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Broomhall, Wendall "Chummy" oral history interview

Marisa Burnham-Bestor

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Interview with Wendall “Chummy” Broomhall by Marisa Burnham-Bestor

Summary Sheet and Transcript

Interviewee

Broomhall, Wendall “Chummy”

Interviewer

Burnham-Bestor, Marisa

Date

October 11, 1999

Place

Rumford, Maine

ID Number

MOH 157

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Biographical Note

Wendall Broomhall was born in Mexico, Maine on December 3, 1919. He grew up on farms in the Rumford area; his parents were Methodist. His father was a farmer-logger, and then during the war worked in a South Portland ship yard. After the war, his father worked at the paper mill in Rumford. Chummy had seven brothers and four sisters. He was on the ski team in high school and the Chisholm Ski Club. He attended Pettengill School, Chisholm School, Stephens High School, and worked at a young age because there were so many children in the family. In March 1942, he joined the service in the 10th Mountain Division and took basic training at Camp Roberts, California. In Wisconsin he married his wife on November 17, 1945. After the war, he worked for H.P. Hood until 1955, and then went on to work for the California Olympic Committee. Had competed on the 1948 and 1952 Olympic Teams and was an American member of the FIS Cross Country Committee. He also participated in the 1950 world championships in skiing in Rumford, Maine. In 1960 he began his own logging business, except from 1980 to 1983 when he laid out the courses for the 1980 Olympics at Lake Placid.

Scope and Content Note

Interview includes discussions of: childhood games in Rumford, Maine; living in Rumford as a child during the Depression; impressions of Muskie; World Skiing Championships in Rumford,

Maine 1950; 1948 and 1952 Olympic Games; Rumford as a predominately Catholic, strongly Democratic mill town; athletic complex in Rumford; tenement houses in Rumford; description of interior of the Muskie house in Rumford, Maine; the Muskie family (siblings); ethnic diversity in Rumford; and pollution from paper mills of the Androscoggin River.

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Transcript

Marisa Burnham-Bestor: The date is October 11th, and we are in Rumford at the home of Wendall Broomhall, and interviewing him is Marisa Burnham-Bestor. Okay, could you state your full name and spell it?

Wendall Broomhall: Wendall, W-E-N-D-A-L-L, nickname is Chummy, C-H-U-M-M-Y, and everybody knows me by Chummy, I get mail by Chummy, and Broomhall, B-R-O-O-M-H-A-L-L.

MB: And how did you get the nickname Chummy?

WB: Well, when I was small it actually started out Chubby. And about five years old I must have thinned down, they called me Chummy. And I don't know why I ended up with that name but it stuck with me for life.

MB: And you mentioned that you were born across the river.

WB: Well, Mexico, Maine. Mexico and Rumford are twin towns, and that's where I was actually born.

MB: What year were you born?

WB: Nineteen-nineteen, December 3rd, 1919 in Mexico, Maine. When I was a year old we moved on a farm up in south Rumford, Maine and I lived there about five or six years old. And we moved to a farm on Spruce Street, which is no longer there. When they widened the street they tore the barn down and moved the house up on Holyoke Avenue, and it's still there.

MB: What was the reason for moving?

WB: Well they wanted to widen the road; it was just a carriage road between buildings there. That's the reason, at least I know of.

MB: Why did your family leave Mexico?

WB: Well they moved up onto a farm in south Rumford.

MB: And then when they moved from that farm to the other house on Spruce Street?

WB: Well, it was the same thing. It was a farm and my father, in the wintertime, he always had ten or a dozen, sometimes fifteen teams of horses. That's when they used to yard the wood on sleds out of the woods in the winter time; what they call stump cut in the fall and haul it out on the snow with horses, see.

MB: What exactly was your father's profession?

WB: Well, I'm not sure what you'd call it. He was a farmer-logger mainly in the early years. And then he was into that type of woods work right up to well into the Depression. And the bottom dropped out of everything and he was like a lot of other people, he had people working for him and he sort of lost everything. And then he worked in a, well he worked during the war, he worked in the shipyard down in South Portland. And then when the war ended he came back to Rumford and got his job in the paper mill and he retired from the paper mill.

MB: What was his name?

WB: His name was Arthur.

MB: Arthur Broomhall?

WB: Yes.

MB: And what was your mother's name?

WB: Ethel.

MB: And what was her maiden name?

WB: Morrison, Ethel Mae Morrison. She was born in West Paris, Maine. And my father was born in Kenneth Square, Pennsylvania.

MB: How did your father come to Maine?

WB: Well, he came here in 1911 as I understand it, with a brother. He was seventeen years old and I think the brother was eighteen or nineteen. And they were hiring in the mill, or heard there was work in the mill. And the story, as I remember it, there was no roads in here, they came in on a train. The train, railroad was built first into the mill, and they came in here to work. And he did work in the mill in the early years, but that wasn't the kind of life he wanted so he got out and went farming. And I think when the, of course I was too small to remember, but as I recall when we were living in Mexico I believe he was working in the mill.

MB: Did you have any brothers and sisters?

WB: I had eight brothers; there was eight boys and four girls in my family. And I was, there was four boys and I was the youngest of the four older boys, and then I had four sisters and four brothers, and my two oldest brothers have passed away and one of my younger brothers passed away this past year. The rest of us are still going strong.

MB: What was your childhood like?

WB: Well, like all the other kids around here, you know, there was none of the things you have today. You made your own fun. We played a lot of touch football, tackle football. And in Virginia here there was a lot of kids. I tell people there's just as many households in Rumford as there ever was, the only difference is there's not ten or twelve kids in every one of them. So we used to have two teams, this section from the Falls Hill up to just up above here, it was split into High Virginia and Low Virginia and we all had teams, played against each other. And we played against Waldo Street and Maple Street teams downtown, but this was all fields out here and we had football and baseball. And we spent hours, you know, there wasn't much work, and even when we were in school.

And we played a lot of what we called Pepper and that was maybe one guy with a bat, and it might have been a cantdog handle that was cut off. My father used to always say, what happened to all my cantdogs. A cantdog is a thing with a hook on it, they roll logs in the woods. And we used to, nobody had any money to buy balls or bats or things like that so we, you might say we stole the cantdog and cut the metal part off and used them for a bat. So, and we'd line up six or seven guys and one guy batting and you go, you know, three outs and you got to be the batter and you moved around; spent hours doing that.

And then you used to go down to the ball field, play pick up. You know, pick up teams, always plenty of kids around, and have our own games. And we used to play kick the wicket which is something you never see (*unintelligible word*). Put a stick up against a telephone pole or something and kick it and run and hide until you find everybody, you know. And little things like that, you made your own fun.

But I've said a hundred times that even though times were tough during the Depression, nobody had anything but they were all in the same boat. And they helped one another and they worried about one another. And I've many times said it, that we grew up in the best of all times. We had a lot of fun and we made our own fun. And we didn't have all the troubles and the pressures and things, even though nobody had anything that kids growing up today seem to have. There was no alcohol problems or drug problems, nonexistent, you know. Although some of the families around made what, made their own home brew beer, you know. And I don't know if there's anybody that does that any more but I suspect there is. We just made our own fun.

And skiing in the wintertime, we had snow shoeing and skiing. You had little ski jumps all around town. There used to be one right over here. And there was another one over in the back here. And when we were in high school they had what they called the winter sports team. And they had speed skating. One of my older brothers is a really good speed skater. And they had competitions around the state and the teams from Caribou and Houlton, up that way, were always good. And Edward Little always had a good winter sports team. And you had four-forty, eight-eighty and a mile speed skating, you had a hundred yard dash on snow shoes, a hundred yard dash on skis, and then a mixed dash, a relay, two skiers and two snowshoers. And you had a three-mile snow shoe race, a mile snow shoe race, three mile ski race and ski jumping.

So that. . . Right up to when we came back from WWII, everything was changed. They went strictly to skiing, and it was all ski jumping and cross country skiing, and it was a way we made our own fun. And even had little tournaments, some of the hills, like there was one down on Spruce Street that they called Pete Shoot, it was a real popular little jumping hill. And there might be fifty kids down there on a given day, jumping. And they'd have little tournaments and they'd get flashlights, jack knives, that was the prizes, you know. I can't remember how they came up with them, but. And the ski jump, that big ski jump on Spruce Street was the biggest ski jump east of the Mississippi for a long time. The hill record was a hundred and eighty-seven feet on it. Until they built the jump in Lake Placid in 1932 for the '32 Olympics it was the biggest jump east of the Miss-, well, in the eastern part of the country. There was hills in the Midwest in (*name*) and Land Mountain and a few other places in the west that had big ski jumps and were building them at that time.

MB: Were your siblings involved, or as involved in skiing as you were?

WB: I had- my oldest daughter who just left here was on a high school ski team. She wasn't a gung ho racer. Her coach used to tell her that she was a very cautious skier, you know. He'd say, "God, let 'em roll," you know. She was a good skier, she still skis today but, for the fun of it, but.

And my son, I had, we had two girls and a boy, and he was an active skier and still, and a very good skier. And he went to New England College over in Henniker, New Hampshire and then skied on the ski team and competed in the junior nationals for four or five years as a junior. And then he, he's coached skiing, he coached, Chisholm Ski Club hired him as a coach supplement to high school coaching; he coaches soccer, he's a good baseball player, too. He was captain of the ski team and captain of the soccer team when he went to New England.

MB: When you were younger were you very involved with the ski team at your high school?

WB: I was on the ski team, yeah. But I only, I skied, I jumped back then, but I never jumped in any of the tournaments. I ran basically cross-country then. And then, well they came in with Alpine skiing after '36 Olympics in (*name*) in Germany. And we laid out a hill down next to where the old ski jump was and we ran slalom races there. Not so much downhill, but a lot of slalom races.

MB: Were any of your brothers and sisters involved?

WB: In the skiing?

MB: Yeah.

WB: Yeah, my, well my older brothers, my older brother wasn't, he was a basketball and football player. And my next to oldest was a speed skater; he was involved in helping run ski tournaments, things like that. And my next brother was a good skier. He went to the University of Maine, was on the ski team there. And that was after WWII and he lost an eye in WWII but he still came back and made the ski team and jumped; and was a really good skier. And then he, when he graduated from Maine he, second year he taught skiing down in Hartland, Maine for one year. And then he went to Kent's Hill for one year and started a ski program. Then he left there and went to Kenneth High School in North Conway and he was a teacher there, taught science and coached the ski team for twenty years until he retired. And he had, they had one son and he is now the ski coach at Kenneth High School, has been since my brother left.

MB: What was that brother's name?

WB: Charles.

MB: And what was your oldest brother's name?

WB: Victor, and the other one's William.

MB: And then there were four girls?

WB: Four girls, and two live in Massachusetts, one lives in, well actually two live in Arizona now and two live in Massachusetts. And the four younger boys, one, the oldest one of the four youngest ones went to Western State College in Gunnison, Colorado and he skied for them. And he came back after he graduated and taught in Mexico High School and was the ski coach one year. And then they started a program in Bennington, Vermont at Mt. Anthony High and they hired him as a phys ed. teacher. He majored in phys ed., and he was the phys ed. in the middle school and was the ski coach for. He just retired from coaching a high school team, but he still helped out and he still runs a junior program for them, just can't get away from it. And then the next one, one of them passed away, they were twins, and one passed away this past May. And the other one was a custodian in Mexico High School until he retired, thirty some years, he coached the high school ski team over there a number of years and he, last year and the year

before he was a cross country coach with a team at Mt. Valley High School here. He's been involved in skiing all his life.

My brothers that were involved in skiing never stopped being involved, they, officials or chief (*unintelligible word*) in a number of competitions. The one that just retired from Mt. Anthony, he's a technical delegate, and a technical delegate makes sure they are assigned to different competitions. He was a technical delegate to the World Masters Championship in Lake Placid last winter, and several others. And I served as a technical delegate for many years. And then I had my, the baby brother, he won the Junior National Championships way back about 1957 which was held in Kalispell, Montana I believe it was, and he's active. He didn't stay with racing or coaching, he worked in a paper mill and he retired from there as a pipe fitter and mechanic. That's the history on them.

MB: Were the girls involved in the, in some of the athletics and the games that you played?

WB: Ah, no, my older sister wasn't, she was not active in sports at all. Girls didn't get involved in sports back then, you know, they, none of them did. Their kids did, but they didn't. So, and one of my sis-, well my oldest sister that lives in Arizona now, her kids were not too active in sports. Then the next one, she had one son that was a really good hockey player. Fact is he was in the Philadelphia farm system, he never made it right up to the big dance, but he was a good hockey player. And he lives in Springfield, Illinois now, still involved in coaching and refereeing hockey games. And then my next, the next sister, her boys were really good baseball players and I don't know as they, I don't think they played football but they were good baseball players, and they're really good golfers, a couple of them are really good golfers now. And the youngest one, her children were not too active in sports either.

MB: Did you- did you and your siblings have many responsibilities on helping your father?

WB: Well, when you grew up back in the Depression years, from the time you were ten years old you pretty well had to earn what you had, take anything going, you know. With a family of twelve, twelve kids, you know, you were working when you were young.

MB: What sort of work?

WB: Anything that anybody would let you do from raking leaves to shoveling snow, right up to, I worked in the woods when I was fifteen years old, you know. We all worked, I had a paper route. I think every one of us as a boy, all the boys had paper routes during the Depression. And I had mine right up until about junior in high school and I was playing sports, couldn't get out of bed in the morning any more. So, and I, actually- you sold it for something like five dollars to somebody else, you know. And that's when you got probably half a cent for every paper you delivered. And I had a route from down below where I picked you up all the way up to where the shopping center is now, on these two lower, three lower streets, that was my route.

MB: What other, what was the sort of work that you did in the woods you said?

WB: Maybe pulling a cross cut saw or a buck saw or swinging an axe, whatever.

MB: For a specific company?

WB: Well, for my father sometimes. Or we just took a job cutting firewood for somebody, you know, things like that. And worked with my father, you know, he also had a saw rig. Back then, you know, there was no chain saws or anything like that, it was buck saw, cross cut or an axe and they had saws rigged up on their old vehicles, you know, with a pulley engine. Maybe you've seen them or heard about them or saw pictures of them. And they'd have a table in back and you'd put the four-foot wood up on there and cut them in stove length, you know. I used to feed that a lot of the time, or take the piece away.

And one of the first things I did after I got out of high school, you know, you'd take any job, we worked on the road in the summer time. I know one summer I worked up in Grafton Notch, they built a highway and they hired a few guys to dig postholes. There was no posthole diggers then, you dug them all by hand. And I did that all one summer up there. And then one summer I worked on a high way over in, around Bridgton on the slopes. They called it highway beautification project, federally subsidized that summer. There was seven or eight of us from here that worked on that project.

And they had the NYA then, National Youth Administration, and they had a machine shop downtown in the, where the town garages used to be. And they had us working in there cutting out grates for manholes, for the water drains, you know, on the streets.

You'd take anything then. Back then you took a job and you found out how much they paid you the first paycheck. You just tried to get the job. And I worked on the, the last job I, major job I had was when they built the Ridlonville Bridge. They just built a new bridge there, and the old metal bridge they dumped in the river and cut it up and took it out. I worked on that that summer when it was built, and they had me on the cement mixer. Them days you mixed the cement on site and wheeled it where you wanted it; wheelbarrow. Well my job was to put so many shovels of sand, so much cement, so much crushed rock in the hopper. And then you had a driven motor that you raised it up and dumped it in the mixer, and then you added so much water. That was my job and I tell you, it was a busy job. And we worked, I can remember we worked forty hours a week for forty cents an hour; sixteen dollars a week and you worked.

MB: And everyone in the area was doing that?

WB: Well, that's the kind of the jobs there were. You'd take anything that was going. I mean, that was one of the jobs I happened to get. But there was railroad work and things like that, and some guys would get carpenter jobs. And they'd do that until they, you know, everybody put their job in, their name in the mill. Soon as everybody graduated, they'd go down to the main office and sign up for a job in the mill. And some guys were lucky enough to get in, they wouldn't get in maybe the first year but after a year or two there'd be a few guys get in. Well I went down after I graduated from high school in 1937 and I got right up to the door and it came time for lunch and the guy says, well, there was quite a few kids behind me, too, and he said you'll have to come back after lunch. I never went back; I never worked in the mill.

MB: Why did you decide not to go back?

WB: I don't know, I just never went back. I never did work in a mill. And that's when I took some of these other jobs that, anything that came along. And, well I'll tell you what we did one summer, there was a bunch of us kids living in this area, they were, wanted guys to work on the drive. That's when the river was full of four-foot pulp. And that was after the long log years, but they were still driving pulpwood down here. And they hired, it was about ten of us and there was no work in the spring, and we signed up and went up to Sunday River, way up into Riley at the source, they had dams up in there and they had logging camps. And we stayed with the job, all hours of the day, twenty-five cents an hour, four meals a day, they really fed you. But you were soaking wet all day long. And what we did do is that when they'd flush the logs down you'd pick up what they called the rear, they had these little pick axes that you drove in, dragged the wood into the stream again, and the next flush would bring it down further and hopefully some of it went all the way to the Androscoggin. We did that, and our goal was to last fifty days, there was only two of us made it to the Androscoggin. The other guys either got called into the mill or they just quit. It was a tough job, but it was a job.

And then spring of 1940 I think it was, fellow by the name of Nick Morrison owned the Rumford Drug Store then. And he was an avid outdoorsman and he bought the Pleasant Island Camps up on Cupsuptic Lake up in the Rangeley area, you know, and he was sort of involved in skiing. And I was working that spring, a friend of mine was in school with me and graduated with me, he brother-in-law was a fire warden up in that area then. And Brown Company had a big set of camps that they were headquarters for all the logging they did on the Kennebec and Parmachenee area, Brown Company owned all that, see. And they were looking for a couple of laborers. So he got me to go with him on that job, and what we did was split wood. They heated them buildings with wood and we split about forty cords of wood that spring. And then they were still booming pulp across Mooselookmeguntic from the Rangeley Kennebec. And it was going down Upper Dam down to Middle Dam to (*name*) and down Rapid River, down (*name*) and then down on (*name*) into the Androscoggin, coming down to the pulp mills down here. Some of it went into Oxford, some of it went down to Livermore (*name*) or IP mills that was down here. So I did that in the spring, and then this Nick Morrison hired me as the caretaker and handyman for his camps over there because he knew me from skiing and of course I was an avid outdoorsman, I hunted and fished all the time, you know. Sometimes I lived up in Mooselook for weeks at a time in the summer. My mother knew I was up there, and that's it. And that's when I was fifteen, sixteen, seventeen years old. And anyway, that's the kind of life we lived back then.

MB: Was that how it was for all the families in the Maine area at that time?

WB: Well, pretty much, you know. For our fun, like I say, we played ball, football, and took whatever work we could get. The goal of most of the kids, not too many kids went to college in them days because there just wasn't any money. Some went, you know, some families that had the better jobs in the mill could afford to send their kids, and a lot of them went to Maine, you know. Of course and then Ed Muskie went to Bates. I can remember I was in the eighth grade; the eighth grade was part of the Stevens High School, the same building. And I can remember going to a debating match one time and he was debating, and he always impressed me as a tall,

he was tall and lanky then, you know, like his father. And sort of an Abe Lincoln type person, you know, but a good debater. And that proved, he went to become a lawyer and then a politician.

MB: What was your early education like, where did you go to -?

WB: Well I went to, well, when we lived on Spruce Street down there I went to Pettengill School. That was a grade school. It was, there was no bus in them days, you know. I had school, like Pettengill was just maybe a quarter of a mile from where I lived. And Chisholm, I went there one or two years. That was a little further away but not more than a half a mile. But then we moved up Virginia and I went to high school. We walked from here to the high school every morning, and oftentimes at noon back to Stevens High School which is at least a mile away. You know, there was no bus in them days. And the people that lived in the country, they used to pool cars, you know. And I don't know if they got reimbursed for expenses or, whether they did or not I wouldn't know anyway. But friends of mine that lived in the country, that's how they got to school. And I know when my oldest brother, they had a school over in South Rumford at that time, and it was about a half a mile from the farm. And they closed that up. And my next brother actually missed a couple of years of school. He graduated with the third brother, they were in the same class, when they moved back into town, and they graduated together. In the wintertime he just didn't go to school, you know.

MB: Why not?

WB: Couldn't get there. My mother tells about hitching up the sleigh and coming into Rumford six, seven miles to get groceries, driving the horse herself.

MB: When did your family move from the farm into the Virginia section?

WB: Well, we moved from the farm on Spruce Street to Virginia, must have been around 1932, '33. And of course I was, maybe lived there, when I wasn't working away, until maybe '39, '40. Then they moved up on Front Street, which is just down here, they bought a house there. Then the war came along and when I come back they were still living there.

MB: How old were you when they moved here to Virginia section?

WB: Oh, about twelve years old.

MB: And then you went to school, to middle school?

WB: Well, there wasn't any. When we moved up Virginia there was a Virginia school. That's since been torn down; there's houses there now. And I was twelve years old as I recall when we moved to Virginia section, and I lived there until I went in the service. And when I came back from the service, they still lived on Front Street. I got out of the service in October and went to Wisconsin and married my wife in November 17th, 1945. We've been married fifty-four years next month.

MB: What did you do in the service?

WB: I was in the 10th Mountain Division. And my, I was, in the 10th Mountain Division I was there right off when they were forming it, there was, you could enlist right in to the 10th Mountain Division. And everybody took basic training at Camp Roberts, California, and then you went from there to Fort Lewis, Washington where they were forming the 87th Regiment, one regiment of the First Battalion then. And I was assigned to A Company and it wasn't a full battalion yet. And my first platoon sergeant was Walter Prago who was a Dartmouth College ski coach, so, and there was guys, of course I was active racing in the winter time. The fact is I spent more time racing and not much time working in the wintertime, and so I knew a number of the guys that came in to the 10th. And then when you went to the 10th up there, you had to go through a mule packing school, a ski school, a rock climbing school. And other than that, they picked some of the better people at it for a mountain training group. And we were used to train others who came in to it.

But I wasn't there very much, I was sent on detached service, so-called. And I arrived at Fort Lewison mid-June in '42 and I was gone in mid-July on that detached service from the outfit, from the mountain training group, up to the Canadian Rockies. And we were up on the Columbian Ice Fields from mid-July or the latter part of July until mid-November. And we were, that's when the Studebaker company, we were testing all kinds of different over snow vehicles and some of the early snowmobiles that ended up to be snowmobiles later. But mainly they came up with what they called the weasel. It was a track vehicle that they use in the service, not only the 10th Mountain Division but other divisions for over snow travel. And that was my first detached service.

Then I came back from there and I wasn't with my outfit very long and I was sent to northern Michigan on another detached service. And they were, we trained a cadre from the 2nd Infantry Division how to ski and how to survive in the cold. And that went until about mid-February, and when we were coming from upper Michigan down to Camp McCoy Wisconsin. We came down, we went up on a train and them were the old pre-world war day trains that had candlelight, you know. And when we came back down we came back on the four wheelers, in the back end of four wheelers, no heat, nothing, all day.

We got down to Camp McCoy Wisconsin, Warsaw, Wisconsin, and they took us into a CC camp, there was no heat and no water. And it was about six miles from town. And a friend of mine, Ralphie Towner who went to the University of New Hampshire and was one of my fierce competitors in competition before the war, we hiked into town and that was the night I met my wife to be. She was going to college there. We were in old CC camps up there in upper Michigan, they had eight of them, and boy, one of them was made into a hospital type thing where guys, you know, anything wrong, cold, flu, frostbite or whatever, they took care of them there. Well in the end of the time we were there it was supposed to be a thirty-day maneuver, forced march maneuver, no heat, we stayed in the cold for thirty days and survived. But it got down to forty below and they, guys would get frostbite so bad. If somebody couldn't navigate any more they, we had very good sleeping bags, double down bags, they'd put the guy in a sleeping bag and zip it up over his head and put a tag on it and lay him beside the road and the ambulances came along, take them to the hospital. But when it got so cold they had, the hospital

got full, they had to shut the maneuvers off and allow fires and so forth. So, let's see. Are you interviewing me or Muskie?

MB: Both.

WB: Because I haven't said anything about Muskie, I don't know a lot about Muskie and that's what I told the gentleman I talked to on the phone. Except I grew up in that area and knew him, knew the family. I didn't know the oldest two that much, but I knew Lucy who was married to a Paradis and he ran a construction company and I used to hire his bulldozer to do work in the woods at one time.

And then Eugene was, I think he graduated in 1937 and he was in my two other brothers', '36 I think he graduated. I graduated '37, and they were a year ahead of me, '36 I believe. And I'm pretty sure Eugene was in their class. He may have been '35 but I'm not sure. And then the youngest one was Francis, he was married to a Chouinard who worked for H.P. Hood, and I worked for H.P. Hood.

MB: Tell me about that.

WB: Well, when I got done, I worked for that Nick Morrison up to Pleasant Island Camps that whole summer right through hunting season, because I was a good fisherman and I grew up fishing and hunting, he knew I was good. And they had a lot of people come in, hunters and fishermen. And that fall I know I shot eight deer, so we had eight deer hanging up there at one time. Nobody left that camp without a deer. And he used to say, "Well, come on, we got to go hunting today." I'd say, gee, Nick, I've got all this work to do, you know, I still had the work to do. He'd say, we'll do it when we get back. Well you knew who that 'we'll' was, it was me. Anyway, I loved to do it so I, I loved to hunt so I did it and somehow got the work done, too. But then I left that winter and I raced all winter, and the next spring H.P. Hood was, they had some horses delivering in town, see, and they had a Dixfield route and special delivery route, and I got hired as a special delivery guy and to take care of the horses. What we had to do was keep the stables clean, keep the horses fed and watered, and keep everything neat around, you know, harnesses polished. And then if, every day there was, these horses couldn't carry the whole load of milk so you'd go out and bring them fresh milk and take the empties back. That was my job for that, that one summer. Then eventually I worked into a route. Then war came on and another one of the guys, young guys that was, had been the spare driver before me, we both enlisted, he went in the Air Force and I went in the 10th Mountain Division March of '42, see. And then when we came back from the service they had to rehire, give us our jobs, so I worked for H.P. Hood until 1955.

And I left to take a job with the California Olympic Committee. I had been on- I had competed on the '48 and '52 Olympic teams. And I was American member of the FIS Cross Country Committee, which is the world governing body of skiing. And so when Squaw Valley, California bid for the '60 Olympics and got it, they, the FIS sent me out there to make a feasibility study to see if they could hold cross country races there. And I came back and I said "yes." And they, so they ended up getting the bid for the '60 Olympics and then FIS said that, you either hire me as the chief of racing and technical advisor to the Olympic committee, or we

will assign a European. Well they hired me. And that's when I left Hood and went out and picked a site. And what happened was, when I went to make the feasibility study, there was only about six lodges in the valley, Squaw Valley, and it's a big valley. And, but by the time the games came there was over three hundred. They used up one whole side of the valley that I was going to use. So we went into the next valley, Deer Park -

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

WB: Anyway, to make a long story short, I had to look for a new area, so I found an area down around Lake Tahoe in McKinney Creek. That was seventeen miles from Squaw Valley. And there was a, they were a little upset that I changed the site, but when they saw it then they okayed it, see, and it turned out to be an excellent site. And McKinney Creek and General Creek area, though it was a little ways from the, they could see there was no way you could do it in Squaw Valley and Deer Park Valley. As it turned out, they built a major ski area in Deer Park, you know, they were adjacent to each other. And so we had the cross-country races at McKinney Creek area. And I was there until, I was the last guy on the payroll getting, tearing everything down right up until July in 1960.

And I wanted to stay around there that summer because it's such a beautiful area, but ended up there was no work. And I had three children then and they went to school in Tahoe City, that last year during the games. They used to, we used to drive out there, two years prior to that when I was laying out and constructing the courses and the stadium and whatever had to be done. And we'd leave right after school ended here, drive out to California, different route every time. And they were, my oldest one was about eight then, so they got to see the country and it was an education. And they had a lot to see and tell stuff, you know, and then they lived out there for a year, went to school in Tahoe City.

So I came back and of course I didn't have a job, I knew I wouldn't have a job, but while I worked for Hood's, see my father jobbed in the woods a good part of his life, farming and logging, you know. And so I had bought some woodland on his advice when I was going, working for Hood's back when land was worth nothing, you know, but somehow I'd come up with enough money to buy a lot. So I decided, well, I guess I'll just go back and cut my own wood. So I went in the logging business and that's what I did the rest of my life.

Except 1980, they hired me to lay out the courses, for the 1980 Olympics in Lake Placid. So I spent the better part of three years either in Lake Placid or here, or commuting back and forth. But I'd been in Lake Placid competing many times, but this was an entirely new area than where I used to race in the late '30s and right after WWII. They had the national championships in Lake Placid in 1947 and unbeknown to me at the time that they were only going to send one cross-country to the '48 Olympics. Fortunately I won that race that day so I got sent, and they- then I made the 1952 team, the trials were held here in Rumford, Maine and I made the '52 team, but I said, I don't know how I can go, I had three kids, young kids, by then. But the local ski club and one of the merchants here said, "You're going." They raised money and supported my family while I was gone.

MB: What were your experiences like in the Olympics?

WB: Well, it's an experience, I can tell you. Because we, the Scandinavians dominated the Olympics then, when it come to cross country and jumping, totally dominated. It was very exciting just being there and being a part of it. And we found out we didn't know an awful lot about it and trained. We had solid hickory skis made by Northern Manufacturing Co., and the Swedes of course were not in WWII and they developed the Leemex skis, was the first laminated skis, and (*name*) bindings, which were an aluminum alloy. One of our skis weighed more than both of theirs, you know, but it was a learning experience. And then after the Olympics in St. Moritz we were invited by the Scandinavians and I spent another couple of months racing and skiing in Norway, Sweden and Finland. And we really learned what it was all about then.

And came back and made the '52 team. And I made, I actually made the 195-, world championship team, the U.S. team and that was supposed to be held in Lake Placid, and they had no snow. I was on the team, I hadn't left Rumford yet to go join the team, I called up my coach and asked them where to report and he said, don't go anywhere, there's no snow here. We had two feet of snow in the woods here, so it ended up it they would move from Lake Placid to here, and there was only two of us in town that were really racing then that knew the course we were using, and I ended up, we ended up getting those courses ready. And this businessman that helped send me to the '52 Olympics, he said, "You organize the skiing and I'll organize the administration part of it." And we pulled off the world championships within a forty-eight hour notice. The timing was Longine and they brought their own people from Lake Placid over here. And there was hardly any motels, headquarters was in what was Hotel Harrison, which is a kind of a boarding house now. We pulled it off anyway.

MB: What year were those world championships?

WB: Nineteen-fifty.

MB: And they were here in Rumford?

WB: Right.

MB: Tell me a little bit about the community of Rumford.

WB: Well, it's a mill town of course, the paper mill is the whole town, and it still is for that matter. There's other businesses too, but anybody making any kind of money works in the mill. Wages are, hourly wages are way up high, you know. But it's not the same. When I was growing up, there was over three thousand people employed at the paper mill, and now there are probably twelve to fourteen hundred. With all the modern machinery and the modern equipment and technology, it's totally different, you know. But I've never worked in the mill, but I delivered a lot of wood to the mill. And I was only inside the mill once when they had an open house when you could see the paper machines and they took you through everything, but except for the wood yard and that one time. And they didn't show you all the mill either, so.

MB: What was the religious affiliation for -?

WB: What?

MB: What is the major religion in this area?

WB: I'd say Catholic because biggest percentage of the people were French, Italian, Lithuanian Catholics, too. You had two Catholic churches here, St. Athanasius and St. John's. St. John's was predominantly French, and the other one was the rest of the Catholics, you might say. But as the population dropped off, they joined and they all go to St. John. And St. A now is a low income housing place, from a few years back.

MB: What were you, what religion were you raised?

WB: I was, actually my folks were Methodist and I used to go to Sunday school up to WWII, and since then I never practice any religion. The only time I go to church is funerals, deaths and whatever, you know.

MB: How was your family involved in the community?

WB: Well my folks really weren't, they were trying to make a living. I wouldn't say they were active in running any, active part in running the community.

MB: So it was mostly the kids who were involved, you and your siblings?

WB: Well, we were involved through the Chisholm Ski Club afterwards, you know.

MB: What was the community like as far as socially and politically?

WB: Well, being a paper mill town, a strong Democratic vote here, still is. I'd say two-thirds.

MB: How is that related to the paper mill?

WB: The labor unions, they had all that labor vote, strong labor, strong Democratic vote. Still is.

MB: Were your parents -?

WB: I don't know as my parents, I don't even think my father was active politically. He just wasn't into anything like that.

MB: What about socially, what was available socially in this neighborhood or town?

WB: I don't know, we were involved in sports and whatever went on in the school system, you know. One of the things that, back in the '30s there used to be a lot of minstrel shows, Al Jolson was a popular person back then. So there, I can remember the schools, and kids seemed to be more musical minded then. Somebody played something, you know. And they had these really

good minstrel shows and other shows, there was always big bands, you know. Now there's practically no band at all in the school system here, and why I don't know. But, you know, there was big bands them days, football games and in parades, you know. And that was, parades well attended, and football was always big and big crowds then. And baseball was probably as popular, more so then because there wasn't anything else to do. There was no TV.

I remember when the radio first came in, the first ones that had a radio, on fight night the living room would be full of guys and people listened to the fights until everybody, you know, as they got their own radio. And I'm sure when television came in it was somewhat so, but not as critical as it was then because of the Depression and the status of the economy.

MB: Who was the first family to get radio in this community, do you remember?

WB: Gee, I don't know, I can remember we had one on Front Street. I'm sure we weren't the first one, but we had one. And I can remember my mother getting her first Maytag washer. And back then, I can still picture my mother with the old washtub and a hand wringer and a scrub brush, scrub pan, whatever they called it. But she rubbed our clothes and then put them through the hand wringer. And then of course the Maytag was the first wash machine that came out and of course they might have bought it at a dollar down and twenty-five cents a week or a month, but they bought it. That's how they bought things back then, you know.

Somehow they managed, but everybody in the family worked. All had big gardens, and when you lived on a farm, you lived pretty good back then. You raised everything, my mother always had a cellar full of canned stuff, you know. And there was a lot of apple orchards around the old farms, and they'd let you go pick them, you know. Nobody went hungry that I recall. I'm sure we ate a lot of soup and things, but I don't mind that, I still like soup.

MB: What was the difference between the Virginia section and -?

WB: Well there wasn't much difference between Virginia section- then there was Maple Street, Pine Street, they were sort of groups. Then there was the Waldo Street gang, referred to as the Waldo Street bunch. You know, there were areas where there was a lot of kids and they were into the same activities. And (*unintelligible phrase*) kids living downtown, well they used to play ball at the Pettengill School right there near Maple Street and Pine Street. And then kids in the lower part of town, down around Waldo, Cumberland, and Falmouth Street went down to the old ball grounds, which is still there today. See, and they, that's on the right hand side of the road when you're going from Rumford on U.S. 2 to Mexico, across the Swift River. On the left they developed that whole new athletic complex, (*name*) Field, and that goes right down through there for baseball field, football field, soccer field, horseshoe pits, tennis courts, basketball area for the kids to play. And there's a big walking path that goes down along the Swift River that comes out of there. Matter of fact, right now I'd say Rumford has probably as good a athletic complex as any school system in the state, regardless of its size. They have a super athletic system here.

MB: When was that built?

WB: Well, it's gradually built to what it is today. They just put some brand new stands on the football field they just opened for homecoming a week or two ago. The old ones were wooden ones, these are all metal. And, pretty nice, you know. And they keep things up pretty good. The town appropriates money to the park commission, which maintains these facilities every year. And the community center, which was built by Oxford Paper Company and now it's called the Rumford Community Center. And they run all the little league, Babe Ruth legion, all them, soccer now, and the gym, the basketball programs for little kids and girls right up through, gymnastics, you name it. They run that and the town appropriates money.

And then the ski area was built by the Chisholm Ski Club, which was formed around 1923 by the Scandinavians that came in the paper mill. And they built this jump, the one on Spruce Street that was the biggest one. They used to advertise it, biggest one east of the Mississippi. And they had a snow train come in from Lewiston and Portland on carnival weekend. They'd come in maybe for the day of jumping. Some of them came in and stayed overnight, they stayed with people around town. There was no motels and there wasn't much room in the Hotel Harrison, Hotel Rumford at that time. I was a little kid then, I can remember that, ten thousand people in there watching the ski jump, maybe from, locally and Lewiston and Portland they tell me. Oh, they had all kinds of activities. They had horse races on Spruce Street, (*unintelligible word*), different obstacle race, three legged races, you name it, any fun thing.

MB: Would you be able to verbally paint an image of what the Virginia section was like, or the building layout, residential, commercial?

WB: Well, on the main street, where Sam's is now, that used to be a, that filling station right behind was there when I was growing up. And the highway- that was the highway, the President Highway wasn't there. There used to be a ball field right there, Brooks Field, and they tore it out. Well they went right through it when they built the new highway and bypass coming right through Virginia, the ball field was done away with. And right across where we came out and went over to Muskie's, there was an A&P store and a First National store there, and just down there was a big drug store, all those things fell by the wayside. That was the main shopping area in Virginia section then. It was, well there's nothing there now, they're gone, you know. Tommy Crawford's meat market's still there. That was the one where we turned. And Porter has his construction business inside of that little building now. Used to be a big store there and meat market. And the back end of it was a freezing unit, and Tommy Crawford was the ice cream deliveryman for H.P. Hood, and everything was stored in those lockers, all the ice cream. And for a number of years after the war he still did that. Other than that there was, and when the new highway come in all the new stuff up here came in, see, that's all recent years.

MB: What were the homes like?

WB: Well, you saw it, some of them are run down, where we went over to Muskie, where the Muskie family. I don't know who lives there but it's obviously a bunch of young families by what's strewed around there, not very well kept up any more. But people had pride in their houses back then. And some areas of town, they don't have that any more and that was one of the. I was a little surprised myself, they just, I don't know why.

But I went to a town selectmen meeting just this past Thursday and there was a couple of people in there from another section of town complaining about one house that had so much junk all over the front lawn, a couple of vehicles that were abandoned, it was just a total mess. I know where it is. And the other one, the house is all falling apart, sort of abandoned. And they were complaining about what can we do to get them to clean it up or tear it down or whatever. And you may have read in the paper just two weeks ago where they had a special town meeting to tear down the old Stevens High School. They voted ninety-nine thousand dollars to have tore down because they abandoned it when they built Rumford High School, because it got too small. And they sold it to a church and they let it go to pieces and the roof caved in. It was a big mistake the town. It's right in the center of town, it could have been an excellent community center. That's water over the dam now. But it's an eyesore and they're going to demolish it.

But there was a comment made at that meeting which, I was telling my wife today, that one of the people there at the meeting said. And this is what he said, maybe not word for word, he said, and there's a number of old blocks, there was a lot of tenement houses in Rumford then, still is, and some of them are in, falling apart because no renters, you know, and they can't afford to keep them up. So the comment this person made was that, the reason why we have all these dilapidated buildings and eyesores in town is the federal government made our town like that. And the guy said, "How do you- What do you mean by that?" He said, "Well they came in and they put the Muskie building with low income housing, Swainbrook Apartments, low income housing, St. A. school, lower income housing, the Bisby School, they built the low end housing, low income housing. And all these people would have been renting those apartments, and so I blame the federal government for the town's disarray." The guy is probably right, you know, if you drive around. They're not, there's some really good sections of the town well kept up, but where some of the apartments, some of them, they put new siding and kept them up. But if they can't rent them and there's no income, they eventually, some of them are abandoned. Some have been torn down already. You know, I don't know whether they forced the landowners, they wouldn't pass the inspection codes or whatever, and they made them tear them down. But according to what one of the selectmen stated, it's hard to get them to do this. You end up having to take them to court and if they don't have any other assets, you're dead, you know. And it's a long process to go and make somebody pay, either do it or you tear it down and make them pay for it. And if you do you're ability to collect from them, which ends up going through a court system, you know.

MB: Were the homes, when you were younger, were they very large homes? I mean, you mentioned that families had many children.

WB: No, I wouldn't say so. There was a lot of tenement houses, still is, around town. Like I said, many of them have been torn down, but they were two, three apartment houses. Some of them, six tenements. Like when Oxford Paper came into town, they built (*name*) Park, which is row houses, company built. They were two family houses, one on each side made out of brick. Still there, those are in pretty good shape. Then along U.S. 2 on Hancock Street, they built these six tenement buildings out of brick. That was all done by the paper company to give a place for employees to work.

And as they came in, the Lithuanians built more of the blocks than anybody. They came in, took

jobs in the mill. And of course they obviously saved every nickel they earned and they, I think they helped one another and they built these big blocks and rented out to help pay for them.

Then the Italians more or less came in what they call Smithville, down on the lower section of town. They sort of all settled in there and they're all smaller houses, some of them are torn down, not a lot of them, but some are torn down. If you drive down through there, there was a back field, what they called the back field or Back Street, you drive through there now and then same houses are there. But they took a little pride in them and they kept them up. There's younger families living there. I haven't been in the Back Street for a number of years.

MB: Were there tenement houses built in the Virginia section as well?

WB: Yeah, those that I mentioned about where the A&P and First National stores and a couple of the others on that main street, they became dilapidated and were torn down. Other than that, there's some two family houses, a few around, if you drive around town. Not too many, mostly single family houses. There's a few on Crescent Avenue and Prospect Avenue, but not many; mostly single family.

MB: When you and Muskie were younger, were the houses privately owned houses for the most part (*unintelligible phrase*)?

WB: Well, individual houses were, but the tenement houses, maybe one guy owned them and he rented out whatever rents he had, see.

MB: Were you ever inside the Muskie's house at all?

WB: The Muskie, yeah, when I was living down there. Not many times because we used to go over there to pick up Eugene to play ball or something. He was the youngest. Well I think there was only the two boys, Ed and Eugene, and there was an older girl and Lucy and Francis, see. I can't remember the older- oldest girl's name. She's married to a Breault, Breault; B-R-E-A-U-L-T I think they spelled it. And he's still alive they tell me, and he lives down in Muskieville on Congress Street now. He's got to be in the eighties and not the best of health I guess.

MB: Can you describe the Muskie's house at all?

WB: Well, it's that white house, I showed you.

MB: Right, but I mean on the inside when they lived there.

WB: Well, you had a small living room and a kitchen, and the bedrooms are all upstairs. And I'm sure that you shared a bedroom, you know. In our house, there was bunk beds, too, you know. I know when I grew up when we were little kids you slept two to a bed, double bed, not a double bed you call them now, maybe a three quarter bed, with the boys and the girls. You tried to separate the boys and the girls, you know. And as they got older and they left, then, but that's the way it was.

MB: How well did you know Eugene or-?

WB: Well I knew Eugene just from being in school and playing games, you know, ball or something with him. Until he graduated from high school, and then he, I had very little contact with him then. But Francis was married to Chouinard who worked for Hood's so on social functions at Hood's I would see them a lot, you know.

MB: What sort of social functions would Hood have?

WB: Well, get-togethers, you know, with the milkmen. And Hood used to have a banquet in Portland once a year and all the drivers went. Whatever you ran into, bowling or whatever, you know. Little things like that. And meeting them because you, husbands and, you know, you were at the house occasionally.

MB: Did you know her very well?

WB: Who, Francis? Yeah, I did Francis, yeah.

MB: How would you describe her as?

WB: Well, she's a nice young lady, you know, very pleasant, very quiet, you know. People back then, the Muskie family were conservative, you know, all of them. And that's the way it was then. You kind of minded your own business to a degree, but in our house my, there was not only our dozen but all the neighbor kids, there was like a parade in and out all the time, you know. And in some of the other houses the same way, you know.

MB: When you, after you stopped working for Hood, did you maintain a relationship with Lucy and her husband?

WB: Not until I came back from California, and then I went in the woods and I used to hire Lucy's husband's bulldozers. I had him do bulldozer work in the woods for me, see. So that's my only contact with Lucy then. They lived down Worthy Pond and the only time I would, Henry and, what the heck was, Henry was one, there was two brothers in the construction business, I can't remember Lucy's husband's name. Henry was one of them, Lucy's husband, what in the heck was their name. I can't think of it.

MB: Tell me a bit more about if you remember any of your teachers from school that some of the Muskies might have had as well or your experience.

WB: Well, there was, back then Mrs. Poland, she's got to be in her nineties, she was a eighth grade; she taught American history in the eighth grade. And she came to our class reunion the last time we had, the only teacher that I had in high school still living. She was in her nineties. And there was Mr. Maynard and there was Ray Bohm who was the baseball coach, Johnny Dolan was, I think he probably came there about the time Muskie was graduating. I'm trying to, Harry C. Brown was an Aggie teacher and ended up principal of the high school later on. I'm trying to think of somebody else, and there was Mrs. Farnum, taught math in the eighth grade

and I think in high school, too. She was quite old then, when I was in high school. And Mrs. Coombs was another one that taught English. I'm surprised I can remember those names. That was a long time ago.

MB: Did any of them have a particular impact on you, or?

WB: Probably Mr. Maynard more than anyone, he was the English teacher. I wouldn't say, well Harry Brown probably most. He was the Aggie teacher and I was in the Aggie class then.

MB: What sort of groups were there in, within the school, was there a certain group that Ed would be associated with or a certain group that Eugene would, or you?

WB: Well I hung out mostly with the kids in the Aggie class, see, we had our own group. And there were some of the kids that- Ed, I don't know whether he took a general course or college course, I suspect he took a college course. And you know, the better students, you know, all schools have cliques anyway. And I'm sure he was up there in the debating group and that group there, he was pretty smart, you know. And I never had, see, like I say, I was in eighth grade I think when he graduated, I think he graduated in 1932, and I graduated in '37 so I would have been in the eighth grade. I can just remember that one time when I went to that, had to go to that debating they were having, you know, up in the auditorium, which kind of impressed me, I guess. Probably first time I ever did, saw anything like that. Because I wasn't active in anything like that, see, I was just a little shy farm boy I guess you'd say.

MB: Would you consider, you said that, you know, Muskie kind of, Ed kind of hung with the more intellectual crowd at school. What about -?

WB: I would guess that but I can't say that. I know the Muskies were very conservative, they minded their own business, they, you know, but I'm sure, you know, Mr. [Stephen]Muskie was a tailor, he had a shop down on Congress Street, and I've known, I'd seen him, I know he walked to that shop and back many. I can't remember, they may have had a car at one time but I can't ever remember it.

MB: How far of a walk was it?

WB: Oh, maybe, well, from where we looked at the house down to the main street, close to a mile I would guess, you know. And you had to walk down Falls Hill, across the bridge and walk back up, with his little satchel.

MB: Were his, were Muskie, Ed's brothers and sisters, were they also kind of on the college track as you called it?

WB: I don't think so. You know, back then girls got through school and they took a job and got married and that was it. And I don't think any, I don't know as, if Eugene went to school, see when we all went in the service for WWII he ended up. I'm not sure what branch of the service he was in, but he was in California and he never came back to Rumford. To my knowledge he still lives in California. And I was told recently that he's still living, he's in California

someplace. Whether he went to school under the G.I. Bill after WWII I couldn't tell you that, I don't know, I've never seen him again. Probably hadn't seen him after he graduated from high school. I don't know where he went or what he did. I actually can't tell you much about the Muskie family, except I lived just right around the corner from them. And in that period of time which was maybe four, possibly five years, when I was in high school. I was, we were living on Front Street I think when I graduated from high school, they had moved from over there to Front Street. So that could have been '35, '36.

MB: It's interesting to hear about the section of the community and, you know, things about the community in which Muskie grew up in, I can kind of get a little more insight into him.

WB: (*Unintelligible word*), you know, the French were more downtown in Pine Street, Waldo Street, that area there. And some, many of them lived, well some of the Scotch people who came, there was a bunch of Scotsmen came and worked in the mill, too. And they were more or less in that (*name*) Park, you know, like the Sorensens that were Norwegian, they lived in there. One of their daughters graduated from high school with me. But the French were mainly in that Maple Street, Pine Street, Waldo Street area. The Italians had their little place down there in Smithville. And of course after WWII they intermarried, French and Italians and Lithuanians. Some of the blocks on Spruce Street were built by the Lithuanians. They're still there, and they're in pretty good shape, too. Let's see, there's one, two, three, well there's three that are in pretty good shape. Then there's one, two, that are not in very good shape. And another one across, well, (*unintelligible phrase*) Reno, Reno Oil, them raising that row there and the (*unintelligible word*), he was a Lithuanian too. And (*names*), they're still in pretty good shape. But then there's two or three of them there that are run down. And the other ones across there, two or three story, they kept them up pretty good.

MB: So what was the ethnic make up of the Virginia section?

WB: It was a mixture of English or, there was some French people, and some, a few of the Scotsmen like Waddington lived up there by the church. Abbotts, there was quite a few English type people in that particular area at that time.

MB: Was there a lot of social segregation between the different ethnic groups?

WB: Well, I think probably back in the '30s it was more so, you know, like Sons of Italy, there was a school down there in Smith Crossing too, where all the Italian kids, you know, you didn't have busses so there were several schools around. There was one at Smith Crossing, Pettengill, Chisholm, Virginia, Bisby, you walked to school. So, and Stevens High School was right in the middle of the town down there, and Rumford High, when they built the new school, was out a little further but then the busses brought some of them.

When, I think he's in the back bedroom (*referring to howling dog*). That's my daughter's dog, she's coming back, they're just bringing the boys to Colby. They're going back to (*name*) tomorrow, but they're coming back. They bought some land down on Sebago and they're going to build a place down there; retirement place I guess.

MB: When Muskie became involved in politics, were you aware of what was going on with his career at all?

WB: Not really, except when he ran for governor of course, this town went heavy for him, first Democratic governor elected in Maine, so [*sic* first Democratic governor in 20 years]. There's one thing, I think my father did used to vote all the time, you know, he always went to the town meetings. And I do, too, I rarely miss a town meeting if I'm here. That's a privilege that we have that not enough people take advantage of, to vote, you know.

MB: How did the people of Rumford feel about Muskie's success, were they -?

WB: Well, they're going to build a monument down here in honor of Ed Muskie, and the money is almost there. We're nineteen thousand dollars roughly from reaching our goal and we expect to reach that by the end of the year. And plans, the type of monument and where it's going to set has already been decided. And it's going to be a nice monument and hopefully it'll blend in. You know, where he was so instrumental in the Clean Air and Clean Water Act, and it's going to set down there at the reflection pool overlooking the falls. And the Bovin brothers, who are ex-fire chiefs in town, they put that little Indian village you see down there, that'll be part of it. And they're going to build a new chamber of commerce building at one end of the parking lot there with a gristmill, a working grist mill they tell me.

It was supposed to have been started but I don't know what's holding it up. And we were planning to have the base of the Muskie monument in this fall and that, there was some technicality. Well you've got all these EPA rules and regulations you've got to clear. And the last meeting we had they were about all cleared. But they haven't started the base yet, but they hope to by the first of November, before winter sets in, at least have the base down, because that monument's going to be made over in Vermont, Vermont Granite. And that's in the works already I guess.

MB: In what way was he supported by the people of the town?

WB: I'm sure he had a big vote when he ran for governor, or ran for the senate. He had tremendous backing, you know.

MB: Did he ever do anything directly for the town of Rumford?

WB: See, that's the kind of a thing that people bring up: "What did he ever do for Rumford?" Of course my argument and the argument of many others is, he did the same thing for Rumford that he did for people in the whole country: he cleaned up and is still cleaning up the rivers and the air from his efforts in pushing the Clean Air and Clean Water Acts; that's what he mainly did. For Rumford he cleaned up the Androscoggin River, you can swim in it, you can catch fish in it, which you couldn't do for umpteen years, totally polluted. But actual, what he did for Rumford directly, probably not very much.

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

MB: This is tape two, side one with Wendall Broomhall. Please continue with what you were about to say.

WB: Well, Ed Muskie's wife Jane was here this summer at invitation of the Muskie Memorial Committee and was shown the site and all the plans, and she highly approved them. And in addition she donated five thousand dollars from the Washington Muskie, I don't know what they called it, memorial. What you technically call it I don't know, but it came from the Muskie family, Muskie foundation of some sort I guess. I should know it, I was there. Anyway, I've got a good memory, but it's short. It's getting old.

MB: You had mentioned that the Androscoggin River in this area used to be un-

WB: Totally polluted.

MB: What caused such terrible pollution?

WB: Paper mills, the Brown Company mills in Berlin, New Hampshire and this here, the IP in Livermore. The river right to the sea was totally polluted. And it's cleaned up now.

MB: When you and Muskie were growing up, do you think that that impacted his strong-?

WB: I don't think that was even a thought in anybody's mind at that time, until he became a senator. And at some point in time there he got into that phase of politics and was the main person pushing for clean air and water. That's what we were told and read and whatever.

MB: What would you say were his strengths?

WB: Well he was certainly a good politician. And he met people very easily. He was very intelligent and had a way about him that, I don't know how you describe it but he, when you talked to Ed he could put you at ease. I haven't been around him enough to know, but I'm told that he controlled his emotions pretty well except for that one incident in his political career over in Manchester. But he was a pretty cool thinker, from what everybody says. And never lost his temper I think too much, you know.

MB: Did you ever meet him personally?

WB: Yes, I've met Ed. And, last time I saw Ed and he remembered me was at a, that was maybe four or five years, three or four years before he passed away, at a Maine Sports of Hall Banquet. And he came up, he went around and greeted people and he came up to the table where I was. And of course I got up and shook his hand. And he knew me right then and he said my name. And the first thing he said is, "What happened to your hair?" I used to have a big head of hair and I was getting bald like everybody else. And that's how he greeted me, and we talked for a little bit. But he remembered who I was and I hadn't seen him in years.

MB: When was the first time that you actually met him face to face?

WB: In my life? Probably when he was, I'd see him in the neighborhood, you know, we lived right there.

MB: Would he ever interact with the athletics?

WB: I don't recall that Ed was too much into athletics, unless it was track. I don't think he played basketball, I can't recall him playing basketball or football, so.

MB: Was he involved with the play that the others -?

WB: I think he was, but I can't remember that. I never was involved in that sort of thing myself, so, but he could have been. I knew he was into debating.

MR: Do you remember the subject of the debate that you saw him debate?

WB: No, I wouldn't remember that. Probably, you know, it just impressed me that, what was going on and I probably didn't understand too much what really was going on. Except I can remember being there in the Stevens High auditorium and why I went there, maybe it was something that one of my teachers had us do. I have an idea that's probably what it was. Which teacher, I can't even remember that. I think it may have been Mrs. Coombs, she was the English teacher. And she just wanted to get us involved in something and see what took place. That was so long ago, I can't remember. I'm surprised I can still remember her name.

MB: When was the time that you lost touch with the siblings that you knew better like Lucy and Eugene?

WB: Well, Francis was the last one. When I, see, I worked right until 1955 at H.P. Hood and Fern Chouinard. I think he retired from Hood's. I'd see him every day. I was the driver on the Dixfield delivery route, and he was on the Farmington delivery route. So we were at the Hood plant every morning loading up. And then that whole, the families, the Hood family, they'd kind of get together somewhat off and on, you know.

MB: Can you think of anyone else in the community that might have known him that is still living that might be useful to interview for the project?

WB: Well, I know, they tell me that the oldest girl's husband, Ben Breault, is still living in the Muskie building down on Congress Street. I wouldn't know him if I saw him, but that's what they tell me. At that thing we went when Mrs. Muskie was here, somebody mentioned that he was still living. But he's got to be pretty old, too. And I don't know what kind of health he is, whether he'd let himself be interviewed or not, I don't know. You know, really, as I told the gentleman that wrote me the letter, I can't remember what his name was, my contact with Ed Muskie was not a lot. And the family, only those few years I lived right there. And then the war came on and, you know, everybody scattered. I can't remember when Mrs. Muskie or even Mr. Muskie passed away. That was a long time ago.

MB: Well thank you very much. Everything that you've told us about Rumford will be very helpful.

End of Interview