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## Clark, F. Davis oral history interview

Andrea L'Hommedieu

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## **Interview with F. Davis Clark by Andrea L'Hommedieu**

*Summary Sheet and Transcript*

### **Interviewee**

Clark, F. Davis

### **Interviewer**

L'Hommedieu, Andrea

### **Date**

May 10, 1999

### **Place**

Sebec, Maine

### **ID Number**

MOH 088

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### **Biographical Note**

Freeman Davis Clark was born in the late 1910s in Milo, Maine to Bess [Davis] and Arthur Clark. He was involved in Democratic politics from his earliest years. He grew up in the Milo area, and was educated in the Milo schools. He went to Bowdoin College, and entered Boston University School of Law in 1941. He saw active duty in the Army and was stationed at Okinawa in the 32<sup>nd</sup> Theater Artillery during World War II. In 1946, he became active in the Maine Democratic Party and ran unsuccessfully for Governor. He returned to Milo and practiced law. He was then a probate judge, and served as a district court judge for twenty-two years.

### **Scope and Content Note**

Interview includes discussions of: Clark family politics; the Democratic Party in the 1920s, including key players; Democrats at Bowdoin College; campaigning for Roosevelt during World War II; Maine Democrats in 1946; running for Governor; Brann election of 1932; comparison of Brann and Muskie elections; Frank Coffin; Ed Muskie and the environment; Ku Klux Klan in Milo in the 1920s and their defeat; politics of Milo; Jean Charles Boucher; Eddie Beauchamp; Louis Jalbert; Harold Dubord deserving a judgeship; Albert Beliveau; Lew Barrows; Ralph Owen Brewster; Muskie's contribution to Maine; Jimmy Carter; Clark's experience on the court;

and changes in the Maine court system.

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**Andrea L'Hommedieu:** This is an interview conducted by Andrea L'Hommedieu on May

10th, 1999 in Sebec, Maine with the Honorable F. Davis Clark. Mr. Clark, would you start by spelling your name for me and sp-, and . . .?

**F. Davis Clark:** My full name is Freeman Davis Clark, it's F-R-E-E-M-A-N, Davis, D-A-V-I-S, Clark, C-L-A-R-K. I've gone by the name of F. Davis Clark since the days of F. Harold Dubord when I thought it was really sophisticated. And hence, in a way, my name portrays politics.

**AL:** When and where were you born?

**FDC:** I was born in Milo, Maine in the house of my grandmother. My mother was, uh, Bess Mildred Davis Clark and my father's name was Arthur A. Clark. He ran a furniture business in Milo, Maine, and my mother later became postmaster under Franklin D. Roosevelt and remained postmaster until the day she died. And she essentially succeeded the previous Democrat postmaster, that would be my grandfather, Freeman Davis, for whom I'm named.

I was born in a political family. My mother was a Democrat. Her parents were Democrats. Her sister was [an] outstanding Democrat. She was a Rose E. Brown of Milo and she had much to do with the election of Louis J. Brann, governor of Maine, and she was a delegate to the National Conventions in '24 and '28, '32.

And I had two, two uncles, one was a doctor and one was a lawyer. Leon G.C. Brown, husband of Rose E. Brown, was a Democrat, and I mean Democrat. He was a candidate for congress from the old 4th Congressional District in Bangor in nineteen hundred and, I don't know, I think it was 1918. But anyway, he was unsuccessful, although he could generate a crowd by taking a soap box and standing on a corner in Bangor and inside of ten minutes he'd have three or four hundred people gathered around. Excellent speaker, one of the best the party had ever had. And so, as I say, I was introduced to Democracy at a very early age. I remember being thrown in a wood box or something on a blanket and setting by a corner stove while the Democrats had their caucus in 1920. And I can recall who was there, I can recall the business that transpired, had a little bit of a fight, typical Democrats, disorganized but organized. And . . .

**AL:** Who were some of the people that were active then?

**FDC:** Well, there was a man by the name of Daggett and his following. We met in their store as a matter of fact. I remember there was a William Carter who was very notorious character, a loud mouth. He used to stand in the streets in Milo when the Republicans were marched to the polls by the Republican kingpin who run the mill. And he [the republican kingpin] got all the people together on election day and he'd march them two by two up the main street to the town hall where they'd be voting under his auspices. And he [William Carter] would stand there in the middle between the two lines and as they came along he'd call them by name and then he'd say, are you a man or a mouse, are you a man or a mouse? And when the head of the mill came by, it was all over. He said, "And here comes the big fat rat". And of course none of this was on paper, none of it was printed, but I remember it well, big kick out of it.

And, about the first campaign which I probably actually took place in was 1932 when Governor

Brann was elected and Congressman Utterback from the 3rd Congressional District defeated R. Owen Brewster, and it was a great day for me. I didn't like R. Owen Brewster and I liked John D. Utterback pretty well. And it was another great day for me because it was the first day I ever had an automobile at my own disposal. My dad let me loose with the car, at eight o'clock in the morning, said haul every damn Democrat you can find in the town of Milo in here. So I hauled votes all day and I really enjoyed it. I remember going back into the woods with Noah and I thought he was crazy, I said, gee there's nothing back in here. Oh yeah, yeah old so-and-so's in there, you'll have to get him, we'll have to drive down to the field and get him. Well, we had to drive down to the field, get this old fellow-- he couldn't walk-- get him transferred from the hay, from the mowing machine to the automobile with great difficulty, but we got him in. And, and then the fellow that was with me says you think you can find your way out? And I said, oh hell, yeah, I can find my way out of anywhere. Well I found my way out and he stayed and cut hay for the fellow all the time the fellow was down voting, and that's the way we got them, we got them right out of the fields and we did the best we could.

But previous to that election it was, an interesting fact that always brings back memories to me, is Milo had the state treasurer. His name was William S. Owen, Republican, and his brother was a newspaper reporter for the *Portland Sunday Telegram* and he was political correspondent. And he called my aunt on the telephone, Saturday before the election, and said to her, Rose he said, we've been good friends and I want you to know that I think from my observations in the state there's going to be an upset tomorrow and Louis J. Brann will be elected governor against, I think his name was Burleigh<sup>1</sup>. But anyway, and he said the only thing between you getting a victory tomorrow is that you get your normal Democrat vote out, because, he says, the Republicans are going to kill this man. And lo and behold they did. But she jumped on the telephone, she called Fred Lancaster, she called Harold Dubord, she called Joe Sylvester, she called Piper Kingsbury in Bangor and she called all these people. And all the town chairmen in the state that she had telephone numbers for, all the nat-, state committee people, the county chairmen and Democrats got out a very creditable vote and Brann won by about three thousand votes.

And it was very interesting to me to see how they operated and I operated, and we had a very good time. And that's how the story of Brann's election, which came about by this telephone call from the *Portland Press Sunday Telegram* writer, who was a Republican, telling my aunt because they lived next door in Milo, get your vote out. And she, she was a political activist, she got the vote out, I'm telling you. And that was quite an escapade. But it was quite a shock to the state and the nation and I think in a way added to the base from which Franklin D. Roosevelt was elected, but not by the citizens of Maine. And that was all, that's all political background that I had in my....

But I remember wanting to be a lawyer or a doctor. I had a doctor, uncle who was a doctor, I had an uncle who was a lawyer and the uncle who was a doctor finally said to me, he said, Davis, he said, you better be a lawyer because they don't make any left handed tools for doctors and

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<sup>1</sup> Burleigh Martin was the republican candidate for governor of Maine in 1932. He was defeated by Louis J. Brann, a Democrat. The Socialist Party was represented in the election by Frank H. Maxfield.

you're left handed. And as a consequence by the failure to make left handed tools for operating physicians back in the '20s I became a lawyer, and, uh, instead of a doctor. Although it's been said that I doctored more than I lawyered.

**AL:** Was your practice right here in Milo?

**FDC:** I practiced in Milo, I had an office back in my father's store. I went to law school, well, let me go into that. I went to Hebron Academy and then I went to Bowdoin College, then I went to Boston University Law School in 1941, the war was starting. And I came home and spent the summer at Schoodic Lake where I did nothing but read law and got conditioned for the law exam, which I took and which Jimmy Bishop took at the same time. Jimmy and I were good friends all of our lives, and his father was a postmaster<sup>2</sup>. And as Democrats we stuck pretty much together at Bowdoin College and, we had the Bowdoin Democr-, Young Democrats Club, we formed that in Bowdoin.

And I can remember at Bowdoin I had a lot of breaks because president Kenneth Charles Morton Sills was a Democrat. And he used to see me on the campus, he'd call me over and talk politics. You know, wonderful, wonderful background. And then of course another professor of great consequence to me was a Prof. Abrahamson<sup>3</sup> who was on Roosevelt's brain trust in the beginning, then came back to Bowdoin as a professor. And he gave me many inspirational ideas on what the issues were, why they were, and had me pretty well in the background all the time and I enjoyed it to no end, I enjoyed it. And, so I've been politically active since 1920 which is now seventy, almost seventy I guess, will be next year. But, It'll be eighty next year. But I ran the gauntlet of the whole works.

In the Army . . . . I passed the Bar examination, went home for about three or four weeks. The Army drafted me and then I went into the military in which I had the fortunancy of being a public information officer on the island of Saipan in Okinawa for the 32nd Theater Artillery. And an interesting thing is that the colonel, my colonel called me in and he said, now you know this is an election year, and I said yeah, I'm well aware of that. Now, he said, I'm going to threaten you within an inch of your life, he said, don't you dare be partial. Oh, no, no, that was the last thing in my mind, be partial, I'll be fair. So I gave a half an hour address. And I gave twenty-three minutes of it to Thomas E. Dewey. And I took seven minutes for Franklin D. Roosevelt in which I said, you boys all know Franklin is a great president, Franklin D. Roosevelt, and whether it would be better to shift horses in the middle of the stream or not, I'll leave it up to you, but I think we've been doing pretty damn good out here. And that's all I said for Roosevelt.

And Colonel Waterman, Bangor, West Point graduate, said to me, damn you, I can't pin anything on you but, he says, you were partial as hell. I said, well, I intended to drive a point home. He says, you did, he says look at those men over there, every damn one of them voting

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<sup>2</sup> Orrin Bishop was Jimmy Bishop's father, and postmaster in Presque Isle, Maine.

<sup>3</sup> Albert AJim@ Abrahamson, 1905-1988. Bowdoin alum and professor of economics, 1928-1976.

for Roosevelt. Well, that's good. And I was about to get blasted to a fare thee well, you know, and up comes the general. The general says, colonel, he says, you got anything for this man to do for about the next ten days? The colonel says no. I want him to go out and speak to all the troops in the islands and give the same speech he gave today. And I told him, I says, it's impossible for me to give the same speech twice because I never keep notes. Well, he says, you know what to say and I said, yes. Well, he says, say it. So I spent the next three or four days speaking to all the island troops and I think we had a good vote out of Saipan, I'm not sure, I think it was Saipan. We had a good vote out of Saipan. So I was politically active even in the Army.

Well, then I came home and the Democrats were in great disarray. Matter of fact, they'd only pulled twenty-seven thousand votes in the last election. And somewhere along the line somebody asked me if I'd keynote the convention. Oh hell, yeah, I'll keynote anything. So I got together what I thought was a pretty good speech and gave it at the convention. It was the only bright spot of the convention. The convention was extremely dull, I'll have to admit it, and they were beaten right down, they had two state senators and seventeen state representatives, and if they'd elected everybody there was to elect, they couldn't have had a majority of the legislature. And on a certain day I was to give this speech. Harold Dubord invited me to go up there, and I probably figured I might be a little nervous, which I was, but. And at the, at this dinner, we had a little dinner at the hotel just before the election, before the keynote address, and it consisted of Hal Dubord, Ed Muskie and myself.

That was my first encounter with Ed Muskie and Ed Muskie's first encounter with me. And I always remembered how nice he looked in his naval uniform, slender. And even then, although he was not the politician I was at that time, he showed signs of being a good politician. And he showed signs of being aware of the facts of the situation. We discussed politics for about two hours and I think finally Ed agreed to run for the legislature down in Waterville and so forth and so on. Then I went on to make a speech which is, I think it's heralded among speeches for Democrats because people well received it. I had about five or six spontaneous demonstrations, and following the speech the public, the, all the delegation wanted me to run for governor.

I had no idea about running for governor, didn't want to run for governor, probably if nobody had mentioned it I never would have run for governor. But I did and we got gains in the legislature and we got gains in the senate and we got generally a few more up in the legislature and things like that which heralded the beginning and the end of the Republican Party. It really did because we never slipped down after that. And it was then, I don't remember exactly but a few years later, Ed Muskie ran for governor and I met him on the campaign trail and asked him how he was doing. He says, I think I'm going to win. He said, did you think you were going to win? I says, no, I never thought I was going to win because I wasn't going to. But, anyway. . . He says, I think his words were something like, I'm afraid I'm going to win. And he did. And it was really gratifying to me to have been with him the day he made his decision to make politics his lifestyle.

And I was, I was even then impressed with the man, something about the charisma he had that made you feel confident that all was well with the world. And he made a excellent governor, he would, made a far more excellent governor than I would have because I'd have told the

Republicans where they could go, and probably had a very antagonistic administration. Ed however had the ability to compromise. If he couldn't have a loaf of bread, he'd take two slices.

And he'd give, give, give to them until something very crucial came and he really wanted that crucial point. And then he'd sort of put his feet down, say look, I gave you this, I gave you that, I gave the other to the governor's council, now give me something back. And they did.

And it was interesting for me to note, one of your questions was how did the Republicans react up here in the state of Maine. Well, Republicans reacted by following Ed Muskie. Milo, Brownville, Brownville Junction, Guilford, Sangerville, Monson, Greenville, not Monson but Greenville, all had cast good Democrat votes. And Dover-Foxcroft, they never recovered, they don't know the Civil War's over, so they never did do very much, although Ed carried the town I believe. But very, very close. And so he was well, well received by the Republicans, both he and strangely enough Curtis was also quite well received, at a later date that is. But I worked with him as a Democrat National Chairman, National Committeeman and later withdrew, later I did, I, run for reelection and he was elected and so I remember him.

**AL:** Can you, is there any way you could give me a comparison between the Louis Brann election in '32 and Ed Muskie winning in '54? Did they do something similar that strengthened the Democrats to win or, any thoughts on that?

**FDC:** Well, they did some things, yeah, similarly. And I think if anything, if anything, the Democrats were a little bit better organized in the Muskie campaign than they were in the Brann campaign. Because under Brann they'd been, before Brann had been trampled to death, I mean they were down, they were out. If it hadn't been for, well I always said if it hadn't been for me I don't think the Democratic Party would have ever recovered. And I ran simply because I felt that the Democrats had to have somebody that was outspoken, and at that time I was outspoken. And we picked up an awful lot of votes from an awful lot of places that had been going Republican steadily, and they drifted back a little. And they, after I was *sic* [ran for] governor, they held on to the semblance of a Democratic organization. But I would say that they were a little better organized at the time of Muskie about, but that was the, oh, ability, I was, Ed had a little bit more of a grasp on to it than Brann did, and he grasped on to it and he grasped it well. You know, he knew his issues, he knew what was going on, and the people liked him, he was predominantly, in the legislature he made a good name for himself. So he had a good name when he was nominated and I know I was pleased that he was nominated and I worked for him in the campaign. And that was the last campaign I worked in for quite a while because of the fact that I had a little monetary problem, I spent all my money when I ran for governor and I had nothing else left, and I'll be damned if I was going to go into debt, that's a mistake they make, or how many people make a mistake. And I think it's absolutely ridiculous today that they spend more money on the election of the state senator in Piscataquis county than they do in the whole campaign 19-, when Ed, when I was running, when Ed was running.

**AL:** Do you think television had an impact on Ed Muskie's campaign in '54?

**FDC:** Oh, without doubt, it had a small one. But it was, television was nowhere near the powerful tool then as it is now. But Ed Muskie learned how to use it, and he used it well. And he knew, well there's a song, something, knew right from wrong, and he was able to always,



most always turn the tide. Had a very pleasant voice, a good sense of humor, could take a joke on him as well as he could the next fellow, and he was really good. If Frank Coffin had had the charisma of Ed Muskie, he'd have been governor.

**AL:** What are your recollections of Frank Coffin, did you work with him...?

**FDC:** Oh, Frank Morey Coffin, I knew his mother. She was on the Democratic State Committee with me out of Auburn or Lewiston, Lewiston with Fred Lancaster, and I knew her. I always loved that woman. And consequently I was well, thought as if I knew Frank Coffin long before I knew him. But when he was Dem--, he was a master tactician, he could run a campaign pretty good and he ran Ed Muskie's campaign pretty well and the two of them did a whale of a job. And I liked Frank. He was a little peacock.

**AL:** Are there any others during that campaign that were close to Muskie that you have recollections of, working on the campaign?

**FDC:** No, I really don't, just Frank Coffin. I don't know who his advisors were, I was not one of them although I made suggestions, but I only made one suggestion that I ever saw take hold and grow, to Muskie, and that was when he was running for Senator. He came up this way to speak and he said to me, and I guess he probably said it to everybody, what's the issues? I said, I don't know, Ed, what the issues are but I'll tell you something, this damn country's going to spend itself into bankruptcy. There's waste, waste, waste everywhere. You know, something should be done to conserve the assets. And I think I was, that probably may have germinated the idea of Ed Muskie to be Mr. Clean, clean air and don't throw everything out the side of the road, and look after your stuff. And look how that's grown today, you can go around anywhere around the country, see a yard sale with the damndest mess of junk you ever saw. No longer do people just throw it into a dump. Some of them do, and there's a guy who's profession is to come along and pick it within five minutes, but they sell the damndest things for antiques today.

Ed, and then I recall spending the last day that I ever spent with Ed Muskie, well, he used to, I used to have a furniture store in Milo and I had all the pictures of candidates in the window and I always had Ed's picture and I always had, oh, Hathaway and those guys, and we had, oh probably twenty-five or thirty young girls and boys that, they were real Democrats. I think Ed and I agreed on one thing, you had to capture the youth before you did anything else, and boy he captured them and I captured them and I spoke in every damn high school I could find to speak in.

And we had, in Milo, we still have it to this day, a Democrat teaching history, which is a tremendous advantage. Had one lady by the name of Clark, she's no relation to me, Alta Clark. She was a splendid lady, she drove the fear of Democrats right in to their hearts. And then along came a Doble girl, married to somebody else, married to, and she used to stick to her democracy and her son is now a teacher of history in Milo High School, up there in Penquis Valley, and he keeps them pretty well in line.

I know I had an occasion to run just for the hell of it for judge of probate against a man who had been a Democrat, turned Republican, because his interests were \_\_\_\_\_ republicans. But

anyhow, I took twenty-five, I took five hundred cards down to Milo and said to the kid, I said, here, here's twenty five bucks, just get some kids to pass these out. And I beat the guy down in Milo and I think I got four or five hundred votes, write in. But it was a great, good experience.

**AL:** So you were a judge of probate?

**FDC:** I was judge of probate, yeah.

**AL:** For how many years?

**FDC:** About six years I think. Got it here somewhere. And then I was judge, I was judge at the district court for twenty-two years. Uh, active retired, I did twelve and then I did ten active retired, and . . .

**AL:** Milo as a whole, politically, is it more Republican, or . . .?

**FDC:** Swing town. No, it's more Democrat now.

**AL:** But when you were younger was it . . .?

**FDC:** When I was younger, in the twenties, 1920, it was a swing town, you might get one way and you might get another. And in 193-, '23 we had a parallel invasion of the Ku Klux Klan. Now the Ku Klux Klan, to be a member of the Ku Klux Klan you had to be a member of the Republican Party, and the Democrats deserted, some of them, and went with the Klan.

My uncle hated the Klan and he used to make jokes on the Klan. And they had, I thought, at one time I was scared they were going to lynch him because he had somebody on the inside who'd tell him just exactly what they were doing. And he'd go down and pick out the officers of the Klan and he'd say, I hear you people are planning on lighting the fiery cross on Derby Hill Saturday night. How'd you know that? Well, I have sources, I haven't been county attorney for nothing, you know. And, he was town clerk, and I can remember a fellow came in, said, Leon I want to transfer. Leon said, what the hell are you going to do, join the goddamn Klan? Yup. Won't have you. Why not? You're half Indian, you know? They don't want any red blooded Americans, they want straight white Protestant.

Well, fellow came back the next day, he says Leon, he said, you change that application over yet? Leon says no, no, and he says give it to me, tore it up. He said, what's the matter, didn't get into the Klan? No. Found out you're part Indian. Yup. Well, he says, now you're going to know them for what they are. He says, I was so scared, Leon, I thought they was going to lynch me. He said, I was scared, I got the hell out of there, fast as I could go.

Well anyway, then he'd, my uncle, the other uncle who was a doctor had a little pin from a school he'd graduated out of which consisted of a green snake coiled up with a big, with a little ruby eye in it and nobody knew what it was but it was a medical fraternity. So my uncle borrowed that pin from the doctor, put it on his coat and he went down town, and he said I hear that the Ku Klux Klan is going to burn the fiery cross on Sturtevant Hill on Thursday night.

How'd you know that? The green snakes told me. The green snakes told you? Well, Ku Klux Klan had a big meeting to find out who the hell the green snakes were, which were in effect a product of my uncle's imagination. And he literally ruined their effectiveness in Milo by having this spy in amongst them. And it was a trick I learned, because I always kept somebody in the county on the Republican county committee when I was running politics up here. I always knew what the hell they were going to do the night before they did it, (*unintelligible phrase*), and that fellow's still living today, he's ninety years old.

**AL:** Which fellow is that?

**FDC:** Huh?

**AL:** Which fellow?

**FDC:** Fellow that was a spy for me. And well, we had quite a time.

**AL:** Now in your family, were you an only child?

**FDC:** I was an only child, still am. A motherless child, now I've got the girl there, works for me, mothers me like a mother but . . .

**AL:** What did people do socially in this area of the state?

**FDC:** What did they do?

**AL:** What did they do for social relaxation? Was there a grange hall?

**FDC:** Political rallies and they had the American Legion which was an organiz-, a good organization, and the, the Oddfellows and the Masonic Lodge, and Knights of Columbus. See, I think the Ku Klux Klan influenced me to be more steadfast a Democrat than I was because I, a bunch of kids I liked, played with, were Catholics from down in Derby. They came in and built a railroad, the railroad had a big strike in '23 I think it was, a lot of them, all these French people came up, French Canadians came up from Old Town and down from Madawaska and down from both towns and they settled in Milo and Derby shops. And they were nice people. Well, the Klan was death on them. And I used to hate the Klan because they didn't like my friends. And, oh, but the Klan had an awful time, reception in Milo. Once the people found out about them in '24 and '25, found out what they really were, I mean they turned on them. Maybe not openly, but, well I'll give you an example.

This, in 1923 the, they were having a big parade and they had a doctor in Milo who had a big black stallion horse, he was a, suffered, died of tuberculosis he contracted during World War I. But anyway, he was parade marshal, he wasn't about to start the parade until my grandfather, who was a selectman, gave him the order. Because my grandfather had said to the Ku Klux Klan, you men march in this parade but you cannot march with your heads covered with pillow cases. We've got to have one man out there in that parade that everybody knows that can be identified so if we have any problems, you got it, we've got them. Otherwise, couldn't do

anything.

Well anyway, finally my grandfather gave the word. But anyway, this Klansman came along and he grabbed the horse's halter, bridle. A horse has a very tender mouth. When he grabbed the bridle the horse just reared up, pretty near broke, oh, the doctor's back. An awful shock. So the doctor said to him, don't you ever, damn you, don't you ever touch that horse's bridle again. You do, he says, I'll do something to you, and went that way. Guy reached up in defiance, grabbed the horse's bridle, the doctor had a riding crop about that long, he laced him, cut him right from here, way down here. Blood spurted all over the place, so they tell me.

I was up to my grandfather's, my uncle's, Dr. Snow. I was up there for, folks being afraid of the Ku Klux Klan. And I was setting there, and they brought this fellow up to Dr. Snow. All they had was a little black bag like you've got there, that's all a doctor had to work with anyway. So he went in the house and got his bag, came out on the porch. Didn't want, said to the fellow, I don't want you bleeding all over the damn house, so I'll take care of you out here. And he hollered to the hired girl to come out with some soap and water and wash the floor off. Now, he said, just what happened here? Well, one of the Klansmen said, "Well Dr. MacFayden did it." Dr. Snow says, "Dr. MacFayden did this?" He says, "Yeah." He snapped that medical bag shut just like that, says, "Get him the hell out of here. I never finished another man's operation in my life and I'm not starting now." So the, one doctor had gone to "Ebeemee" (?) Pond for a week, the other doctor was so drunk that he couldn't do anything, so they had to take this fellow from Milo over dirt roads, twelve miles to Dover-Foxcroft to Dr. Brown who sewed him up. And that was what happened on the day of the great big parade.

**AL:** Did those people stay, remaining . . . ?

**FDC:** Huh?

**AL:** Did those people continue to live in this area?

**FDC:** Oh yeah, the last ones are just dying off now.

**AL:** They are?

**FDC:** That was the only time I dared talk to them, now they're dead. And I remember my dad, very liberal man. This fellow came in and he introduced him as the head of the Ku Klux Klan in the state of Maine. And my father said, "Yes, to what do I owe this honor?" He says, "Well we understand you've got a Jew in your building here as a tenant." And my father didn't say anything. He says, "I said you had a Jew." "I don't know what the man's religion is, I can tell you he pays his rent on time, and as long as he does he stays here." "We'll give you thirty days to get him out." "Well," my father says, "now that's funny, because I'm just going to give you thirty seconds to get the hell out of here." So he hollered to the hired man in the store, "Open the screen door!" Fellow opened the screen door. My father says, "Your thirty seconds are up." The fellow stood there defiantly. My father, who was about my size, picked him up by the nape of the neck and the seat of the pants, kicked him right out into the street, and ended up in a dirt pile. Well, that's one thing that happened to him that day.

Not satisfied with that, he went down to a barber shop, a fellow named Harry Cowan's barber shop. And he said to Harry, "Shave." Harry says, "All right," lathers up his face and then stroked his razor back and forth. He says, "This is a Klan shop?" "Nope. And if I had the head honcho of the Ku Klux Klan in the chair, I'd cut his goddam throat from ear to ear, and he'd never know he bled to death." With that, the fellow jumped out of the chair, ran out into the street into the hands of a deputy sheriff. Harry had come in pursuit about two steps back with a razor right in his hand. Deputy sheriff, who had a big booming voice so everybody in town could hear him a mile off, "What the hell's going on here?" And before the fellow could say a word, Harry Cowan said, "He stole my barber cloth." "You got the man's barber cloth?" "Yeah." "Give it back to him." Fellow didn't know what the hell to do so he gave him back his cloth, and he's trembling, I mean he's trembling. Now Harry says, "You're interested in a Klan shop. Klan shop's down there on the island, third building down," and he said, "I'll tell you right now, you tell him you want a shave and tell him I am not making any goddam charge for lather." Sent him on down the street. So his reception was not good in Milo, and people just didn't like them after they got wise to them.

**AL:** I'm going to stop the tape just a moment and turn it over to the other side.

*End of Side One*

*Side Two*

**AL:** We are now on side B of the interview with F. Davis Clark on May 10th, 1999. We were just talking a little bit about the Ku Klux Klan in this area.

**FDC:** Yes, I think that it solidified, the Klan did solidify in my way of thinking everything that was evil, and that necessarily included the Republican party. I'm always reminded every once in a while as I go back over political history, or political sayings, Franklin Delano Roosevelt making a speech and being questioned by somebody in nineteen hundred and thirty-six, after his election by all but Maine and Vermont. And he made the remark, somebody said something about the Republican party and Franklin D. Roosevelt said in his most eloquent tones, the Republican party, no, I am not worried about the Republican party; Maine and Vermont are my only worries. And I'll always remember that statement. And in another speech Roosevelt gave which was a beautiful speech about his little dog Fala, he said, the press had castigated his wife, his daughter, his sons, but now they're beginning to pick on my little dog Fala and that I won't stand for. Those things, you remember these things, you know? Well, Maine has been, Maine has gone from a Republican state of two senators, one was the great senator from the city of Lewiston, what was that man's name, Jean, Jean Charles Boucher, and he was one of my mentors and he went around with me, and he worked like hell for me.

**AL:** Can you tell me a little bit about him?

**FDC:** Well he was president of the senate, the house majority, minority leader, he led one other guy. And somewhere it's said that they held their caucus in a phone booth. And he was a family man, a very devout Catholic and a very devout father and, and adopted me into his home as if I were a son. And he really liked me and campaigned with me, went up the valley with me and

made speeches in French. And well, no matter what I asked him to do he did it and no matter what he asked me to do I'd try to reciprocate. And he was just, he was a good solid Democratic leader of the city of Lewiston.

The other leader was another young man down there, I guess he must be an old man now, he's my age, Eddie Beauchamp was county attorney at the time and he ran for congress and we campaigned the whole second district. And then he brought, and then there was a character, I like to refer to him as a character because, he was a friend to me, he never did anything to hurt me, he did a lot of things to hurt a lot of people but he never did anything to hurt me, was . . .

**AL:** Was it Louis Jalbert?

**FDC:** Louis Jalbert, yeah. And I remember even, oh, twenty years ago when he was waning in his power, the court asked me to do some damn thing, I've forgotten, see if I could get his approval for a bill for the judiciary. And I went down early in the morning and I called Louis Jalbert and I said, "Louis I got to have a favor." And he says, "What is it?" I told him, he says, well get the hell out of here, I'll vote for it and I'll speak for it. And I says all right, and then I took off, the hell out of there. Well, the rest of the judiciary came down, hemmed, hawed, wondered, probably swore at me and everything else. And finally the chief justice called me and he said, "Look, where are you?" I said, "Back in Milo, Maine where I belong." Or, "Bangor, holding court where I belong." And he said, "Well what about Louis Jalbert, we're worried about him." I said, "don't worry," I says, "Why don't you guys get the hell out of there, that bill's going to pass anyway, Democratic legislature." Well they went in, Louis Jalbert, he got up and told them, there wasn't any question in his mind that that was a good bill, he was going to support it, the Democrats are going to support it.. So I always thought well of Louis Jalbert. And it always tickled me, he studied law off and on and he'd say to me, "Oh, if I could just get that license to steal." And I always thought then that's really funny but I'm not sure now how funny it was. No, Louis Jalbert was a good man.

And then we had Paul McDon-, no, Peter McDonald out of Rumford who was a very fine gentleman. And, well we had a good crowd in those days, I knew them all by name and I had them all categorized and I knew just who I could count on, who I couldn't.

And one time it came down to a vote on something that, Democratic State Committee wanted to vote and I didn't want them to do it and I went down in the morning and I collared, what someone would say, the votes from the rural area. So when they voted they lost. And I know I felt kind of bad for Frank Coffin and I resigned that day. I said I have always said that when I became an obstructionist was the day that I got through working for the Democratic Party. And I left the Democratic Party at that time with the threat that I'd be back, and I was, two years later when Governor Curtis was running. And so I just, until I knew how to play politics so I could beat Frank Coffin at his own game, he was chairman of the State Committee and I hadn't over the years thought anything about it. No, it hurt me to do what I had to do. I had to do it, conscience, my conscience just said it shouldn't be. And it wasn't.

**AL:** You spoke earlier about F. Harold Dubord, I . . .

**FDC:** F. Harold Dubord was one of the nicest men that ever came down the pike. He was from Waterville, he was an attorney and he was Democrat National Committee man. And I succeeded him on the Democratic National Committee, I believe. And he was always, he was one who put the Democratic Party ahead of everybody and everything, and he worked his heart out and the Democrats in a way didn't do right by him.

**AL:** In what way?

**FDC:** He wanted to be a federal judge and the powers that be got John Clifford as federal judge. Clifford was a good man. Harold Dubord deserved it because through thick or thin he carried the party's banner, through hell and high water. And so I felt that, I was on the Democratic National Committee and I felt that Truman kind of double crossed me on that, and I told the president that I thought he did. And the president said, "Well," he says, "I like you," he says, "you always tell me the way I, the way you see it." And I said, "That's right." So, as I say, that, to me, that was an injustice. In a way I paid for that, too, but that's all right. I can always remember one year they wanted me to come down to Lewiston, to John Clifford's for something.

And I said, you know, I've traveled the state at my own expense for a great many years and I'm here to tell you it's not a damn bit further from Lewiston to Milo, Maine than it is from Milo, Maine to Lewiston. And they all came up to see me. And then we had, oh, let's see, who else. Oh, I can remember Fred Lancaster, who was judge of probate down in Androscoggin County, he was the chairman of the Democratic State Committee, he was a great guy, gentleman, gentleman's gentleman. Joe Sylvester from Portland was Democrat state treasurer, and it was his happy report to take him out of the 1932 election without owing a damn cent. And Piper Kingsbury was Bangor man. These fellows all got their just desserts in that Sylvester became collector of the Port of Portland and Piper Kingsbury became a United States Marshall, and, well, which went on, let's see, there were some others.

**AL:** Did you ever know Harold Dubord's son, Dick? He was active as well.

**FDC:** Oh yeah, matter of fact his grandson, Dick's boy was up here the other day to see me, yeah. Richard, yeah. Yeah I knew him, yeah. I knew most of them down through and including the celebrated character of, who in the hell is it? Judge Beliveau's, Beliveau's son.

**AL:** Severin?

**FDC:** Severin, yeah. I knew his father real well.

**AL:** Yeah, Judge Albert Beliveau?

**FDC:** He, I think it was Beliveau that made a ruling that tickled the hell out of me. Of course I came right back to his term of court and got the job done, but I was taught as a child, as a lawyer, to take your weakest case and get it on the docket first, and if you can win your weakest case you have a pretty good shot at the rest of the game. So I organized my cases and went to them all and did that first one and won it and, came right after the one that was, gee, it was just like this, you know, snap. I put on the evidence, Judge Beliveau says, rule for the defendant. I says,

“What?” “Rule for the defendant.” I says, “On what grounds Judge Beliveau? He says, “Turn off the recorder, or turn off the, off the record. No goddamn lawyer comes in here and wins every case in my court, and this is the last case you had, I could get you, so I got you. Bring it back next month.”

**AL:** Sense of humor.

**FDC:** I can remember campaigning with Brann when we went to Rumford, to Judge Beliveau’s house. Jesus I was impressed.

**AL:** Tell me.

**FDC:** Beautiful house. I suppose it’d be, certainly be an antique now. Lots of furniture, it was just beautiful, Mrs. Beliveau was a lovely woman. How in the hell he dared to do it I don’t know. Just because Brann was governor he took the chance. But they tethered me right down, I couldn’t do anything after I became judge.

**AL:** Politically?

**FDC:** Politically I was nothing. I did in nineteen hundred and something or other make a speech to the Democrat’s State Committee for forty-eight, forty-eighth review of the 1942 uprising, and I remember, now I don’t know that I’ve got anything in here (*looking through material*), I got pictures of some girls, I got all the 1934 and ‘36 stuff here. I don’t know. Oh, this was my uncle who was the politician. Seems all I’ve got, I know where they are. That was when I left to become a district court judge, they gave me a party more or less. The only thing the Bar Association ever did for me. And, I’ve got some pictures of, you might, in fact it’ll be interesting to you probably.

**AL:** So you went from being judge of probate to being a district court judge?

**FDC:** Yeah, I . . .

**AL:** Judge of probate is the only type of judgeship that can be political, is that right?

**FDC:** That is correct. I know . . . they, uh . . .

**AL:** Well those pictures of the Ku Klux Klan are just amazing, to see how many of them, marching down Main Street.

**FDC:** Yeah, among them was Ralph Owen Brewster, and Honest Lew Barrows.

**AL:** Were they from the Bangor area, Ralph Owen Brewster?

**FDC:** Brewster was from Dexter.

**AL:** Dexter.



**FDC:** Barrows was from Newport. And I remember saying, "I got a picture of you, senator," and I says "what would happen if this got out in the public?" He smiled and he said, "It wouldn't make any difference to me. You see the guy right there?" I says, "Yeah." He says, "That's Lewis Barrows," so he says, "you haven't got much to choose from." He was a, I liked Brewster in a way. A hell of, hail fellow well met. And a pain in the ass as a politician. Really poor politician. Yeah, he was, I always felt bad that Hathaway . . . If somebody didn't come along and beat him within the Democratic party, that was one of my . . . I told him afterwards, I'm awfully sorry you got defeated Senator Brewster, I'd hoped it would be one of mine that would do it. And he laughed, he said, well you take the bitter with the sweet.

Well I think that Governor Brann opened up the governorship to the people. It used to be that you had to be one of a select or rich or well born to get inside that governor's office. Governor Brann opened it up to the farmers, to the laborers, to those people, and you'd see them there with their dirty old clothes on, all the clothes they had in the world, you'd see them in Brann's office. And, again, Muskie opened it up. And the governorship changed radically by those two men over a period of, from '34, '36 to, what was he governor, '46, '48 *sic* ['54, '56]? Ten *sic* [eighteen] year period. And the Republicans never, never, never did recover from Governor Brann.

And, well, they recovered from Governor Brann, and Democrats dropped to a low ebb because all the people who were Democrats were young people. When they went to war, many of them didn't vote. But when we got back, we made our feelings known to the world and, as I say, I, somebody was a sacrificial goat, and I guess I was. I've always enjoyed the reputation. Ed Muskie told an audience in Dover one night at a rally we had, he doubted he had been governor if it weren't for me because I stemmed the tide. I had a great day up here last time, I think I had him, length of time I talked to him was, I think probably maybe is the last time I ever saw him was Bang-, Piscataquis county fair when he was running for vice president. And I had the officer been working with me the last two or three days, I picked the officer to guard him up here that day. And he was nervous as a cat whole time Ed was here. I had a picture of he and I and Ed taken together, I gave it to him because I sort of felt more, it would mean more to him than it would to me.

**AL:** What do you think Senator Muskie's biggest contribution to the state of Maine was?

**FDC:** That's a fair question. I think that he got Maine to believing a little bit in itself, more than it had been. There hadn't been much feeling about Maine, kids would grow up and move away. And I think he, he sort of charted the beginning of kids trying to believe in themselves and of trying to stay here and do something. And I think he stemmed the tide of outflux of brains, and that meant more to Maine over a period of years than anything else could have. And he also of course fostered good legislation and led the spirit of people. We always talked, Ed and I always talked about if we had the money, we had the issues and we had the candidates, nothing could lick us. And that was Frank Coffin's theory too. We had that thing that, given those three things and then getting some money, we could lick the world. And I think Ed did do an awful good job. Ed also had a, an ability to do what was right for Ed Muskie. And I think that last term he could have won reelection if he'd wanted to run. But he thought he saw the end

of time, the end of the Democrats, and did everything the president asked him to do. I think, who was it, who wanted him to be secretary of state?

**AL:** Jimmy Carter.

**FDC:** Jimmy Carter, and there was one of the great unsung heroes of the century, too. He's done more for the United States since he stopped being president than any of the rest of them. You sneak around and find a hot spot in the world, you'll find Carter nosing in and getting things straightened out. Plus, the government wasn't ready for him. Too honest. This guy we've got now is an old reprobate. I like him, I told him, I kept donating to his campaigns and then finally they wrote me and asked me for a defense fund donation, and I says, "I guess it's up to him to defend himself, he got himself into the mess." Well, Albert Gore, I don't know. I like him. I knew his father, who was a senator, and I knew his mother as a member of the Daughters of the American Revolution. She was one of those, my wife was, and I went along for baggage. I went to Washington four or five times. He spoke at one of the meetings. But I knew his father as a, old senator Albert Gore of, where was he from, I can't remember where, Tennessee. Makes me mad when I have those lapses of memory. Oh well.

**AL:** What was your experience like on the court?

**FDC:** What was it like? Most enjoyable.

**AL:** In what ways?

**FDC:** Different days, different problems. Never knew what you were going to do when you got up in the morning. One day I went from Bangor to Newport and Millinocket, back to Dover and then back to Bangor, just to hold one or two cases in each place. Ralph Ross and I never closed the courts, never was a day without a judge available. Now there's three times as many judges and they're having to close court. I'm a little bit disgusted with the system now.

**AL:** Too easy on the judges now?

**FDC:** Judges are stifled now. We used to be able to do what, use a little imagination. I'll give you an example, I had a kid, I couldn't reach that kid if I flew high, I did everything, exhausted all possibility. Finally sent him out with disgust and as he left the door I said, "Young man let me tell you something. You ever come back in this court room again while I'm presiding judge, I'm going to kick your arse until your nose bleeds." Well of course a judge couldn't say that today. But two years later, I'm shoveling snow down in Searsport and this kid come by, he says "Judge Clark." I says, "Yes, how are you?" "Good. Remember me?" I said, "No." He says, "I'm the kid you told you'd kick my arse until my nose bled if I ever come back." He says, "You never saw me back did you?" I says, "No I didn't." He says, "Let me clean the driveway for you," and he shoveled all the snow out of the driveway. And I said, well God, I saved him in spite of hell. And then the next day, or the day after that I read in the paper he'd got in a car accident, got killed. But at least I knew I'd saved him.

And things young people get into trouble with always amused me, and I could find something

funny about every case I've tried with these kids. And the kids appreciate it, too, you know? I remember one kid threw a beer bottle out, Ballantine bottle out of the car, police picked him up for littering and I fined him twenty-five dollars. And then I says to the police officer, "You got that Ballantine bottle?" "Yeah, Ballantine?" I said, "Ballantine?" "Yeah, Ballantine bottle," he says, "Yeah." I said, "Give it to me." He gave it to me, I says "Son, now look son, you've got to pay a twenty-five dollar fine for throwing this bottle out of the car, but in a way the bottle's going to do you a favor. Here's your bottle, get five cents on it and then you only twent- four ninety-five more." And he liked it.

Then I had an old Irish boy from Bangor, dead now, but he and I had a long dissertation one day about letting him out for the first of April, first of May, he wanted to get out first of May because the weather's better. I said, "All right, I'll give you another thirty days if you want it." And he went down into the lawyer's enclosure, starting to go out of the courthouse, turned around and danced an Irish jig for me, and then said, "Judge, you're the only one in the system's got any brains." I said, "Now what do you mean by that?" "Well," he said, "There's none of this crap you give me. You don't say, 'Danny, you can't drink any more, Danny you can't do this, Danny you can't do that.'" He says, "you got brains enough to know that Danny's going to do just as he goddamn pleases." I says, "that's right." "Well," he says, "I'll see you about tenth of May probably," and out he chomps.

Then I had another kid came down from Piscataquis county, he beat his wife down in Bangor. Well I had to give him ninety days, couldn't help it. He blacked both her eyes. He said to me on the way out, he says, I said, "ninety days." He says, "All right. I says, "that'll bring you out about fourth of September." "That's right. Well by the way, judge." And I says, "yes, what is it?" "You got any moose meat?" And you could feel the crowd all ready to gasp. I says, "Haven't got a damn bit of it, running short this year." "Well, I'll see you about the 15th, bring you down ten pounds, how will that do?" I says, "All right, that'd be fine." This little old lady couldn't contain herself in the back row. And she says to me, "Judge, does he really mean that?" I says, "Oh yes." I said, "A wife beater he is, a liar he ain't," and left it right there. Yeah, she came up to me afterwards, she says, "You really mean he's going to bring you some moose meat?" I said, "Yes," I says, "a lot of accidents from moose up in Piscataquis County, trains always hitting them," I says, "He's always around to pick up the pieces." Of course he was going to kill a moose, no question about that. So, what else you know?

**AL:** I think I'm going to stop right here.

**FDC:** All right.

*(Tape turned off. Then interview resumed.)*

**FDC:** . . . name of the poem is Cover Maine with a Guy Gannett Chain. And it goes like this, if I can remember it:

"Cover Maine with a Guy Gannett chain  
You prize her from ear to wane  
In the morning hours it's the Portland Press  
For the tired workers the Evening Express

The Waterville Sentinel and Kennebec Journal  
Beguile their readers with services rendered  
Even on Sunday there is no rest  
Because with the Telegram we are blessed  
And all the poor people  
from here to Thomaston Pen  
Have to listen to WGAN  
They say in all New England  
There is no longer chain  
We say pull it  
And free old Maine.”

And that was about what the situation was when I was running for governor. You, the Guy Gannett chain was all powerful. And I used to close a lot of my speeches saying, state of Maine, run by the Central Maine Power and the Central Maine Railroad. Times have changed. Central Maine Railroad is nonexistent almost, and the Central Maine Power Company is on evil days. So you live to see a lot in your time. I’ve lived to see Maine go from a predominantly Republican state to a predominantly Democrat state, that’s one of my life’s finest hours was when we got the first legislature. Oh, that was a great day. Sure was.

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

**FDC:** Oh, you’re welcome. Hopefully you got . . . .

*End of Interview*