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Interview with Dana and Jean Childs by Stuart O'Brien

Summary Sheet and Transcript

Interviewee

Childs, Dana

Childs, Jean

Interviewer

O'Brien, Stuart

Date

November 18, 1998

Place

Westbrook, Maine

ID Number

MOH 057

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Biographical Note

Dana Childs was born in Lewiston on December 15, 1922. He moved to Portland as an adolescent. He served four years in the Marine Corps during World War II in the Pacific. He then attended the University of Maine and the Portland University Law School. He was on the Maine legislator and became the Republican floor leader. He was also the chairman of the Portland Republican City Committee. He became a Democrat in 1960. He also practiced law. He owns and trains racehorses. He was the speaker of the house in 1965. In the 1970s he became Judge of Probate, a position he continues to hold.

Jean Childs was born in Portland in 1927. She went to Westbrook Junior College and University of Southern Maine and received a degree in political science. She has been involved with the League of Women Voters. She was a member of Portland Democratic City Committee. She was also a Member of the Portland Planning board, a political activist, and a city leader.

Scope and Content Note

Interview includes discussions of the Office of Price Stabilization; the 1954 Maine Gubernatorial campaign; Muskie's first term as Governor; Muskie's 1968 Vice Presidential campaign;

environmental protection legislation; Vietnam; the Republican and Democratic parties in Maine; the Maine legislature from 1952-1968; highways and roads in Maine; the Sinclair Act; the League of Women Voters; and education.

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Transcript

Tuck O'Brien: Stuart O'Brien, Westbrook, Maine, November 18, 1998.

Dana Childs: Dana Childs, and that's C-H-I-L-D-S, and we're in Westbrook, Maine as Stuart just said, sitting in my kitchen at 350 East Bridge Street.

Jean Childs: And I'm Jean Childs, same spelling, Dana's wife.

TO: So each in turn, Dana first and then Jean, can you tell me where you're from, where you were born?

DC: Well, I was born in Lewiston, Maine. The exact date: December 15, 1922. I lived in Lewiston until I was a junior in high school, family moved to Portland and I've lived here pretty much since that time, except for the four years that I served in the Marine Corps.

JC: And I was born in Portland in 1927 and attended Portland schools, went to Westbrook Junior College, then we were married. And in 1960 I went back to the University of Southern Maine that was known as UMP at that time and studied, took a degree in political science.

TO: Dana, where did you attend college?

DC: I attended the University of Maine for six months prior to the war. I returned to the University of Maine in 1946, stayed there until 1948 and then I entered what was then known as the Portland University Law School, and I graduated from law school in 1951.

TO: Did you serve overseas during the war?

DC: Yes, I was overseas for, oh, twenty months.

TO: Europe, or . . . ?

DC: I was in the Pacific. Most Marines were in the Pacific.

TO: So you met each other, how did you meet?

DC: Jean? Well, we knew each other in high school and, but our romance didn't start until after I returned from the service.

TO: How did you know each other, when you had moved down to Portland after leaving Lewiston, you went to the same high school?

JC: Portland High School, yeah, and we had mutual friends.

TO: So, 1951 you had just, you passed the Bar in 1951 . . .

DC: 1952.

TO: 1952. How did you become involved in politics?

DC: Well, matter of fact, I'd only been out of law school a very short period of time and somebody approached me and asked if I would run for the legislature. And, naturally, just getting out of law school I didn't have any practice; I didn't have a hell of a lot to do anyway, so it sounded like a way to get my name known. So I decided to run for the legislature. And my first run was in 1952 and I served my first session in '52-'53.

JC: Fifty-three, [1955]‘5 and [1957]‘7.

TO: What attracted you to the Democratic Party?

DC: As a matter of fact, when I ran for the legislature and I served in the legislature from 1953 to 1957, I served as a Republican; I was a Republican at that time. And I served as, matter of fact, as the Republican floor leader and I also was the chairman of the Republican City Committee in the City of Portland.

TO: Now, you were from Lewiston which is a heavily Democratic area. What was your family background? What were your parents, were they Democrats?

DC: No, my family was pretty Republican oriented. I’m assuming that I became a Republican because it was suggested to me by my grandmother, who really brought me up and had a great influence on me.

TO: What were your parents’ occupations?

DC: My grandmother, who brought me up, she owned a hotel in Auburn known as the Hotel Whitehall. My father was in the racetrack business and he was a, also he was a conductor on the railroad but he also owned and trained racehorses. And I’m pretty much doing the same thing now, except being judge of probate and a lawyer, but we also have a racing stable here and we have about fifteen horses that we race.

TO: Jean, what was your family background?

JC: My parents came from New Hampshire and my father worked for an ice cream company, which was very nice, we always had ice cream in the house. My mother worked during this period of time at the Registry of Deeds and then she became an insurance saleswoman. But with regard to a political party, at that time the City of Portland elected I think seven members of the legislature. And it was a straight, I mean, it was a, you voted, you didn’t run by single member districts. So the dominant party was the Republican Party, the Democrats were never elected, and the state was heavily Republican. And Lewiston and Biddeford and perhaps the St. John valley were little pockets of Democrat voters, but nowhere else. They just didn’t have the power. So if you weren’t really politically motivated, the message wasn’t there, you became whatever party was the strong party, generally that was Republican.

TO: So when you first entered the legislature, you were already married?

JC: Oh yeah.

TO: So what attracted you to politics?

DC: I’m not sure that I was really attracted so much to politics as I was trying to get a way to get my name known, and, because I was starting a law practice as a sole practitioner. And I just

thought it was a good idea to get involved in the city so I'd get known and possibly pick up a few clients.

TO: What were the major issues of that first campaign, when you first entered the legislature?

DC: The major issues as a candidate or as I became a . . . ?

TO: Either one, whatever's easy.

DC: Well, probably back in those days the major issues were highways, the legislature was pretty much controlled and dominated by the, an older generation. As a matter of fact, I was the youngest member of the legislature when I got elected and I was twenty-eight. I think the average age of the legislature at that time was about fifty-five. But getting back to your question, I think probably highways and agriculture and so forth were the major issues in the legislature.

TO: Now, when you were elected to the state legislature, was it from Westbrook?

DC: No, it was from Portland.

TO: From Portland proper.

DC: There were seven Republicans elected my first session, and as Jean just said you know, it was a very heavily dominated Republican legislature. I think in the senate there were three Democrats out of thirty, and in the house I think there were twenty-four, five Democrats out of a hundred and fifty-one. So it was totally controlled by the Republican Party. And that's when things started to change. As a matter of fact, in my second session . . .

TO: The sessions were how long?

DC: Two years. I think it was in my second session that I was the only Republican elected in my second session, the other six were Democrats, so it was starting to turn around in the early fifties. And my third session I think there were three or four Democrats and three or four Republicans. I think it was divided pretty much down the middle in my third session. But in my second session, I was the only Republican.

JC: From Portland.

DC: From Portland.

TO: And so your second session would have been around '53 - '54?

DC: My second session would have been when Senator Muskie was elected governor.

TO: How did you get to know Ed Muskie?

DC: Well, I knew Ed Muskie because we had a lot of mutual friends. Ed, when he stayed here in Portland for a time, when he was director of the OPS, he stayed with a fellow by the name of Milton Wheeler who was an attorney. And Milton was an instructor at the Portland University Law School; I was a student at the Portland University Law School. And a lot of the students, the law school students, after graduating from law school, they went to work for the OPS. And so I had an association with them, and I was a very, very close friend of Milt Wheeler's. So I met Ed Muskie through that connection.

TO: But you personally didn't have any connection to OPS?

DC: No, I did not, no.

TO: And you met Ed the same way?

JC: I probably didn't meet him in those years, not until Dana was in the legislature and the senator had been elected governor.

TO: So, it's 1953 and there's starting to be murmurings, the Democratic Party is starting to get a little more organized, especially around in the Lewiston area, and 1954 Ed Muskie runs for governor. What was your involvement with the gubernatorial elections that year?

DC: Well, I'm just, I'm making assumptions of what I did. I suppose that I supported the Republican candidate who was Burt Cross who was running for reelection. You know, I don't have much of a recollection I actually actively participated in that campaign or not. But, as you know, Muskie won handily and then he became the governor and it so happened that year that I was the Republican majority floor leader in the House. So during his term as governor for that two-year period, I had a lot of contact with Muskie in my capacity as the Republican floor leader.

TO: How did you find him as a governor, as a leader?

DC: Well, of course it was a shock to most people in Maine, particularly the Republicans, that the Senator got elected as governor. He certainly was a, he certainly was not the favorite. I was pretty much involved in . . . I knew what was going on because most of my friends were Democrats at that time, and my personal relationships were with people who were Democrats. And so I was aware of what was going with the Democrats just because of my association with them.

And probably one of the most interesting things I always remember about the campaign, because the senator didn't have a lot of support as far as the newspapers were concerned or any organizations, and if I remember correctly that the senator's biggest contributor during his first run for office was a fellow by the name of Henry Wong. And Henry ran the Pagoda Restaurant in Portland, and Muskie was a great lover of Chinese food. And so he became friendly with Henry who ran the restaurant. And I had been told that his biggest contributor in that campaign was Henry Wong who gave Muskie a two hundred dollar contribution. Some difference from what goes on now.

JC: Things were very different then, campaigns were run so much differently. We never had signs, you know street signs, in front of the house or anything. That was imported from Massachusetts some years later, along about the Kennedy years. But, and television was in its infancy; Burt Cross who was the sitting governor came across like a stick on television. Muskie wasn't terribly good but he was so much better than Burt Cross that he utilized that medium in a much better way than Cross was able to do. And there were very few stations, so you didn't need a lot of ads and people tended to watch better then. And of course the campaign began, the campaigns were shorter and the primary was, the general election was still . . .

DC: Well, the general election was in September, wasn't it?

JC: Yes, yes, so it was short. They didn't begin until so much later and, it was different. You didn't need all that money that you do now.

TO: Now, you say that television was really important for Muskie, to Muskie's win. That's interesting.

JC: Well, I don't know how many television sets there were in Maine at that time or how many stations, certainly southern Maine had much more TV access than northern at that point. But if you were only looking at the two of them on television, there was just no question who was the more successful utilizer of that medium. And it did make a difference, especially to elder people I think who ideologically were still kind of floating around.

TO: What were the, between Muskie's election in '54 and your second term in the legislature, there was a major shift between the Democrats and the Republicans. What happened, what, was it because of Muskie?

DC: Oh I think that Muskie played a great role in that shift, in people turning their political sides from Republican to Democrat. Of course, during that period of time Frank Coffin played a major role in turning the Democratic Party around. Because Muskie was the, without question was the leader of the Democratic Party at that time, but Frank Coffin who was extremely articulate and very strong, had a very strong philosophy about the Democratic Party . . .

JC: And a good strategist.

DC: . . . and a good strategist. And I think that he played a major role in the Democrats coming into power, just as much as Senator Muskie did.

JC: It began, the Democratic Party began to be alive more with the higher educational institutions than it ever had been. And it wasn't just a, the French enclaves in Biddeford, Lewiston, wherever; it began to have this liberal, highly educated, intellectual attitude, and that really changed things.

TO: So pulling from the University of Port-, or Portland University, University of Portland and . . .

JC: Bates was the center, of course, and some Colby, and just assorted liberal professors here and there.

TO: Did the issues change? I spoke with Denny Blais about three or four times and Denny is always telling me about, you know, it was the highways. He calls them the three Rs but I can't remember exactly what the wording is but the highways, the restructuring of the educational system, smaller school systems, less schools

DC: Now you're going into another era, you're going into the '60s . . .

TO: Oh, so that's later.

DC: That's later. Denny was in the governor's council in the '60s, in '65 as a matter of fact; by that time I turned and became a Democrat in 1960 . . .

TO: All right, so let's jump back, I'm getting a little ahead of myself here. So did you see, through the '50s, through the Muskie, Muskie's terms as governor, you remained a Republican, we were just talking about the political party shifts, now the issues, were they the same as when you entered, was there any . . . ?

DC: Oh, in the '50s I think the issues pretty much stayed the same. I think that one major development I remember in the '50s was when Senator Muskie started the agency, what did they call it at that time, the Dept. of Economic Development? And I think that was a new agency to the state of Maine and a new process for getting businesses to come to Maine. And that was part of Senator Muskie's program, which at that time the Republicans opposed and I was one of those in opposition to it. But at the last moment Muskie was able to convince us in the Republican leadership that it was a good idea for the state of Maine and it would be a lot of progress for the state of Maine to be involved in having a division of economic development for the state.

JC: What . . .

DC: I don't know if you can answer to that, Jean.

JC: No, I wanted to ask a question, though. When did SADs come in?

DC: SADs came into effect when I was a Republican, so that would have happened in the middle '50s.

JC: So that was the time when we were getting away from the small schools that could not afford science labs and so on, and we were getting the consolidated school districts. What was the man's name?

DC: Roy Sinclair?

JC: Roy Sinclair Act.

TO: You said SAD?

JC: Yeah, School Administrative Districts. Prior to that there'd been, you know, the little town of this, that and the other thing, had its own elementary school system and maybe a high school, maybe not. The kids had to go wherever or not go. And so the state started encouraging the School Administrative Districts and they gave them financial support for that, which encouraged larger schools.

TO: And this was in the late '50s.

DC: No, this was in the middle '50s, yeah, because it was called the Roy Sinclair Bill and as a matter of fact then I was serv-, I think I served on the sub-committee of the Sinclair Act, so that had to be around 1955.

TO: How did Muskie get along with the Republicans when he was governor?

DC: Well, in the beginning, gee, I can still recall, now it's starting to come back to me. I recall that when Muskie gave his inauguration address that we all had scripts, you know, written out as to our critique on what his, his address was going to be in the legislature. And even before he gave it, you know, we were all prepared to give it to the press, naturally all being critical because, you know, he was the first Democratic governor since Governor Brann. And Louis Brann was governor, I don't know, sometime in the '30s? And naturally Muskie was a shock and surprise to all the Republicans.

And I imagine that our goal at the very beginning was, how do we get rid of this guy, how do we make him look bad? And that was the strategy in the beginning and it backfired on the Republicans. The press was very critical of the way that the popular leadership handled their criticism of Muskie at the very beginning, and as time wore on of course Muskie became more and more popular. And one of the reasons he became popular, I'm sure, was because of his sincerity, and, at that time the senator was a very sincere person. And people of the state of Maine had reached the conclusion that he wanted to be governor because he wanted to do a good job and it wasn't purely politics for him. I think at the beginning, Muskie probably never had any aspirations to go beyond being governor of the state of Maine. And so he's somebody that, as you got to know him of course, he became, you started appreciating what he had to offer. And during that four-year period a lot of us who were Republicans became very close to him and had a lot of respect for his thoughts and what he wanted to do for the state of Maine. So during his four year period as governor he turned a lot of people around, and, people that began to appreciate and respect him.

TO: So Muskie went to the Senate in 1958, Clinton Clauson was elected governor of Maine, he died and John Reed, there was kind of, it seems like a little more of a Republican, a resurgence of the Republicans, a kind of a counter swing. But you changed parties in 1958.

DC: I changed parties in 1960. And in 1960 I ran for the state senate as a Democrat and took my first political defeat as a Democrat in 1960. In 1963 I ran for the legislature, for the House

from Portland, and I was elected. I was also elected as the assistant Democratic floor leader in 1963. And then when I ran again in 1965 I was elected as speaker.

TO: Okay, your first loss, who did you lose to?

DC: Oh, at that time there were three or four, four, there were four Senators elected from Cumberland County

JC: Countywide.

DC: They were county wide, so I ran as one of the four Democratic Senators and there were four Republicans and the four Republican Senators won.

TO: Oh, you ran as kind of like a group?

JC: All at large.

DC: Yeah, all at large. Cumberland County at that time was not divided into districts; each county had so many Senators. Cumberland County being the largest county, it was entitled to four senators. Androscoggin County I believe at that time was entitled to three, Penobscot maybe three, but there were thirty senators elected throughout the state. Some counties would only have one but it was not done in districts.

TO: And there were no primaries?

JC: Oh yeah.

TO: Oh there were, okay, I see. Did you continue your relationship with Muskie after he went to Washington?

DC: No, because when Muskie went to Washington I would see him when he came back to the state, see him around the State House and so forth. My real next contact with the senator, my next contact of any significance, was when he ran for vice president along with Hubert Humphrey. And then I was one of the Senator Muskie's advance men that went all over the country setting up his appearances when he was going to be in that particular city.

TO: How would you differentiate between your time as a Republican legislator in the '50s and your time as a Democratic legislator in the '60s?

DC: I'm not sure I understand.

TO: Well, we just talked about some of the issues and the changes that you saw in the legislature and the government of Maine undergo in the 1950s. What were the changes you saw as a Democrat conversely in the '60s? What were the issues that presented themselves in the '60s?

DC: Well, I think in the '60s that, of course we were getting away from agriculture. I think it was during that period of time that we started losing our farms, we started losing the poultry business, the cow business, and there was a diminishing of farms. And I think there was a lot of time spent in the legislature as to creating some sort of programs that was going to change the state around from an agricultural state to a state that was going to be able to find employment for people who were starting to lose their jobs. And the shoe factories also were going at that time. So there was some sort of economic revolution taking place about that time.

TO: How successful do you think it was?

DC: Well, we're here. We're still, that's still going on, you know, trying to find a way to keep Maine youth here in the state of Maine and find employment for the many people that want to stay in the state. And I'm sure it's very difficult for somebody who is graduating from Bates or Bowdoin and so forth who wants to stay in the state of Maine. It's very difficult for them because the opportunities aren't there.

TO: That's definitely true. So you had the economy, the restructuring of the economy was one issue, and the highways I'm sure was still a major issue, education. Was the redistricting still going on at this point in the mid-'60s or was it pretty much completed?

JC: You mean with the school administrative districts? Oh I think that was, by the '60s that was pretty well in place.

TO: Anything else?

DC: No.

JC: Well, there were some social issues. The state as the protector of the mentally ill, AMHI and BMHI and those places needed help all the time. The Department of Human Services, when did that first really get going? It has bloomed, you know, enormously, and the court system has bloomed, and the prison system has bloomed. Those social issues, though, all came a little bit later I think.

DC: And the government of course has gotten larger and larger all the time. I recall being, actually, being a lawyer I have a recollection of what we had for Attorney Generals. When I first went into the legislature, the Attorney General's office I think the total number of lawyers involved was six. It was six lawyers who were either Deputy Attorney Generals or Assistant Attorney Generals. And last number I heard is they now have a hundred and seventy [170] assistant and Deputy Attorney Generals in the State of Maine. So, in forty to fifty years we've gone from six to a hundred and sixty; that gives you some idea of how the size of government has grown.

JC: And I think that Maine state government grew of course after the introduction of the great society with President Johnson and all the federal programs that were put in place. And naturally there had to be government entities in the state to put those into action.

TO: Your involvement with the League of Woman Voters, was that the '50s or the '60s?

JC: No, I was born into it. Yeah. No, I became active I think about 1955, but my mother had worked in Washington during WWI when the whole women's vote came into being, was one of the early members of the League of Woman Voters. So yeah, I was kind of brought up. But I became involved in pollution abatement and that was my first task in the League of Woman Voters. They did a very good job . . .

TO: When was this?

JC: This was in the mid-'50s into the '60s at a time when the mills were dumping, you know, straight into the water bodies, generally rivers. And of course Muskie was very active in the "payroll to pickerel" kind of thing, that was the slogan in his era. And the paper mills needed to be enlightened and persuaded that by cleaning up the rivers it would have an economic benefit for the rest of the area, and that it would not be terribly costly for them; they could recover some of their chemicals that they were dumping. So it was changing a whole generation's attitude.

I recall going in to the office of the mill manager here in Westbrook, at S.D. Warren. And the mill manager and his top management were there, you know, wondering why a couple of women from the League of Woman Voters, had the audacity to question them about their business practices. Well, headway was made, Muskie was a champion of that, cleaning up everything. And now we have a generation of managers and operators who care about the environment in a way that would have been anathema to those earlier people. It's not all perfect now, but they do care. And they see the benefits that have derived from those policies.

Here in Westbrook, by the time the water got down river seven miles into Falmouth, the fumes were such that it destroyed the paint on the houses, let alone, you can imagine how people felt breathing that stuff. You know, it had decomposed, there was no oxygen left in it, it was awful. But those kinds of things could be cleaned up fairly quickly and they were, and that was how I got involved in political life, public life.

TO: Now Muskie has a reputation as being a very, a good conservationist and very in the forefront of the environmental action in the state of Maine; how would you judge that, how would you assess that, Muskie's role in the conservation movement in the '50s?

JC: There were a few people earlier than he, but they were not able to communicate with the public. They had the, they were on the right track but they had personality quirks so that they just weren't successful. He was able to present an argument, both he and Frank Coffin could lay out an argument that was so logical that you just had to come to the same conclusion that they did. And he used that ability. I think he was a debater wasn't he, at Bates? He used that ability to communicate extremely well. And he had somewhat of a temper at times, and I think sometimes he could turn it on at will, and that was successful as a ploy. I mean, it was just a combination of logic, intellect and personality.

TO: Did you have any personal interaction with him over the issues of cleaning up the environment?

JC: No, our interaction was later.

TO: Later. Um, okay, jumping ahead a decade, let's talk a little bit about the, your movement from speaker of the house into being an advance man for the '68 campaign. How did that come about?

DC: Well, I believe that I was asked by George Mitchell. If I remember correctly, George called and said that the Senator wanted to know if I would have the time and the desire to be involved in his campaign in running for vice president. And my job would be doing advance work in all the country. Well, I considered it probably the greatest opportunity in the world to have some knowledge of what goes on in national politics, plus I had so much respect for the Senator that I was happy to take that time and do it. And I think I spent a few months, and I traveled most, most of my time was in the mid-west. I think I was in Illinois and Indiana, Michigan, Minnesota and . . .

JC: Did you go to Texas?

DC: No, I never went to Texas. No, most of them, oh, I think I was in . . . I spent a lot of time in Detroit, in all the outlying towns around there. Wherever Muskie spoke in that area, I was doing advance work for him.

TO: What was George Mitchell doing at the time?

DC: I think George was in Washington, and George was at the head of the advance people. In other words, we received our instructions more or less from George Mitchell.

TO: How would you categorize that campaign? What were its successes, what were its failures?

DC: Well, I thought that Wherever we went and Muskie had an opportunity to speak I noticed, was able to observe, that he was the type of a person that the public would listen to and he was able to sway people into his way of thinking. And I appeared, oh, maybe on a half a dozen occasions on college campuses and it was absolutely amazing the way he could turn around the college age. And sometimes he started off with a lot of booing and so forth, mostly because of the war. And I was with him one time when Muskie invited somebody up on the stage, one of the students, and talked about that, you know; I'll give you the opportunity to say what you want to say with the understanding that the students will listen to me afterwards. And that happened and before it was over they were cheering Muskie.

TO: Can you tell me, that's a pretty famous incident, it was in Ohio I think?

DC: Well, that happened more than once. And as a matter of fact I think the senator used it, that procedure, used that technique to get the attention of the students and to give the students the opportunity to be heard, you know. Remember that Muskie's theory was that, you know, if there's something wrong with the system in this country, then this is the way that we fix it, we

listen to each other. And for me to understand what your concerns are, I'm willing to listen to you with the understanding that you'll also listen to me. And that's the only way that we fix and take care of our problems. And Muskie, that seemed to be his theme about every place that we went, particularly on campuses.

TO: Do you remember any more detail about the specific incident you were referring to? Where it was?

DC: It may have been, the one, I think it may have been . . . either in Indiana, some college in Indiana and then, or it may have been at Notre Dame. There were so many of them and it happened so many times that I don't have a specific recollection of that particular incident . . .

JC: Bless people who keep journals.

DC: Yeah.

TO: Did you, were the interactions, those conversations between Muskie and the students, generally amicable or were they, did they degenerate into shouting matches?

DC: Well, they didn't start off amicable. They always, they started off in shouting matches because of, as soon as the senator came, there was always a lot of hecklers. And each and every place that we went, the senator had to take time to get people to listen to him and, but when, they ended up generally speaking, Muskie coming out looking good.

TO: Why do you think Muskie and Humphrey lost that election?

DC: I'm not sure that Muskie lost the election. I think if Muskie, I think if the ticket had been turned around and Muskie was the candidate for president and Humphrey was the candidate for the vice president, that the Democrats would have won that year.

JC: Too much baggage for Humphrey from Johnson.

TO: Stepping back into Maine for a second, what, during the '60s, what were the struggles going on within the Democratic Party? Was there a lot of unrest in the party itself?

DC: No, in the '60s there was very little unrest in the party because the party was just getting in a situation of power and we worked as a team in the '60s. And Muskie of course and Frank Coffin, you know, were very, very instrumental in everything that took place in the party. And Donovan and Don Nicoll, you know, all very much involved in the party at that time. And I don't think, I can't recall at that time of a division in the party. There was nobody . . . I think we all had a goal and I don't think that we strayed from our goal and that was to get Democrats elected.

TO: So after the '68 election, did you return to the legislature?

DC: No, I never went back to the legislature after I was speaker, no.

TO: So after that campaign, what, you just, you practiced law . . . ?

DC: I practiced law and became, in the early '70s I became judge of probate and I've been judge of probate since then.

TO: And were you, at that time period, Jean, what were you, were you politically active?

JC: Oh, some, you know, in Portland, Democratic city committee and, oh we had, oh, we started the issues conferences in the '60s. Can't think of his name, tall blonde professor from, David something. He started issues conferences and they were held throughout the states so the Democrats could define issues and see what kinds of actions we could take to have the desired outcome. And I did quite a bit in that area, generally on pollution abatement. I don't remember any other particular kinds of things until I went on the Portland planning board.

End of Side One

Side Two

JC: . . . tall blonde. But then we began the year of big government and you know, government could make everything right. And then the Vietnam War got all tangled up in it and then we got into the Nixon years. Those are the issues that nationally, and it's hard to say that the issues in Maine differed significantly, it was more a matter of degree than anything else.

TO: The 1970s there was, I believe I'm correct in saying that in 1972 there was kind of like a Republican revival in the state of Maine. I think it was Bill Cohen who kind of started that off. How did, in the early '70s, it's the same question I asked you about the '50s and '60s, what was going on in politics, especially in the Portland area?

DC: Well, it's early 1970's of course so I've been elected judge of probate and naturally as judge of probate you're prohibited to, as any judge, you're prohibited to participate in politics. And I'd kind of gotten away from it and out of it at that time, and I don't even recall who our Democratic . . . Who was active at that time, running for governor and so forth? That was, oh that was around, let's see, Ken Curtis . . .

JC: I have to count backwards. Ken was in from '68 to . . .

DC: Seventy-two . . .

JC: To '76.

DC: Or '76, right.

JC: Then Longley, then Joe and then McKernan.

TO: All right, yeah, so if you weren't really involved I guess we can step back and I'll just ask you a couple more questions about being an advance man. What was Muskie's relationship like

with his advance men? I've heard some colorful comments that he has made about his advance teams and . . . What was he like as a boss?

DC: Well, generally speaking Muskie would show up in, advance people would go to the city or town, wherever we were going, you know, a day or two before. Sometimes three or four days before. And then Muskie would come and our contact would be, with Muskie, would be when he got there. And then after the day was over we'd always end up in the hotel suite where Muskie was and then we'd have a good time. We'd talk about how the day went, what it looked like, what we thought Humphrey was doing, tell stories, have a few drinks, eat.

JC: In one town there was a matter of some police dogs or something, wasn't there, that you . . . ?

DC: Yeah, there was, I just remembered there was something to do with police, oh, I guess that . . . I think that I told them that we had to get the police dogs out of there. They had some . . . This is what it was, on one of the campuses the police showed up with police dogs and I do remember that. And Jesus, I couldn't believe that they were there with police, I can't imagine a better way to start some sort of a riot is to have police dogs. And then I suggested that there was no need of police dogs and that we'd be able to handle the situation without the dogs. I do remember that, now that you've brought it up.

TO: That's interesting, curious time period. What would you do, specifically, when you got into a town?

DC: Well, what you normally do is you would meet with the local politicians and you'd discuss with them what we, what the senator would be talking about, how we're going to generate a crowd, how we're going to get people to come and listen to the senator. We would, there would always be some press with us at that time. It was more or less done to, when the senator got there, there'd be a welcoming committee so he doesn't blow into town, you know, and nobody's there to greet him. And so that primarily was our goal, was to let them know what the senator was about, who he was, what his philosophies were, what he's probably going to talk about, and security. We'd play a role in the security with the Secret Service people, and make sure there was going to be a good crowd.

TO: Just a couple more questions. What do you think Ed Muskie's weaknesses as a politician were?

DC: Hmmm, gee, well, his weaknesses, you know a lot of people talked about his temper and as Jean said earlier, you know, Muskie had a temper but lots of times he used it, and used it to his own advantage. I mean, he could use his temper but he could immediately not use his temper. I don't think that Muskie had a lot of disadvantages, is that the question you asked, what were his weaknesses? You know, the guy was elected to the United States Senate a couple of times, Governor a couple of times, and almost became Vice President. And probably he would have become President if it hadn't been for the New Hampshire incident, at least that's, I feel that way, that was the beginning of his downfall. I wasn't there at that, on that occasion . . .

TO: Why do you say that was the beginning of his downfall?

DC: Well, I think that, you know that's when he cried. And that's when the newspapers got on him and started talking about, you know, how can a person that, how can a person with those kinds of emotions be President of the United States. And, if that had happened in the last ten years or so, I don't think it would have had any effect at all. I think probably it would have gained him votes. But for some reason, that incident in New Hampshire started Muskie's going down and I think that people, and particularly the Republicans used that as a sign of weakness. And since that time I'd say that society has different thoughts about that type of weakness. And I think that, I don't think that would have fazed the general public in the least now, that incident of crying. It was just the wrong time in our history for it to happen.

JC: It was a chink in the armor and other candidates just fastened on it and eroded the foundation.

TO: Lastly, what do you think Muskie's biggest contribution or contributions were to the state of Maine?

DC: Well, you go ahead on that one, Jean.

JC: Well, he was an alternative initially. The state had been The power in the state was generated by the big paper companies and the electric companies and a few other concerns. And it was Muskie who said that more people ought to have a chance to make a living, and jobs ought to be better, and we ought to have more education and so on. And I think he was a spirit of hope that things could be better, and we didn't have to send all our kids to Connecticut or wherever to get jobs. The issue continues, of course, but he was a beacon.

DC: I think another thing he was also part of the minority, you know, he was an immigrant, family of immigrants, Polish, . . .

JC: Catholic.

DC: . . . Catholic, and I think that gave a lot of hope to other minorities in Maine such as the French people and the Catholics and so forth. That a, here was a person that was able to become governor of the state of Maine, and I think it gave them a lot of inspiration.

JC: And it was all WASP dominated, it really was, all men, all white, all Anglo-Saxon. It's a more interesting fabric now.

TO: All right, thank you very much.
(Interview stops, then reconvenes.)

JC: . . . almost everybody else is dead.

TO: Now, what is the Visiting Committee?

JC: In 1985 Joe Brennan appointed the Visiting Committee to the University of Maine. Since the whole university system was set up, there's always been this infighting among the various institutions. You know that if you take a course at Farmington, it may not be accepted at Portland, etc., you know, the difficulty in transferring credits. The levels are significantly different. Anyway, the system had been in place for, oh, I think it started in, it had been in place for ten, twelve years, something like that, and it needed a look at. So Brennan appointed this committee made up of these various and sundry people most of whom were in education. Strider was the president of Colby, and one woman was the dean of Brandeis, one man was the head of the independent college's nationwide organization. There were a lot of people in there who were professional educators.

TO: How did you get involved in this?

JC: Well, because Joe Brennan thought I could help. Wilma Bradford was from Bangor and she had been on Westbrook College's board forever, and Ed Andrews was president of the Maine Medical Center. Most of the others were all in education.

Anyway, we were assigned the task of looking at the whole university system and Muskie was very much involved. You know, this was '86 and it happened to be at a time I guess when he could give us some time, and I think he attended almost every session that we had. We visited every campus. We discussed the strengths and weaknesses of each of the campuses and of the system in general and where we might improve things. And we came up with a whole list of recommendations. And it was Muskie's genius that, the system having been neglected a little bit by the legislature, funding had not been forthcoming, and so there was enough enthusiasm so we knew we were going to get something through the legislature. And he came up with the phrase about a down payment on the state's future commitment to funding the program at the level that he believed it should be. He came up with the phrase that it was a "down payment". And that was picked up by the press, and we were successful in getting that done.

TO: Getting . . . ?

JC: Getting the funding through and the impetus was there for a while; it needs to be done again, I guess. But he had this ability to come up with something that the public could hang onto and say, it is a down payment, but that carries with it the idea that there's going to be an additional payment forever. And it just caught the attention and fancy of everybody who cared about education. So it was very successful, and he was able to do it. He was a very, very important member of the committee.

TO: So this was over a period of about a year maybe? So you got pretty regular interaction with him? How did you find him as a person?

JC: Oh, fine, fine. I knew him enough by then. You know, in the early years if I wasn't standing beside Dana he wouldn't have a clue as to who I was. He was not the best man at remembering people. He contrasted with John Reed who succeeded him, you know, right after Clauson, who had such a memory. I don't care where you were, John could say "Hi" and call you by name, and he knew just who you were. Muskie couldn't do that, that was a weakness he

did have, it was a weakness. But, you know, he was not, he didn't see himself as a lesser god, he was pretty regular, he wanted his due deference, to which he was entitled, but not, you know, he wasn't fussy about it. He was pretty good. Regular guy.

TO: Now this is great because this is, I mean that's fairly recent interaction with Ed as far as what I've come across. I'm usually, I've never really come across anyone who's had any interaction post 1979. So tell me a little more about what, what were the definite changes that are now in the University of Maine system?

JC: Oh, I can't do that.

TO: You can't do that, because of the Visiting Committee.

JC: I can't do that. I think perhaps we focused more attention on how good the VTIs were getting to be, the technical colleges, and assisted them in acquiring more stature. At that time their faculty was not accredited in the same way that the private colleges in Maine had their faculties accredited, nor the university system. VTIs had some really well qualified educators, but some were just practical guys who knew how to do something and could teach it, but they didn't have the degrees necessarily. Anyway, they were turning out some very fine products and we wanted to give them an opportunity to upgrade themselves. They never became part of the system, which may have been just as well because they didn't lose a lot in, they could effect changes much more quickly than the university could. There's so much politics in a university system, any college anywhere, it's very, very political. So you had to deal with those things.

Hopefully, I think they ensured the status of the University of Maine at Orono, called it the flagship university. It is the preeminent campus, no question about it; yet Portland with its older student body, you know, the average age is something like twenty-eight now, has become the comprehensive university campus. Farmington is education, and a lot of the others have more specialized areas. In some instances it helped to define and justify the continuation of those campuses in that manner. But it just got some more money to take care of a lot of things that needed to be done, whether it's bricks and mortar or whether it's faculty salaries or labs. They were, I think perhaps Harold Alfond was encouraged by this to do some of the things he has done at Orono, mostly in the sporting area, but that meant that dollars that might have gone for that could go for something in the academic line, so.

You need a show place, and Muskie was able to advance, he had an agenda and he was able to advance it, he really thought about it. And he could argue his points against the traditional academics, the liberal arts people who really didn't want to see higher education turning out technicians, electronics people, people who were computer literate and so on. That was in its infancy, of course, but they didn't see that as the true job of higher education. Now we know that it's going to be a big part of the world and its occupations. That was an interesting time. But he was really very much interested in it and gave a lot of himself to it.

TO: Excellent, okay, thank you.

End of Interview

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