters that I've had in my life time as being in a state director's position for the United States Department of Agriculture is that, it's been Ed Muskie and George Mitchell. And I've asked other state directors, "Can you top that, as far as important people?" And I guess they don't realize it. But anyway, that's something that I say.

And one of them, another one, when I was asked to serve as state director, I was asked, I was approached by people to be the state director of at that time Farmer's Home Administration, in 1977, that's right after President Carter had taken office. And I pursued the job, too. However, at that time the Republican that was in the office here refused to leave, so they had to take the procedures to have him removed. And in the, also in the interval time there was another person that was very, very interested in this job and it was a lady. And so this went around for, so my appointment really didn't take effect until February of '78, so it was almost, it was over, almost a year and, well, almost a year and a half or in, you know, close to a year and half from the time of election until I was sworn in. But, and at that time that was, we had two United States senators, that was Senator Bill Hathaway and Senator Edmund S. Muskie, Muskie being the senior of course. And I guess I'd have to say that this went on quite a while, and one of the reasons that Hathaway, or, Hathaway had been given this opportunity to name the, name these new state directors. He was up for reelection that coming next year, within the next term or the next

election, and I'd been told that Muskie gave him the authority to go ahead and appoint them. Well, because it got controversial nobody could make up their minds and finally after a while somebody called Ed Muskie one morning and, he was just getting out of the shower, and said, "Look, who do you want for state director?" And his words were that, "There's no question, Seth Bradstreet." Now I heard this afterwards from some very reliable sources, and I know that when I got sworn in and went to Washington, and I did go visit his office, he had just got out of the hospital from a very bad, a back operation. He was having back problems at that time. But I did go in and talk with him and told him that I just hoped that I could do the job that he had expected of me. And he says, and I remember him telling me, he says, "Well Seth," he says, "I know that you shouldn't worry about who your opposition was because there's no difference, there's so much difference in their ability and I want you to know that." And I thought that was really, he made me feel important, he made me feel, and it was a pretty kind of, at that point in time it really helped a lot because I had been through a year and a half of a lot of politicking which I know I had been (*unintelligible word*). Well, we ought to go back a little bit, we'll go back and, you know, why I got involved in politics.

GB: Sure.

SB: Again, you know, I had to, being close to Waterville, Maine, knowing the odds that Ed Muskie had as far as being elected both to the city council and to the legislature, governor, United States senator, and here I was in a town that was about eighty percent Republican. But in 1961 I was asked by a person that was on the so-called Democrat town committee in Newport if I would consider to run for the legislature. There had never been a Democrat elected from Newport for something like close to twenty-eight years. Well, I was young, energetic, and I guess I didn't realize, you know, I did not know enough to say no. No, I shouldn't say that because it really helped me a lot, but I guess I was privileged.

However, shortly after I announced there was another person in a neighboring town that announced so that was my first involvement in politics, in an area where it was eighty percent Republicans. I was in a primary fight. But anyway I won that, and I did lose my first try at the state legislature. I came back though two years later and I won. And I, so I served two terms in the Maine legislature and that was the 102nd and 103rd Maine legislature. And during that period of time I guess, you know, why do you get involved in it? Well, you always go back to why would Ed Muskie run against the odds that he ran against: governor, against Fred Payne, U.S. senator, and he had to do something. He wanted to, you know, I still believe you know the basic things are and what he always brought out was that if, you know, you've got a chance to help these people that are, what do I want to say, they don't have the ability to take, that a lot of us have, to make changes and to benefit people. And if you've got that ability to do that and got the time to do it, you should try to help those people, the less fortunate people whether they're less fortunate in their, you know, their health. I guess, you know, I look at it, you know, people today, you know we make loans here in this office for the health care areas and nursing homes and halfway homes for different people, and you know, we should be, we're a wealthy nation and we should be trying to help those people that are less fortunate in their physical and mental status, I guess I want to call them. Not status, but what they've been, what God has given them. So we should try to help them if they're less fortunate.

And I think this is something that whenever I always listened to hear Ed Muskie speak, you know he's always brought these things out. Good government can do more for people than what we've been doing. And I think this was a very, listening to his speeches and listening to, attending meetings with him. I can remember many Democrat meetings when you'd have a whole group of speakers going on and there'd always be somebody talking in the back of the room. But when Ed Muskie came to the podium to speak you could hear a pin drop... That's how much they respected him. And of course also if they were making noise he'd tell them to shut up and be quiet and listen to me, I'm here for you to listen to. But he never had to do that, they would always listen. And I just think it's, so he's really instilled a lot of, a lot of things. Of course you know I think when he went into the legislature, see, there was thirteen Democrats at one time, thirteen Democrats. And then of course he had to, you know, he had the foresight to try to revitalize the whole, well he is, he revitalized the Democrat party in the state of Maine. And he revitalized to the point of where, you know, we've got the control and we've had our fair share of the governors and the control in the legislature in the last thirty-five years, we've done a very good job. And it's got to be going back to the depth and the integrity and the confidence that Ed Muskie had in people. I really believe it.

GB: Now when you were elected to the legislature, first, was that the house or the senate?

SB: House.

GB: The house, okay.

SB: Two terms in the house.

GB: And when you were elected you were running in Newport.

SB: That's right.

GB: Was it still so strongly Republican dominated?

SB: Oh definitely, oh definitely, yeah.

GB: So how did you campaign to actually get elected?

SB: I went door to door, I went door to door and here again, there was so many people told me, you know, "You're the first Democrat that's ever come to our door." And they didn't say they would vote for me or anything, but I was the first Democrat ever to come. I remember I had little hand cards to pass out, who I was and what I'd done, and as I said, I was defeated the first time by a small amount of votes, and then I won two terms in a row. And, but I did go door to door. And now by this time these so-called very prominent Republicans in my town, the younger ones, were supporting me. They knew who I was and they knew what, here again, things were changing. I mean, Ed Muskie had changed the, how the Democrat party was perceived in Maine, we could do things, things could be done. And if you, you know, work hard at it and be honest with people, you can accomplish things. And so this was, this was how it all, you know, who Ed Muskie was and what he was doing for the state of Maine certainly had a big

bearing upon the success of people like me in these rural towns that had been predominantly Republican for thirty-five to forty years.

GB: Now who were some of the figures in the Republican or Democratic Party with whom you served while you were in the legislature, do any come to mind, any major players?

SB: Oh yeah, well, of course that first, in 1964 you know we controlled the Maine house and Maine legislature for the first time and, you know, we elected Ken Curtis as Secretary of State, we elected Maynard Dolloff as Commissioner of Agriculture, but, and then the president of the senate was Bud Reed, Dana Childs was speaker of the house. And John Martin came on at the same time I did and very young energetic, intelligent Democrat that has proven himself many times over on what he's done. And, but there was one person that I more or less was very close to and his name was George Hunter. George Hunter was from Durham, Maine and George Hunter, I had heard that name because George Hunter used to be a radio announcer in the Portland area. He used to have an agricultural radio show, talk show, like from 6:00 to 6:30 in the morning, and I had heard him so many times. And when I got to the legislature and met him and found out that he was a Democrat and the type of person he was. He was, he really was very helpful to me because he knew all of the political figures in the Portland area which was, in Portland and Augusta area too, so George and I were very close for a while and I learned a lot about who was who and what was what.

But then of course, and on about this same time too, you know, living in Newport and, which is a close town to Pittsfield, Pittsfield, although is in a different county, but the Cianchette family was in Pittsfield. And Carl Cianchette who was a prominent state senator, before I did, I knew him. And Chuck Cianchette who was later a state senator, state representative and everything and who later become my neighbor. But the Cianchette family was very active in the Democrat party there. And they were hard workers and they were successful. But here again, they knew the different political things that were going on. And, but other than that, well, of course Joe Brennan came in that time, Joe Brennan, Gerry Conley from Portland, these are some Portland people that came in. You know, for the first time Aroostook County had three Democrat state senators. I had known most of them up there. Elmer Violette who was very close, I was very close with him because Elmer Violette was sponsoring, sponsored in that session, sponsored the bill, which created the Allagash Wilderness Waterways.

I had a bill in from Newport that upgraded the stream that runs into the lake in Newport. I had done this because the lake in Newport was polluted, it had been polluted by upstream industries, and there was a group of people in Newport that wanted me to do this and I knew it was going to be a very tough one because there were some very prominent families involved in this. Number one, the Striar family in Corinna, which was the Striar's Mill who was on the board of directors of the local bank that I was doing business with. And the other company was the Snowflake Canning Company which was the Baxter family, and these would be nephews of Governor Percy Baxter. They had a potato processing plant there. I was selling my potatoes to them. But they were processing these, they had a food processing plant there on the banks of the Sebasticook River that flowed into the Sebasticook Lake, and then without a doubt this was, this, these were the reasons that the lake was polluted. Now thirty-five years later we know it was, but at that time we were assuming that. That was a very, very tough bill I must say, upgrade that

classification of that stream. By upgrading it they had to clean it up, they had to clean it up.

So I was bucking a person that was my bank, you might say, that I was doing business with, and the company that was buying my produce, but, that I was producing on my farm. But I will say that the Baxter family, Jack Baxter, was very, very, very supportive of me. He didn't like the bill but he knew something had to be done. That was not the case with the, so much with the bank. I was told by the president of the bank one morning that the lawyer in Newport had told him that, you know, "Seth, that's Seth's bill, he can withdraw that any time." And I was told that by the president of the bank, that I could withdraw that bill any time. And I told him that, I says, "Yes, you're right, you're right on two things: It is my bill and I can withdraw it, but I'm not going to." I think that, had I given in to them at that point in time I would never have been anybody. But that was a, and why I said it that way I don't know, but I was very strong on it. And from that has come later on something that, here again, these are some things that I know that I had learned listening to Ed Muskie. If you think you're right, you stand for what you're doing. You do it. Now, it's not going to be popular.

Now again, to go back you know, that, you know, one of the greatest things that's happening to us today here is cleaning up the environment. You know we, here we loan a lot of money for sanitary districts, sewer and water. But we just put a, a year ago we upgraded, had a large loan with the city of Thomaston whereby they collected the pollution and instead of dumping it into the ocean, into the bay and polluting all the clam flats, we helped them finance a project that pumped this waste three, four miles back into the woods. And by doing that, it's opening up something like two thousand acres of clam flats. Now this project costs somewhere between ten and twelve million dollars to do, but by opening up these two thousand acres of clam flats, probably, without a doubt, in three years they'll harvest that many clams from those clam flats. And this program would never have been in effect if it hadn't been for Ed Muskie's Clean Air and Water Act that he created when he was a United States senator.

Now the reason that, you know, that he was on the Clean Air and Water committee was because Lyndon Johnson, who was president of the senate, majority leader of the United States senate, asked Ed Muskie to support a bill. He wouldn't do it. Therefore, Lyndon Johnson gave him this chairmanship of this very insignificant committee of clean air and water, which was, you never heard of it. But that's what Ed Muskie put together and this is what, you know, there's many things that Mr. Muskie when he ran for, Ed Muskie when he ran in 1968 with Hubert Humphrey for president of the United States and vice president was that they called him "Mr. Clean". But here we are, you know, forty, forty-five years later, forty years later, forty, I mean close to forty-five years later, reaping the harvest of those things that Ed Muskie stood for. He was so far ahead of us on this environmental issues that it's, geez, almost inconceivable, of where his thinking was at that time. He was so far ahead. And now it's, you know, it's massive. I mean, we've still got the, of course we've still got the coal dust coming in from the mid west but a lot of it has been cleaned up, the Pennsylvania areas and everything. But here again I think this is just something that, the odds are against you, but if you believe it's right you should stick with it. And I think this is the, this is the, I know that I would never have done some of those things, felt that way maybe about this situation if I had not known Ed Muskie at that time or known or heard him speak, I wouldn't have done it.

GB: Now how did you know Ed Muskie prior to your appointment to this office?

SB: Well, of course I, I'd been in the state legislature. But even prior to that, being, living, being brought up close to, in the town of Albion close to Waterville, I heard a lot about him. And, but as soon as, shortly after, you know, 1955, '56, I went, I started going to meetings. I had a brother-in-law who lived in the, well the Winslow area and later in the Winthrop area, Ted Russell who was active. He was never in the legislature but he was active in county government, county treasurer and chairman of the Democrat committee in Kennebec County, and he would ask me to, Betty and I, he and my sister would ask my wife and I to go to some of these meetings. For example, we went to the old Summerset Hotel in Rockland I think it was probably in 195-, let's see, '57, '58 to hear Sam Rayburn speak, speaker of the house. And I remember Ed Muskie being there and no doubt I, that's prob-, I'm sure I met him at that time. And then when I did get into that Newport area there was some people that in the next town, Perry Furbush who had campaigned, had been on the Muskie campaign for governor and so he was knowledgeable of who Ed Muskie was. And, but I just can't remember the first time I ever really met him and talked with him. I just, I just, I can't remember.

But I know that all the time that he was always, you know, myself being interested in government, being interested, you know, having served as, on the, as a select person in the town of Newport, and having served on a lot of industry committees like the Maine Potato Board as a potato farmer. And he would come to those meetings and speak. If there was legislation that had to be, that we wanted in Maine for Maine farmers, agriculture, we would always go to his office. I know that I had met him, I had gone into the Waterville office and there was a lady in the Waterville office by the name of Marge Hutchinson, Hutchins, Marge Hutchins [Hutchinson]. Well it was ironic, but her daughter lived in Newport and her daughter graduated from high school the same year that my second daughter did, and Ed Muskie was a speaker at that commencement exercise and we met at their house afterward. But that's, that was in the seventies.

But he was always, and I was always, yeah, I involved myself in the Farmers for Muskie, I can remember that, being on the Farmers for Muskie committee. And farmers for the different presidents, too. I always took a very interest in that even before I was, even before I got involved in the legislature. But I think no matter what we, whatever took place, you know, in the fifties and sixties as far as, especially in the fifties, as far as, within the political parties, Ed Muskie's name was always there. It was always there, and what he could do and what he didn't and, you know, I think one of his children was born in the Blaine House. And I can remember my Republican friends in Newport saying, "Oh, my God, he's even going to even have a child born in the Blaine House," you know, or, and like that. It was just a, they couldn't believe what he was doing.

And, you know, I guess he always, you know, what he stood for I believed in. Sales tax, sales tax, not the income tax but the sales tax, I can remember when they put that in. And I can remember some prominent Republican saying, "Oh, what's a three percent sales tax going to do with people, that's not going to do anything." But I was concerned, I was concerned then about a three percent sales tax to poor people is a lot of money. It's a lot of money. And I think right from that point on I always, my mind as far as taxation went, let's tax those that can pay, let's

tax an income tax. And I can remember, and I, you know, when, and an income tax did pass while I was in the legislature under Ken Curtis. And I think that's, and I always felt that way, I always felt that they had to, you know, the fairest way of taxation is to tax those that can afford it. But it went straight across the board, sales tax came in, I can remember. I was a senior, I was in college then I guess, that was the first of Ed Muskie's term. And I guess I just couldn't bring myself to believe that people could say that that's not going to hurt the poor people. Because if they went out here and buy shoes for the children they had a sales tax on it, and that was a tax. So where are we now?

GB: I'll ask you another question before I flip the tape. Did you have any particular encounters with Ed Muskie or hear any speeches, anything really that comes to mind that had a particular impact on you?

SB: Well, yeah. Oh, there was many, many of those speeches back then. I mean they were, there wasn't any outstanding speech. I think he just stood for, you know, every time you heard him speak he made you feel important, he made you feel that, you know, whether he's asking for your vote, but he was making you feel that you were part of this government and I think that's great, you know. I think that's, that's, that lacks, that becomes, well we're lacking some of that a lot of the time, you know, when we don't care about it, when we don't go to the polls to vote. But he made people feel important. I'm going to bring out one, yeah, when I was the, when I was in the 1979 state director, we were, at that time I was making farm loans and we had made this farm loan in Aroostook county, a considerable amount of money. And the farmer had not paid us back but just a few thousand dollars. It was like a three hundred and fifty thousand dollar loan and he'd only accounted for something like ten or twelve thousand dollars. So he came back a second year and wanted a loan. I refused to do it. I refused to make the loan. The county supervisor wanted it to be made. I refused to make it. He was eligible for a loan under the particular type of loan he wanted; it was an emergency loan, disaster emergency loan. But because he had not accounted for his income the following year, I was not going to make the loan. Well, he took the case and went down to our national office and the national office called me back and told me that he qualifies for it, "Make the loan." I says, "No I will not because he has not told us the truth and he has not paid back the loan from last year." So it got very, very sticky to the point of where the administrator called me and said that if I didn't do it then I would be, I would probably be asked to be dismissed. I'd lose my job. And I said, "Well, if that's the case, maybe it has to be." I had been keeping some of Ed Muskie's staff informed on this, because after all this is a government program, and I had kept some of the staff, and I can't remember who was there on the staff at that time, informed on what was happening.

And, but it got down to a point of where I got a very, very strong letter. I happened to be in Augusta that day and I showed Severin Beliveau this letter just, because Severin Beliveau, who was a very prominent Democrat and who I have known going back into the legislature, and who had been a strong supporter of mine. And I showed him this letter and he says, "Seth, don't talk any more with the staff. When you got something this important that affects you this is more important, go directly to Senator Muskie himself." So I says, "Okay." So I got in the office the next morning, I put a call in to him. He did call me that day, but he said he would call me the next morning at 8:30. He did, and he says, "What's going on with this loan." Now by this time his staff had briefed him. "What's going on here, Seth?" I went through it step by step by step

with him. Now at that time, he had just been put on the senate finance committee and he was, had a lot, spending a lot of time on it. I knew he was. And so I sat down and I explained this loan to him, what we lost, what we'd done. And if we don't make the loan and foreclose on him, each and every creditor would get paid probably between ninety-five and ninety-eight cents on the dollars. I says, "If this loan is made and he does it again it's going to be bad. It's setting a bad example." So anyway, he took thirty minutes with me and went through that loan step by step by step, and I explained it to him, and he asked some very, very direct questions; very direct questions. And he says, but I had the, I had the answers. So when it was all done after thirty, after about twenty-five minutes, he says, "What do you want to do, Seth, what do you want to do?" And I said, well, "I know what I can do, I can either make the loan, I can quit, or I can stay here and get fired. I don't want to make the loan." And he says, "Okay, let me see what I can do." And that was that. The next day I got a call and the national office said that they were going to be making the loan directly from the national . . .

End of Side A

Side B

GB: We are now on Side B of the tape of the interview with Seth Bradstreet, and you were just mentioning how the national office had bypassed you to make a loan to the county and –

SB: Okay, so the next day we got a call that the loan would be made directly from there, so no doubt he had made a call, to whom I don't know, but it did have some effect upon it. And the loan was made and by coincidence that loan went default the same as the others had, I mean I was right. So now it comes to the third year that this person wants a loan, so they come up to Maine and they have a, they bring the people from Washington up. Here again, I said, "No, I didn't have anything to do with the loan last year, I will not have anything to do with it this year". Well, they asked me in Washington to come and sit in on a meeting and as it was I went in and sat in on it but I did not say anything. The national office agreed with what I had, was proposing, they did not make the loan the third year. But by this time the loan value had gone up almost, over double, eight hundred and fifty thousand dollars. Well anyway, he declared bankruptcy, he went into bankruptcy and the United States government and the taxpayers lost 1.2 million dollars on it, okay? And, so I was right on that one.

But I guess, one of the things again, at that point in time when I brought this to Ed Muskie's attention, that had to be so insignificant with what he was dealing with, being new on this senate finance committee and looking at the whole United States budget. But he did take the time to talk with me, ask questions, understand it, and to my knowledge, he made a phone call. So I think that's what's important and it proved out to be, it proved out to be right. And I think this is one of the things that, you know, by having a person of that status and that stature, it makes for good government. It doesn't make for corruption. And he had the foresight and he did listen to me and I think that was really very important.

I can remember that, and also about a year later on that, that this was taking place, I had, there was a meeting in Aroostook County. Well, I know when it was, it was in conjunction, it was in July, I believe of '79, and it was in conjunction with the Maine Potato Boston Festival. Ed Muskie was up there to speak to a group of farmers. I was asked to introduce him, maybe fifty,

seventy-five farmers at the auditorium on the campus of the University of Maine in Presque Isle. And I was asked to introduce him as a federal employee, as a federal, head of a federal agency that dealt with financing to farmers up there. And I can remember introducing him as Ed Muskie, one of the great statesmen of this country. And he looked at me and he says, "Seth, are you sure you're right in saying that?" A great statesman, you know, he was referring to a great salesman. Are you really sure you're right in saying that, or you know what you're talking about?" And I can remember shaking my head, "Yes, I am." Well, now it's history. One of the few people from Maine that's buried in Arlington National Cemetery.

But anyway, he was also a very strong person involved in Loring Air Force base at that, during those years that I was the state director, and his influence was, with Vice President Walter Mondale, was, kept that base open for quite a few years. But he was a very, I un-, talking with his staff he was a very, very harsh person to work for, you had to be exact. I can even remember, you know, George Mitchell, when George Mitchell was, worked for him, George I think will say that he was a hard taskmaster. I know, one person that I know of had worked on a short speech for him and got some of the material together and he'd worked on it for maybe two days and he was on, he'd made about, he had the seventh copy of it, he'd redone it seven times. And he takes it into Ed Muskie, in his office, inner office, and he says, "This is, is this what you want?" And he looked at it and he says, "That's pretty good for a start, go back and try to make it better." And do it (*unintelligible phrase*), and so, but he was a real taskmaster. But at the same time he left quite an impression upon a lot of people. I know upon me anyway. And how you can, you know, how you can begin, I mean here he was a, you know, his parents were immigrants into this country, you know. He was, he had to, some of the cities were Catholics, if, you know, for him to win and be governor he had to go out into the rural area and get the rural population, which was non-Catholic. And to do that without upsetting them back then, he had to be quite, he had to have a lot of credibility, and a lot of stature there, and really mean things. And they had to be able to trust him, and I think this is something that, you had no, whenever you, whenever he made a speech or anything, you had no doubt in your mind that he was telling you the truth and that you could trust him, no question. It was exact, it was perfect, and it was always, you know, saying this is what you stand for and this is what is meant to be and what good government is going to do.

GB: Now you mentioned speaking to some people on Muskie's staff. You mentioned George Mitchell specifically; who else did you know on his staff?

SB: One of the, probably the persons that I was really close to was Gayle Kelly, Gayle -

GB: Was it Gayle Cory?

SB: Gayle Cory. Oh, my God, what did I say... Gayle Cory, oh my gosh, yeah. She and I became very close friends, really respected one another. In fact, she was one of these staff persons that was calling on this situation with this loan in Aroostook County that I know who supported me very highly. And you know, when I called and I says, "Gayle, I just, you know, feel uncomfortable with this, I want to talk with Muskie himself," she was the one that lined it up for me. And she, her home was in Fort Kent, Maine so she knew the situation. But Gayle Cory was an excellent person.

And then of course as I say, in Maine the person who ran his Waterville office was Marge Hutchinson and she was a, I knew her and she was a very good person. And, but other than that, well, you see, Jim Case, back then, back in the seventies, Jim Case and, oh my God, the guy that's, Micoleau, Charlie Micoleau did a lot of the work for rural areas for Muskie's office in Washington. And that was an experience working with those two people, they were very, very capable people.

Mike Aube at that time was there, Mike Aube has later become a Republican but I still know him. In fact he's across town, you know, and he, but those people were very easy to work with. And this is how you, you know, this is how you gather knowledge of just what kind of a person he was, the senator was. You know, you talk with them and then say, "Well, maybe he doesn't want it that way, maybe he wants it this way." As you know, he was a pretty exact person then. Well he had to be because, you know, he had a lot of odds against him and he had a lot of work to do, and you don't have the staff like those other big states have and things. And all those staff people really, really had to work hard.

And I know that George Mitchell got some real good training under him. I was much closer to George's family than, you know, than, because we've always been close, I've always been close to the Mitchell family. And having always known them and then ending up in the last twenty years being really close to his sister and brother-in-law who's passed away. We have homes together, well, I wouldn't have a home in Key Biscayne, Florida if it hadn't been for George Mitchell's brother-in-law, they're the Atkins. But he was quite a mentor, you know, he, you know, if, I'm sure George got a lot of good training under Ed Muskie and that really, and he put it to good use, he put it to work. George became a very honored person, you know, he's a different type of person than Ed Muskie was but he, he's got some pretty high standards.

GB: Could you tell me more about him, or compare him to Muskie's personality or his politics?

SB: Well, of course his politics of course is very, by him being, you know, majority floor leader of the United States senate indicates that, the type of person he was. And wherever he goes, wherever George Mitchell goes I mean he's always a very credible person. I don't think there's, I, you know I've told you that, you know, whenever Muskie spoke Muskie would, you could always, you know, spoke in a tone that you believed him and trust him and know that he was right. George Mitchell I think has a capacity and the capabilities of talking in such simple terms about some very complex matters, whether it be the budget in government or whether it be in business or being in what he just accomplished in Northern Ireland, he's able to put those in such simple words that everybody understands him. People with an eighth grade education can understand George Mitchell and what he's saying. Maybe at times Muskie wasn't quite able to do it. Muskie was a level above that.

But as far as, you know, well I, you know, Muskie was a very, very important person both in the United States senate and to the people of Maine. Of course George Mitchell has gotten probably more world renown name recognition than Ed Muskie had. In fact, I, today George Mitchell is probably the person with the most credibility of any person on the face of the earth today. I

mean, if you want to take religion, what he's done, you know, what he did with the religious factor in Northern Ireland, working with them and negotiating. What he's done politically, you know, he reached the second or third highest level office, elected office, coming from the little state of Maine, majority floor leader of the United States senate. Went out of there with a lot of friends on both sides of the aisle, was able to compromise. Business wise he's probably one of the most respected people in the business world today, or one of the top ones. Maybe Bill Gates is a little bit ahead of him, but you know that he has, he sits on some pretty prestigious board of directors, and he's, he has, he's a very likeable person, you know. He's a pretty good tennis player, too.

But his family, he is good, he's a very, very busy person today. I think one of the things that he's done which is so impressive to me right now is this scholarship fund that George Mitchell's set up. You know, that was only, you know, he started out with that left over money from his campaign and the people that he asked, all these people that contributed if they wanted their money returned. And those that didn't left it there and he put it all into a scholarship fund. And at that time George Mitchell did not have much money. But he took about two million dollars and put it into a scholarship fund. And the idea was that the income from that would go to a, like a four thousand dollar scholarship to every high school in the state of Maine. Every high school had to receive at least one scholarship before they got repeated, again. Now four years later, there was a hundred and sixty scholarships given out at graduation in the last month, at four thousand dollars per scholarship. That fund is a little over, is close to ten or twelve million dollars I've heard. He wants to get it to twenty. How did he do that? Well all these speaking engagements that he does today, and commands a price of, very high, you know, five figures, well over five figures, high five figures, all goes into that scholarship fund. Plus, he's not afraid to ask people from all over the United States, whether it be in California or Chicago, to contribute to that scholarship fund. And he wants that to be in the neighborhood, I heard, of close to maybe twenty million. And it's up to ten, so I think what George Mitchell, he valued education so much that he didn't have, he had to, he didn't have that much money to go through college with, that now he wants every maybe, so that maybe three or four of these scholarships can be given in each high school in the state of Maine. And one of the stipulations that he has right now, which he may have to change on that, is that that scholarship fund, or that person receiving that scholarship has to go to a college in Maine. Now that's a lot of money to pour into the educational system. But George Mitchell had set that as a priority and I think that's going to have such a long lasting effect here in the state of Maine that, you know, more than, what we, you know, what Ed Muskie done.

But Ed Muskie, you know, laid the, you know, he laid the rail that this train ran on, and he laid the, he set the standards of what George Mitchell had to do and, but George Mitchell lived up to those standards and as far as I'm concerned he's surpassed some of them in a different, in a different manner or different areas. I don't know, I just know his family very well and I know what he was going through, you know, in Ireland. And when you start dealing with a hundred and twenty five people in different factions, all these different factions, and are really able to finally bring them together after generations, after two or three generations of this fighting about what religion you believe in, I think that's a real accomplishment. You know, I say, he probably, you know, he doesn't have the most credibility in the religion, the Pope does, but if you take the combination of many, of maybe three or four factors, you know, religion and politics and

business, George Mitchell has, there's nobody surpassing him in those three categories in this, on the face of the earth today. Let's face it, that's -

GB: That's a bold statement.

SB: I did, and I think a lot of people, but he, I think you've got to, you know he left the senate with as many Republican friends as Democratic friends I think. He was able to negotiate among ninety-nine United States senators, ninety-nine of the most educated people we hope we have in the United States, and make them compromise and not be angry at him. Now Lyndon Johnson had, all these past majority floor leaders have had enemies that have been long lasting. But in fact I guess you know that, I mean Bob Dole told about, you know, how much respect he had for George Mitchell. Always fair, and that's something coming from someone like that.

GB: That's great. All right, let's switch gears here. You mentioned a while ago actually that Ed, how Ed Muskie was called and asked, you know, who should be appointed to this office, you know, as state director for the USDA. Do you know why he came up with your name?

SB: Oh, I had no, I couldn't, no, I couldn't answer that. No, I had, of course when you, when we apply for these jobs, oh God, you know, there's people come and they will ask you, "Well, would you like to, would you run for, would you go for this job, would you go after this job." And, you know, I'd say, "Yeah, okay." And they, what context they'd tell him about my qualities, I do not know that, you know, I do not know that. I guess, I do know that, I do know that in 1977 or '76, '77, when I decided to go for this, George Mitchell was a national committee man along with, I'll think of it in a minute, oh my, Nancy, what was her name, Nancy Chandler. Nancy Chandler. And I remember I called Nancy Chandler and told her and she had no problem supporting me. I had known her in the past. I called George Mitchell, got him one night at home, and I says yeah, I says, "I want to go for this job." And he says, "Well good, Seth, he says, I've had another person whose wife sits on the state committee, and I know her as, and I said that I was for her but I will call them up and tell them I'm going to support you." That's all I can tell you. So I knew I had his support. And so I don't know, I don't know, I don't know who these people are, I wouldn't have any idea, you know. And I do call, I did let people know that I considered, the Cianchette family, Severin Beliveau, John Martin, different people like that that I knew was, you know, influential or part of the Democrat party and the state com-, the national committee people, let them know that I was interested in it and, but what they say to him I don't know and why (*unintelligible word*).

GB: All right, now what does your job entail, what are your responsibilities?

SB: Well we are the, Rural Development up until four years ago was known as the Farmer's Home Administration and we were part of the United States Department of Agriculture. We are the loaning agency, or the agency within the Department of Agriculture that has monies available for loans. As I said, we used to have, four years ago when we were reorganized we changed our name and at that time the farm program which loans money to farmers went over to my sister agency, which is in another part of this building known as Farm Service Agency. So that left us with Rural, and they changed our name to Rural Development, so that left us with rural housing. Rural housing consists of two basic things. One is the single family homes; we

have about fifteen million dollars a year that we put out here in direct monies to families with lower income that qualify for our loans to have a single family home in rural areas. We cannot go in the larger cities. That's the single-family housing.

The other one is what we call multi-family housing; multi-family housing is where we build these apartments for the elderly or low-income people. Now that program used to be equal to or more than the single-family housing. However, that, that program has really been curtailed on financing. We used to receive twenty to twenty-two million dollars a year. We're only receiving about two and a half million dollars a year now in Maine on that.

And under the single, okay, going back to under the single family housing we had this direct loan of twelve, ten to fifteen, twelve to fifteen million dollars of direct money. Then we have a guarantee program whereby we guarantee to the banks for single-family housing, and that's another thirty million dollars there. So our housing program is somewhere around fifty million dollars in the state of Maine. Okay, that's one program, that's known as the housing program. And there are some other little sides ones off of that where we can give grants to these people that are very, very low income that have a well go bad, and we give them a grant of a thousand dollars or two thousand dollars to drill a well. But that's very minor compared, that's just a few (*unintelligible phrase*).

Then our next most important one is our rural business service and that consists of guaranteeing loans to small businesses, and we have somewhere around twelve to fourteen million dollars in there. Let me just give you an example. We just helped a trucking company down in central Maine to refinance, we have got some monies in a processing plant, potato processing plant, brand new potato processing plant in Aroostook county to process a different type of potato. We're working on a, like a little, it's a fishermen's coop down in Boothbay Harbor, and we've got some machine shops down in southern Maine. Well we got quite a few of these loans all around the state. And also we have about a half a million dollars we can loan direct, but primarily this is a guaranteed loan working with the banks. The banks come to us and then we guarantee the loan and therefore the banks are able to give this business a better interest rate and better terms.

Then we have other programs, which we call utility service, rural utility service, and that's where we finance water companies, water districts and sewer districts in rural towns. What we've got going right now, as I told you at Thomaston, we got Thomaston, we're working on a sum in Boothbay Harbor, all the way to Mapleton, Mars Hill, all over the state we're doing either a sewer or water district. Then we have a community facilities loan. Community facilities is just exactly what it means, it's to help that community, facilities in the community that will help that community. We just made a four million dollar loan, a grant to Fort Kent Hospital. We do a lot in health care, we're doing something in Calais there along with the Human Services of the State of Maine in a home down there for handicapped children. That can be a fire station in Blue Hill, I mean, Mt. Blue or Farmington, over that way, yeah, a little town of Starks I guess it was, we built a fire station for them. And now that program can be, can total, oh, that all depends, that can go up to twelve or fifteen million a year.

So basically what we have is about a hundred million dollar program that we administer here for

rural Maine. Four years ago there was twenty-three offices in the state of Maine, we had these so-called county offices around, and we had a hundred and fifty employees. But due to budget cuts, we've closed twenty of those offices, we only have three offices now, one in Lewiston, one in the Bangor area here, which is different from the state office, and one in Presque Isle. And those are staffed by, with approximately a total of sixty-five people, about sixty-five people. The biggest one is in Lewiston. And then the state office here which supervises these is staffed with about twenty-five people. But anyway, so we're down to ninety-five people that we have all together now and by putting these people in government cars, GSA cars, giving them cell phones, laptops, and telling them to get out, we're able to do as much volume of business as we were doing when we had twenty-three offices.

Now that leaves us a lot of money to spend on some things. What we did, we had, we knew we were going to lose the personnel, FTEs, full time employees, we knew we were going to do that. So we could not justify keeping an office open with only two people in it because the rent would be something like thirty five thousand dollars for rent, with only two people in it. So this is why we consolidated everything together. We took that thirty-five thousand dollars, or some of it, they took some of it away. But we were able to buy those people laptops and cell phones and pay for GSA cars to get out there and go out and go see the people instead of the people coming in. Now I know that there are some areas in Maine that we are not reaching that we did before, I just know that. But what we're doing, we're working with a lot of these other agencies, state agencies, non-profit agencies, these CAP agencies in housing and a lot of the non-profit groups. Self Help Housing, groups like that, Community Concepts in Lewiston, Aroostook county CAP agency, Piscataquis county CAP agencies to give us information and to be a sounding board for us, outreach. And this is why we have cornered, we're trying to work together with them to, just to tell, you know, to give us, if they have a person come in to them that needs help and a loan, they know our program and if it fits our program, they'll send them to us or get word to us and we go contact them.

But by doing this we have been able to maintain this volume of business. In fact, two years ago when we hit a hundred and twelve million dollars, that was the biggest year that they'd had in something like eight years, by doing it this way. And all the time our budget, our people were being cut and things like that. But you got to do more, I mean, you got to use the computer. These people got to use the computer. I've still got people in here they want to do things long hand. You can't do it. We just had something the other day that came up that, with time and attendance. They used to write it on a piece of paper and give it to your secretary and then, you know, that's how you kept time. This is on the computer. Every morning you come in, you log in, when you go home you log out. Some people don't want to do that, they don't want to use the computer. It's so simple. But they'll take time to write something out on a piece of paper, you know, and they can do it just as quick on this. And then at the end of the week, you know, the secretary goes in there, presses one button and there's the whole thing all outlined. So they got to learn to do this. And so, basically that's what we are, that's who we are.

At one time back in 1978 when I was state director, we were, and I had the farm loans, and it was called Farmer's Home Administration, at that time one year we probably did close to forty percent of the total agricultural financing in the state of Maine, that was done by government agency. And that's not healthy, but it was done. We built something like twelve hundred new

homes that year. We built eight, eight or ten of these multi-family homes for the elderly and the poor. And we did probably about, well we did twice as many in numbers on different sewer and water projects because they didn't cost as much now. The dollars and cents were about the same. But you see back then for a million dollars you might do a project, today that project costs three million dollars, and we've got the same budget. So we were really, really affecting a lot of people. And now, of course I maintain now that we have lost our number of people that can work for us, we've got to leverage and we've got to work with state agencies, it's very important that we work with all the state agencies, that we have a good relationship with them. Maine State Housing, Department of Economic and Community Development in Augusta, even the governor, I've talked with him many times about always working together. Human Resources or Human Services, these different nursing homes that we're building in conjunction with them. So by working with them we're able to do quite a lot.

GB: I see. Now you had mentioned that, you had that one little story about going to see Muskie about the loan to Aroostook County. Is that sort of thing common, do you do a lot of networking with politicians either in the state or nationally?

SB: Oh definitely, yeah, yeah, definitely. I mean, our budget is based upon, what we do here is based upon what congress passes for a budget. And of course today, you know, we have a congressman here in the second district, John Baldacci, who sits on the agricultural committee. And not only is he, I want to keep him informed, but he wants to be informed. He's actually come into this office and set down with us during a work session and find out what we're doing. He's really, he's done a lot that way. And of course when the budget comes before them for a vote, you know, whether it's the administrative budget that determines how many people we can hire, or whether it's the programs, how much money we can get for the programs, we try to keep them informed on exactly what we've done and how we've spent the money and who we've worked with. We've got to, we've got to try to make it. And my, whenever I talk to groups of people I always tell them, you know, whether, you know, like if I'm talking to a group of, about housing and have some people from Maine State Housing I say, you know, one of the things that we've got to do that, you know, today it's still popular for congress and the state legislatures and the county commissioners to cut budgets, we're still in a budget cutting area, although we have surpluses, you know, in all of these areas. It's still popular to cut federal government, or government period.

And in order for us to maintain our status and be important to people and help Maine people, we've got to set a very good example for the voters and the taxpayers. We can't waste at all, every dollar, we've got to get the most bang out of every dollar we spend. And if we work together with state government and don't, and know what they're doing and they know what we're doing so we don't duplicate projects in the same town. We can't do that because everybody will say what are you doing that for, you don't know what the left hand is doing, what the right hand is doing. We can't do that. And so I think we've got to, we've always got to work together on this. So this whole philosophy is changing a lot, you know. As far as, you know, I was in the legislature as a, in 1965 and on the agricultural committee and I can remember setting down with some people that represented the Farmer's Home Administration, which was the name of this agency, and saying to them, "Well can't we, as a state, do something here to help more farmers?" When the meeting got over with the person that represented

Farmer's Home Administration of the United States Dept. of Agriculture, he says, "Hey Seth, hey, we're the United States government, we're big, we're going to do what we want to do." Well that's good, that's a good way to feel, and they were able to do it then. But you can't do it that way today. We've got to work together. We're not big. We know that people, that congress can cut our budget tomorrow if they don't like what's going on. And you can't have this waste in government and still be successful. If you're going to have the waste, this program that I mentioned to you about the multi family housing, if Ed Muskie could ever have seen that, what happened to that, the abuse of it, they abused it, the developers abused it, and so the congress took and cut it by ninety percent. We used to get twenty-two million, we're down to two million because the developers abused it. They'd get their loans and then couldn't account for half of it. And if Ed Muskie could ever hear some of those, he would be a very disturbed person. That was not what he was trying to do when he was on the senate finance committee, trying to get these monies lined up and know what everybody was doing and how it was spent.

GB: All right. What I'd like to do now is, um, all right- I'd like to go back to a few of the names of some people you mentioned who you knew from Maine, particularly in the legislature and just quickly get your impressions of them, on a personal level or their politics, you know, or their impact in Maine. Start, Ken Curtis?

SB: Ken Curtis, Ken was a great guy. He was probably, you know, one of the, see, he was one of the youngest governors ever elected, and a very, very capable person. Great leadership. Here again, you know, he was able to put together a very successful terms, as two, for eight years as governor because he worked with everybody. A lot of Republicans really, really respected him. The real conservative Republicans didn't, but the liberal Republicans really, really respected him. And, you know, it was no doubt very, very tough for Ken Curtis, you know, when George Mitchell was appointed to Ed Muskie's term. That was probably very, very tough on him but he accepted it as a gentleman and went on from there.

And I really enjoyed Ken Curtis, I really enjoyed working with him. I first met him maybe in 1961, '62 when he was the state director or EDA it was, Economic Development. We had a meeting in Newport because there was a group of us that was interested in building a potato storage, and he actually stopped in to explain to us his program, and it kind of fit in with SBA. But Ken was a very likeable person. One of the, you know, his personal secretary was Jo Gaccetta and Jo Gaccetta was as common that you could ever meet. I know that you might go into her office at four-thirty in the afternoon and she'd be setting in the chair like this with a skirt on but her feet may be up on the, her legs may be up there, she was maybe up on the desk. But she was always very, very helpful. She was a great person, great person.

GB: All right, what about John Martin?

SB: Well, I think John Martin is probably one of the most astute politicians that we've had in the state, at the state level. I just always felt that why he didn't go farther or why he didn't. He, here again, I think he got him-, he got himself into a rut or into a situation where he didn't want to give up power and it got to him after a while, you know, being the speaker. At the time this was happening, you know, it was kind of discouraging to me because we were not bringing any new people along. Had he, you know, had he had his maybe two or three terms as speaker of the

house and then let some other Democrats be speaker of the house we could have had some more leaders there. A good example of that would have been Pat McGowan who Olympia Snowe only beat by I think less than one percentage points. And if Pat McGowan had had two years of speaker of the house when he ran against Olympia Snowe for that, for the second district here, no doubt he would have been elected. And I think those are some of the prices that we have to pay, or we are paying for now, we are paying for them now. I guess we should consider ourselves very lucky in the Democrat Party in the state of Maine because the Republicans haven't done much better. They don't have any, that so-called strong leader at the front.

But John is a very, very astute and intelligent person and really understands government and really understands government as a whole. I'm sure he understands our program here in Rural Development because we do a lot of, we have done a lot of loans in Eagle Lake, Maine, or elderly housing for the hospital, nursing homes, parks and things. He understands it, but he knows, he gets the regulations, studies them, and he knows how that can fit into his format. So he was a very, very capable person.

GB: I see. Elmer Violette?

SB: Elmer Violette was one of the most, one of the, I guess the most likeable, he was a gentleman, he was a gentleman from the word go. You know, he just had a funeral, he just passed away last week. And but he was a very, very, very nice person. He was, I'd have to put him right at the, you know, the very top of what he really stood for. He stood for fairness, he later became an excellent judge, worked very, very hard on that Allagash Wilderness Waterways, you know, and that was something like, he was outnumbered ninety-nine to one on that from the paper companies when he started that. But here again, he stayed with it and he really did it, and he did it in a very, very gentleman like way, never ruffled the feathers of the opponents but always did it very quietly and worked hard. He was a good state senator when I served with him for two years, excellent state senator. And he made an excellent, a very, very fair judge in northern, for Aroostook County.

GB: Right, now you mentioned some people who had been involved in Ed Muskie's early campaigns and the Democratic Party back in I guess the fifties. For instance, I think you said Perry Furbush? Who was that?

SB: Perry Furbush, Perry Furbush came from Palmyra, Maine, which is a neighbor of Newport. Perry was, Perry Furbush was a, was an attorney as well as a farmer. He always prided himself on being a small, small farmer, used to raise dried beans. But Perry Furbush was close to Muskie. I think probably Perry Furbush was one of the original people that put together or helped put together the Muskie for governor committees. And he was very, I certainly believe that he was very influential in getting some people in that central Maine area to start a Republicans for Muskie for governor club. And he was, but he was one of the, I'm going to say one of the persons that I knew that was probably first associated with Ed Muskie.

GB: Do you have any other names of folks who would be good sources of information on that party building back in the fifties or on Ed Muskie's campaigns?

SB: I don't know, you know. Of course there was another person from Waterville there, McMahon, Dick McMahon?

GB: Dick McMahon.

SB: Dick's passed away, I don't think he's living, is he? I don't know.

GB: I'm not sure.

SB: But Dick McMahon and Perry Furbush, I remember they can tell some stories. But Dick McMahon was right up there with Ed Muskie, too, when they first campaigned up and down the state. They drove, you know, they didn't have much money, they drove in the car and slept in the car and away they went. And things like that.

GB: Is Perry Furbush still alive?

SB: No, he isn't, he is not alive, no. And I don't, he didn't have any children, any boys, he had daughters but he didn't have any, he didn't have a son.

GB: All right, well I'm, I don't have any other questions so is there anything you'd like to add or emphasize or that we haven't covered, any final comments?

SB: Well I guess maybe, I can't remember everything I said, but I just want to tell you, I think that the, Ed Muskie set a standard, you know, for people my age anyway that, you know, if you want, whatever you want don't give up, whatever you want to try to achieve is achievable. Now I know that we've heard a lot about, you know, George Mitchell being, his parents being from, immigrants, but you know the first time we ever heard was from Ed Muskie's parents came from, they were immigrants to this country. And they came here to, for a better life, and you know what Ed Muskie accomplished was the, I'm sure probably much more than he ever expected to do when he graduated from Bates College. His stature as far as prominence in the United States. His Clean Air and Water Act and things like that and being able to run for, you know as, for vice president and by just a quirk in the fate, quirk of fate, he could have, you know, been president had certain little things happened. Had he had money behind him, had he had, you know, twenty million dollars or thirty million dollars behind him at that time as some of these people do have to on their own. But he was not a wealthy person. But, and of course the incidence that happened in Manchester, New Hampshire was a tough one for him and for a lot of us. But here again, we've got to learn from those things. But he did instill in people, and that, he made people feel important, that's the way I feel. He made me feel important, and my family feel important just because we knew the name and we heard him speak, that you meant something. Go and vote, get your votes out, stand for something. And that we've got to help, you know, we've got to, we should be helping, good government is going to help those less fortunate people, and we should be able to do that. And I guess basically that's it, you know. I feel very proud that, you know, I had an association with him. He placed my name in nomination for a job like this. As I say, Ed Muskie did it in '78 and George Mitchell did it in '92 and you can't do much better than that. I don't think anybody can do much better than that. I just hope that, and you know, in a job like this sometimes it gets . . .

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