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Clifford, Jere oral history interview

Marisa Burnham-Bestor

Interview with Jere Clifford by Marisa Burnham-Bestor

Summary Sheet and Transcript

Interviewee
Clifford, Jere

Interviewer
Burnham-Bestor, Marisa

Date
May 12, 1999

Place
Lewiston, Maine

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Biographical Note

Jere Clifford was born in Lewiston, Maine, in 1927. Clifford's maternal grandfather was the District Attorney of Suffolk County, Massachusetts who prosecuted John Fitzgerald, John F. Kennedy's grandfather. Clifford's paternal grandfather built Lewiston City Hall and Bangor City Hall. Clifford attended Pettengill, Wallace, Frye, and Jordan schools and then Lewiston High School. He began the V-12 Naval Officer training school at Bates, then attended Tufts University and Boston University Law School. He did his internship in Washington D.C., and later practiced law with his father in Lewiston. He served as an alderman in 1952 and on the Lewiston Development Corporation and Corporation Council of Lewiston. He is married with two daughters and one adopted son.

Scope and Content Note

Interview includes discussions of: Muskie breaking his back and refusing to accept charity money collected by Al Lessard from Maine lawyers; 1954 Maine gubernatorial campaign; 1956 Maine gubernatorial campaign ; the Democratic party in Maine; the Maine Commission on Legal Needs; his father's law office being involved in a rock throwing incident during the 1937 shoe workers' strike; Depression- era Lewiston; Franco-American community as insular and in tune with preserving language/heritage; radio personalities; Lewiston Development Corporation- Geiger Bros., Lewiston's industrial park, Bates Mill buildings, federal grants; Lewiston/Auburn

Economic Growth Council ; LIFT- Lewiston Improvement for Tomorrow; his work for his brother Bill's campaign for assistant District Attorney; Bob Clifford's campaign for alderman, mayor and state senate; Paul Couture as alderman; the legal community in Lewiston as being casual, small, close-knit; Brann and Muskie as breaking Republican mold in Maine; John Maloney; Ernest Malenfant and the "Clifford Clique;" Judge Albert Beliveau, Sr.; and Louis Jalbert.

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Transcript

Marisa Burnham-Bestor: We're here at the Muskie Archives at Bates College. It's May 12th,

1999, present are Jere Clifford and Marisa Burnham-Bestor. Could you state your name and spell it for me?

Jere Clifford: Jere Clifford, J-E-R-E, C-L-I-F-F-O-R-D.

MB: Where and when were you born and raised?

JC: I was born April 1st, 1927 in Lewiston and raised here.

MB: Could you describe your family's lineage, where they came from and how they came to America and to Lewiston?

JC: Well, I believe that, let's see, my great -grandparents I believe came over in the Irish potato famine on the paternal side and on the maternal side too. They, the, my mother's family, let's see, the husband, great-grandfather was in Nashua, New Hampshire, and his, I'm not sure where he met his wife. She had been, she had, her parents had sent her over alone because the landlord had been taking an unhealthy interest in her. He was a Protestant of the upper class and of course they were Catholic and they didn't want any, and they figured that some bad things were going to happen unless they got her out of the way. And so they sent her over to the United States. I don't know how they met, but he had, I think he was a gardener or something.

But their son, well they had a number of sons, but one of the sons, my maternal grandfather, went, worked his way through law school and became a lawyer in Boston and ultimately was appointed district attorney of Suffolk County. He, when John Fitzgerald, was mayor there was, Jack Kennedy's grandfather, there was quite a scandal. And my grand-, great-grandfather, no, my grandfather prosecuted, though they never did catch Fitzgerald, I guess but some of his underlings, they, he was successful in prosecuting. And when his boss, who was district attorney, resigned, he became district attorney of Suffolk but he was defeated in the general election then.

Let's see, on my father's side his, again they had come over, the great-, great-, great-grandparents had come over from Ireland, great-, great-grandparents I guess, the, no, great-grandparents, I'm sorry, and my grandfather was the oldest of I believe six or seven children. He went to the fourth grade in Lewiston. They went originally to Columbus, Ohio, and then they moved back here to Lewiston. And he became, started working as a mason and eventually became a contractor in his own right and was very successful. He built the Lewiston City Hall, he built the Bangor City Hall, a number of other large structures, and he owned quite a lot of real estate in Lewiston. And his wife came from Nashua, New Hampshire. Her name was Sullivan, and oddly enough the, my grandmother on the other side was also a Sullivan although they were not related as far as I know.

MB: What were your parents' names and occupations?

JC: My father was a lawyer, and his name was William Clifford, and his wife was named Alice Sughrue, S-U-G-H-R-U-E, and my dad is a lawyer as I said. He, his brother had gone to law school a year ahead of him and they became partners in practice. And John was much more

active in politics than my father was. He ran for the legislature, was defeated, but eventually he was appointed, when Franklin Roosevelt was elected president, he became the United States attorney in Maine and ultimately became a federal judge, U.S. district court judge.

MB: What were your parents, or if your extended family members were close to you, your uncles and so forth, what were their social and political attitudes as you were growing up? What did they portray to you?

JC: Well, they were, I think John Clifford was active politically and probably was more liberal in his views than the others. I think on my mother's side there were four siblings of hers who never married. They lived with their mother, and they were very conservative. I think my dad is fairly conservative in his views, too. They were all staunch Catholics. But . . . .

MB: How did your family and their beliefs relate to the people in the community of Lewiston?

JC: Oh, I think they were very much in tune with the general population. One thing that happened that, my father was a lawyer as I said, and during the, this had to be in the early thirties I guess, there was a strike. The shoe workers were attempting to organize, and I don't know what led to it, but there was, somebody threw a rock through our window, and it had to do with an employee of, you know, a union person that did this. I don't know why it happened, but I know it did happen. But I think that they, the family thinking and attitudes were very much in keeping with those in the community generally as far as I know.

MB: Was the rock intentionally thrown?

JC: Oh yeah, yeah.

MB: Why would they throw it through your window?

JC: I don't know. Obviously somehow my father had angered a union person, but I don't know how it happened.

MB: You mentioned that your family were Catholics. How did that, how did that compare to the people in Lewiston?

JC: Oh I think, Lewiston is, was then and still is to a considerable degree very much predominantly Catholic. We have a, I don't know if you've ever noticed driving around, we have a great number of Catholic churches in Lewiston. I think we have seven or eight, much, like, my younger daughter lives in Bangor, and there are only two up there and the cities are approximately the same size. Lewiston is slightly larger than Bangor. But there's much more here because it's very heavily French-Canadian here.

MB: How did your family relate with some of the French-Canadian people in the area, the mill workers, and . . . .?

JC: Well I think, we were, I can, of course I was born in '27 so my earlier memories are of

when I was slightly older, in the Depression, and I know that there were, my father being a lawyer and his father having a lot of property we were probably a little better off than many of our neighbors. But my parents helped some of the people with large families and there seemed to be excellent relations with French people in our neighborhood anyway.

MB: How would your parents help them?

JC: Food and that sort of thing, and also my mother had, we were eight children, and so she would hire people to help out around the house and that sort of thing, you know, take care, help take care of the kids from time to time.

MB: During the Depression what was Lewiston like? What are your memories of it?

JC: Well, you know, I was not that old, but I really wasn't particularly touched by it. I just know that we were a little better off than some, and we seemed to be doing all right. I have only vague memories of it I'm afraid.

MB: How did your family impact you as you grew up as far as coming from a very large family? What sort of influences did your family have on you?

JC: Well, I mentioned my mother's brothers and sisters not being married, and they took a great int-, although they were in Massachusetts, they- she came from Boston, Boston area- and during the summer my folks had a cottage down at Pine Point in Scarborough. And they would also rent a cottage down there and it was great because the two brothers were quite athletic, and they would, you know, help us learn how to play ball and that sort of thing, and it was a very close relationship. And of course I think we, with a large family, we were, a lot of activities within the family that we did, in our own immediate family.

MB: Was your mother a full-time mom?

JC: Oh yeah, she never worked. Oh, she had worked before she got married. My parents incidentally met at a wedding of, my father's sister married one of my mother's brothers, and they were in the wedding party, and that's how they happened to meet. My father was thirty-seven years old, so he was a little older than most when he married. But he made up for it with eight kids.

MB: Yeah, do you feel that you are similar or different from your parents in terms of your social and political outlooks?

JC: No, I think my, I think I probably was heavily influenced by the religious atmosphere and their thinking generally. I'm very conservative in my views, although I am a registered Democrat. I guess you couldn't be anything other than that here in Lewiston in order to be elected to any office. But, no, I think I'm fairly similar to them in many ways.

MB: How would you describe their outlooks or their stance?

JC: Well, I think they were, you know, they had a very strong sense of right and wrong and attempted to bring their children up in that same way. And they, my mother was much more religious, I guess, than my father, but that's probably the way it usually is. But they were very conscious, I think, of helping other people out, and my father especially was extremely active in the community in working in various charitable things and was active socially, generally. And that, I think they attempted to inculcate us in thinking along these lines, and I think most of us have followed this same feeling of being involved in different charities and so on.

MB: How do you feel that the values that you were raised with were similar or different from the other people in the Lewiston communities, some of the Franco-American people or any other groups?

JC: Well, I think to a considerably greater extent than is true today, the French people were sort of, tried to keep to themselves more and, you know, preserve their language and so on. That's died down to a considerable extent I think now. But when I was a kid it was, you would go into a store, and there would be a conversation being conducted in French. And I know a little bit but I didn't get it all, and that's not true any more. I don't know if that answers the question.

MB: Are you saying that that means that they have come more to. . . .?

JC: I think they've mov-, come into the mainstream much more than they did then. They were much more insular then.

MB: Where did you get your elementary and secondary education?

JC: Here in Lewiston. I went to Pettengill School first. And then, let's see, I went to about, many schools that, we lived there for four years and then to Wallace School for one year and then to Frye School for two years and then Jordan School for two years before going to high school, so a whole bunch of schools. And of course in those days there weren't any buses and so you walked, and some of these schools were fairly distant from our home.

MB: Why were there so many schools?

JC: I don't know.

MB: That was the public education (*unintelligible word*). . . .?

JC: That was, the public, yeah. We did not, whether it was, our parish had a parochial school, and my mother was very religious oriented, for some reason we did not attend those schools. But the public schools were pretty good in those days. I think they were much better then than they are now. I sent my own kids to St. Joseph's School and St. Dom's High School, which is an excellent school.

MB: Are those both parochial schools?

JC: Yes, they were.

MB: What were your experiences like in school as you were growing up?

JC: I don't have any great recollection. I had pleasant experiences. I know I did a lot of fighting for some reason.

MB: Your brother mentioned that, too. He said that you were younger than your classmates? He and you were both. . . .

JC: Oh yes, I, that's right, and we were big for our age, too, probably, so that might have been, that we were targets. But I don't think they made out too well going after us.

MB: Did you think that your family's kind of, they're very prominence in the community, being so well-known, kind of upper class, or upper-middle class, did that impact you at all growing up? Did people know you?

JC: Well yes. My father was extremely well known in the community, and he was a, he was quite a character. He did things pretty well as he wanted to, and it, I guess that, it was, you know, if you were Bill Clifford's son, at least you were known and favorably generally speaking.

MB: What did you do after graduating from high school?

JC: Well, I was immediately, I went immediately, I graduated in 1944 and of course the World War II was on. And I enlisted in the Navy, I actually, I went to officer training school and I went here to Bates for one full year. We went year-round. And then I was, the war was still, the war was still going, but we were sent at the end of that first year to Tufts in Medford, Massachusetts. Then the war ended, and at that point they, we were told that if we stayed in and got our commission, we would have to stay in the Navy for several years. So there was no, they were trying to, you know, get rid of us, and so we went to boot camp and eventually were discharged on points. At the end of World War II people were discharged on the basis of points accumulated that, you know, they were overseas and so on, it was (*unintelligible phrase*). But I got discharged out on the west coast. I got the guy to write a letter saying he was going to hire me to work. And so I got a little travel money to come back, and a friend of mine and I went with, there were two other chaps out there who were, had a car, an old beat up old thing. And of course in World War II there were great shortages of material, especially rubber, and we must have had a flat about every ten miles. And the other guy's name was Bob Cooney, and Bob and I sort of regretted after a while what we got ourselves in for, because we figured we'd save some money and by the time we got through paying for all those tires I don't think we were, came out ahead.

MB: Then was that your drive from the west coast back to Maine?

JC: Yeah, we drove to Milwaukee, and then we took the train to, from Milwaukee to Boston. And then hitchhiked from there.

MB: Oh, wow. Why did you decide to attend Bates? I thought your family had. . . .?

JC: I didn't have any choice in the matter because I was, it was a Navy program, V-12 program, officer training. Oh, I found it was an excellent school, but I did not, it was not a, I think it had things, had the war not been there I undoubtedly would have gone to Bowdoin because most everybody in the family did, including my dad and my uncle.

MB: So then what happened when you came back to Maine?

JC: Well, then I found that I, Tufts, where I had wound up, before I went out to the west coast, was willing to give me credit for all the naval courses I had. so I wound up going back there to graduate, and I got through quicker than I would otherwise have. Then I went to law school at Boston University.

MB: When did you know that you were interested in the law?

JC: I didn't. My father, well I didn't really know what I was going to do, and he said, "You know, why don't you try law school? It's good background for anything," and it surely is. And I did it on that basis and I found that I enjoyed it and seemed to do well in my courses and so on, and so I came back here to practice with him.

MB: What was your field of study when you were in college, what was your major?

JC: I got a business, what was it. . . . It's been so long now, it's over fifty years. Business, some kind of business was the description of it. But you see, it wasn't as though I'd gone in the regular course of college because there were a lot of Navy courses and so that, there wasn't, it wasn't the typical undergraduate course of study.

MB: Were you able to complete in four years?

JC: Three, I actually wound up in three calendar years, even though I went to boot camp and went out to the west coast and got discharged out there. I actually got through quicker than had I had, you know, things been in the normal course and that. So I, when I got out of law school, I graduated from college at twenty. And I went to law school and graduated from there at twenty-three, which is much younger than most.

MB: How did each of these experiences, your college/Army-Navy, Navy?

JC: Navy.

MB: Navy, and then law school, how did they influence you and change the way you thought and. . . .?

JC: Well, also of course, during my, during the time that I was in college and law school, I worked summers at the Bates Mill in Lewiston. And then the, my second year in law school I went down to my uncle, who was this judge there, knew a fellow in the justice department, and I got a job down there for the summer. And all these things sort of, added up. But the, it was

interesting, the summer job in Washington, I was just a kid, and I was writing reports on legislation. And although I wasn't making any effort to show anybody else up, apparently I did because, you know, I was writing about six to anybody else's one. And the first thing I know I found I just wasn't getting any more work to be done. They just didn't give me any more assignments.

MB: What led you to do that internship, or job in Washington?

JC: Well, it was just for general experience, just government service, and so on.

MB: Where and when did you meet your wife?

JC: I met her skiing in the Laurentiens Mountains in Canada, in Quebec. And I was then thirty. I'd been practicing law then for eight years. But she and I were both on vacation up there. I went up with my sister who's a very good skier. We stayed at a place called Grey Rocks and we skied at Mont Tresblanc, Connie and I and another person. And then Betty was skiing right there at the, a much smaller mountain, at the Grey Rocks, so we got together.

MB: Has she been involved with you in your community movements and. . . .?

JC: To a very limited extent. She's from western Canada; she's from Regina, Saskatchewan. And especially before I got married. I was extremely active in various community affairs, I was president of the (*unintelligible word*) Chamber, and I was president of the Chamber and I was an alderman. I was the, and we had to postpone our wedding, not postpone but put it off until the community United Fund campaign was done because the way things were I was tied up in that. But she has been active to a much less degree in things, and she's been a full time mother, too.

MB: How many children do you have?

JC: Three.

MB: What are their names?

JC: Anna Marie and Alice and Douglas. And the older and the younger are adopted. The older girl and the boy are adopted. And we got the, Anna Marie, we adopted her through the Maine Children's Home for Little Wanderers. She, we didn't know it at the time but she had cerebral palsy. And we had her for a year, and we kept noticing that she didn't use her right arm, right hand, but she was a beautiful little girl and an awfully good kid. And so anyway, finally we took her to a pediatrician and they couldn't find anything here so we took her up to Boston. We went to Mass General and there's a doctor named Philip Dodge, and he, when we described what the situation was, he went in the closet with her and he held a flashlight to her head. And you could see the light reflecting off one side of the head as opposed to the other, and there was a tumor, which affected the left, it was the left side of her head. And so that it interfered with the nerves on the right side of her, she, her hand, and of course she was only a year old, and you didn't really notice it, but as time went on you could see that her arm and, she was rigid, you know, spastic, and the foot was much smaller.

And eventually we had an operation done by Dr. Pappas, who is the doctor of the Boston Red Sox, not that that had anything to do with it. But anyway he, to shorten, to retard the growth in the good leg so that there wouldn't be too great a discrepancy in the length of the legs. She does limp, but she's done great. She's, she has almost no use of the hand and arm, and, but she was very determined. She, and of course she was always sort of out of things at school, you know, kids can be kind of cruel, she was different and so on. But she learned to ski, she took ballet lessons, was in concerts, you know, performances, and even got her water safety instructing in the Red Cross thing, which entailed, you know, taking your pants off in the water and blowing it up and all that sort of thing. And of course life-saving techniques and so forth. The, she's now married, lives in Norwood, Mass and has three children. She also rides a bike, which was kind of difficult for her at first.

Her, our middle girl, Alice, is a, went to law school, both the girls went to college, Anna Marie went to Utica, which is part of Syracuse University, Utica College. And Alice went to Providence College and then went to law school at the University of Maine. She is an assistant district attorney in Bangor, and she married one of her classmates in law school, and they have two children. And she has a, the children are in part-time day care but she, so she practices in the district attorney's office. And our son, unfortunately the boy was adopted at two and a half, and unfortunately he's had a lot of problems with drugs and alcohol and so on. He's currently in prison.

MB: What were your reasons for adopting?

JC: Well, we were, we didn't think we were going to have any, we were married for a couple of years, and we, despite all my best efforts we didn't seem to be producing any children. And we adopted and then, as is often the case I guess, when that happens to you. And with the two girls, and my wife was a little older than I was and so we went, it became obvious we weren't going to have any more children naturally and that's when we adopted the boy, and we adopted him through the state. He was, had been in foster care, he seemed to resent much, it was, with the older girl it was very natural and normal, but he, after a while he seemed to resent the adoption. And, you're not my real mother and that sort of thing and we've had our problems with him. Always been on good terms with him and everything, but there have been a lot of problems.

MB: What was the town of Lewiston like in your early years, just the town?

JC: The city? Well, the downtown was very different. Of course the stores were all, down on Lisbon Street and Main Street, were all quite busy and bustling. There weren't any malls, we didn't have television of course, the family would listen to the radio and it was a great thing, you know. The Jack Benny and Fred Allen and "The Shadow" and Jack Armstrong, a lot of family stuff. But the city was, the buses I think were fairly successful, and of course there was a great deal of employment in the mills in those days. And there were thousands employed in the mills whereas today it's, well the Bates Company went at one point, a couple, three or four years ago was down to fifty people in that great structure. So that, and the shoe shops were very busy and of course that's very much changed now, too.

MB: How did the town evolve over time politically, socially, and economically?

JC: Well, the, of course before my time the Irish were much more prominent. I think that originally there was Yankee Protestant people, then the Catholics were very much looked down upon. The Irish were originally brought in here to help construct the mills I think, and then eventually the French-Canadians came from Canada to work in the mills. And, Lewiston had it's heyday I guess in right down around the time of the Civil War and shortly afterwards when, that was when it, it seemed to be at its peak financially. But it seems to have stayed, the population's remained very, very constant in the last forty years I think. Ever since I was a kid it seemed to be around just under forty thousand, and it's that way today.

MB: How was your family and yourself involved in the evolution of the town?

JC: Well, my, I mentioned my grandfather having gone to the fourth grade and becoming a mason. He worked, I think, in connection with an expansion of one of the mills and became a builder. And my dad was, as I mentioned earlier, was very much involved in civic activities and so, and to that extent.

MB: Were, you were active with the Lewiston Redevelopment Corporation?

JC: The Development, Lewiston Development Corporation.

MB: The Development Corporation.

JC: Yeah, I, we incorporated it and served in it as the lawyer of that organization ever since 1952. And for many years we didn't get paid, you know, it was just a civic thing, but eventually they started being able to pay us some money for our efforts. But I always had a great interest in trying to help, you know, get the city going and development, industrial and commercial.

MB: What was the functioning of that group, what. . . .?

JC: Well the, it's, the Lewiston, Roland Marcotte was mayor at the time we started it and it was designed to, the city hired an industrial development director at that time, and this was designed to try and supplement and help in his, in the activities of the city in stimulating economic growth. When, there's a company here called Geiger Brothers, which was our first major incoming company that we were able to help with. We helped in setting up the financing of it, helped them find land. We, the state had a program of subsidizing the financing, but it had to be done through one of these non-profit development corporations, and we assisted in that. Later on we bought land, oh, and helped set up and did set up the industrial park. And we all, people in our office all did the title work for nothing in doing that.

The, when the Bates Mill was, there was a big change in management because the textiles were starting to go down then, and an outside fellow came in and was. We eventually wound up buying the building, the Development Corporation got a loan, bought the building, buildings from the Bates Company and then leased them back, and the rentals from the lease amortize the mortgage over a period of time. That was another thing, which we did which helped keep the

company going for quite a long while. And since then there's been various loan programs that when companies are interested in coming in or expanding, the Development Corporation has monies that it lends in some (*unintelligible word*) revolving fund. And the federal government also has made grants to the Development Corporation and has made monies available for these programs.

MB: When the Bates Mill, I guess that was the last functioning mill in this area, correct?

JC: Yeah, well, there was a, it was cotton, and there was a woolen mill, the Libbey Mill was also functioning. It's gone out of business too.

MB: When the mills finally did go out of business, what did the Development Corporation do? How did they respond to that to help employees?

JC: Well that's, that's these loan programs. And we, we got the land to the Industrial Park so, to make it available and we built a spec building which very shortly, almost immediately after we built it was occupied by a glass company, Paragon Glass from New Jersey. They moved up here, and we helped them in connection with that. And have made, the land has been made available on very favorable terms so that now the Industrial Park is pretty well filled. And also we helped in various expansion of other companies and bringing them in here to, you know, to fill the gap.

MB: How has that affected the economy as far as employment goes? Have you successfully kept the people employed?

JC: Well, yes, I don't think we have probably as many people. Well I think we now do have as many people as were in the mills, but it's very much more diversified. And I'm sure that the economy's really more healthy because of the different companies involved, not all our eggs in, all in one basket.

MB: You mentioned Geiger Brothers and Paragon Glass. Who are some of the other industries that have come into the Lewiston area?

JC: Well, Johns Manville, let's see, the, they were a group. I'm pressed to think of names right off the top of my head here. But Dionne Distributors, the, another thing that helped, one of the mills we, one of the mill buildings we bought from Bates we were able to sell to another fellow, Robert Roy. And he's been very successful in, it's the old Hill Mill, in filling that up with other companies. And he also owns the Continental Mill. Well, I mean, I, if I looked in the phone book I could get you the names, I just, off the top of my head I'm afraid I. . . .

MB: That's okay. How did you become involved with the Development Corporation?

JC: Well, we volunteered to help out in making this, my dad and I, to assist in the efforts, and we just incorporated, and then having done that they needed somebody to do their, you know, keep the books legally and so on, and it just evolved from that.

MB: What, why did you find that to be an important thing?

JC: Well, to help, you know, employment in the city, in both cities. Now, of course now in addition to the Lewiston Development, now there's the, there's a joint effort, Lewiston and Auburn Economic Growth Council, and we've been involved in that too.

MB: Was this connected with the Model Cities money from the federal government?

JC: Well, we've used some of the federal government money, but I don't think it has any real connection other than the money perhaps. But no, it's certainly not an outgrowth of that. This preceded that.

MB: So this happened before the Model Cities money?

JC: I believe so.

MB: Oh wow. I wanted to ask you about some of your other political involvements. When did you first become politically involved and how did that happen?

JC: Well, almost immediately after I started practicing law. Lewiston has, used to have municipal elections in February, and I always, I had a cousin who was in the firm with us, my uncle's son, and my dad and I. And my cousin and I were often involved in getting absentee ballots, and that was quite a, the various mayoral candidates and other people would come and ask you to help them out and you generally do it. And we'd go around to the nursing homes and people who were sick and so on, and you'd have to go in to the city, you'd have to take an application to them, for them to the city clerk to get a ballot and go back, get them to fill it out, take it in, then you get a ballot, go and vote for them and so on.

But anyway, it was, that was where it started, and eventually, and I ultimately became an alderman. I ran for office. Very, it was a lot of fun, the. . . . There were three other candidates, one was the former sheriff, one was a law s-, guy that was a friend of mine, was a lawyer just admitted almost immediately after I was, and who was the third guy? Oh, he had a window business. Anyway, I, it was a lot of fun, I went around visiting door-to-door and plotting strategy, and I had statements to the paper and so on, and I was fortunate enough to win. And I served for several years, and then later on I became corporation counsel for the city.

But, and I helped manage different mayoral candidates' campaigns. There was a group, LIFT, Lewiston Improvement For Tomorrow, we had to try and, there was sort of a clique that was in control of the city. And we would get the candidates to try to get our own people in, and so I would, you know, it was a lot of fun in plotting strategy and so on.

Later on my brother, Bill, was an assistant district attorney and I helped in his campaign to become, when the incumbent decided not to run again, he then stepped forward, and he ran, and he was, he ran and won. And I helped in his campaign. And still later Bob ran for alderman and later mayor and also the state senate, and we helped him in his campaign. But it was, it was one of those things that you sort of did. It was sort of expected that, as a young lawyer you were sort

of, it was a way of stimulating business and getting yourself known in the community by getting involved in different civic affairs and politics to some extent.

End of Side One
Side Two

MB: Were you the first of your brothers to join the law firm with your father?

JC: Yes, I'm the oldest, and I was. As I said, my cousin was there too. He's, he was seven years older than I was, but he was already in there when I came.

MB: Now did, when you did become politically involved as alderman, how did that affect your ability to manage time between the law practice and the political involvement?

JC: Oh, it wasn't any big problem. The municipal meetings were at night and of course you would campaign and so on at night and weekends. I didn't see any problem in that respect at all.

MB: What were some of the issues that you dealt with as alderman?

JC: It's been a long time, forty-some years since I was. One of the, we had a candidate, Paul Couture was, well he was another alderman, he was one of these guys who had to have the last say on everything, and so he would keep us there until late at night it seemed. I don't think of any, no great issue strikes, jumps out at me in retrospect. I mean there were, you were just trying to do the best you could. The, I think the budget has grown so much, I believe honestly that our total city budget then was around three million dollars. Now it's up, seventy or so, so it's grown so much in the last few years. There was always an issue of, you know, getting your share, the public works money for your ward and having your streets tarred and the street lights fixed and so on, but there were no great issues that I remember anyway.

MB: You mentioned that your brother went on to mayor and senator and so forth. Were you interested in going on to those higher elected positions?

JC: No, I really wasn't. Although I had, at one time after they both were in the state Senate, I had thought about running myself. But, you know, I, my wife likes to go to Florida in the winter, and I go down for two months with her, and I couldn't do that. And plus the fact that it's so expensive now running for office, and I hate to ask people for money. I'm not going to do that and so I never; I think I could get elected, but I'm not going to.

MB: Tell me more about your professional life. What it was like to work with your father and, for his firm?

JC: Well, it was, the practice of law today is extremely competitive and is pretty much bottom-line oriented I'm afraid, there's very great attention paid to billable hours and making money in the practice and so on. He was never too involved in that direction, and I'm afraid I haven't been either. I've not been most, the economics of the practice has never been at the top of my list of interests. But it was much more casual, and, see, I started practicing in 1950 so it's almost

fifty years ago now. And in those days it was a much smaller legal community. The community itself was, you seemed to know everybody. I, it's not that way anymore, you, you know, people don't know you as well as well as they did it seems, especially if you get older.

But it was very satisfying working with him. He was a great guy, and we, after a while we started doing a lot of defense, insurance defense work. And at first I helped him carry his briefcase and so on, and eventually I started trying the cases. And we had some considerable success in it, and it was a lot of fun. It was, it's quite stressful though, litigation, and I have not been doing it in recent years. But we had a general practice. At first when I went in, because I was twenty-three years old, I would go, when I'd hear footsteps coming, and I'd go and, "Can I help you?" "No, I think I'd rather see the older gentleman," so there was a lot of that. You sort of had to wait, work your way in, so that's why it was generally very much the case that you got involved in civic affairs, so you'd get known on your own right.

MB: Is that still true today, that a lot of lawyers become involved in civic affairs to get their name out there?

JC: No, I don't think they do so much now. But now the, what happens is that they, young lawyers often, well of course now, it depends on if you're on your own or being in a firm. If you're in a firm then you're, you know, there's generally a clientele there and you do a lot of grunt work, the young guys do, and they're expected to really work long, long hours. As I mentioned my daughter is a, practices in Bangor. She's in the public service sector of, she's an assistant D.A. But her husband is with a law firm, matter of fact the firm is headed by a guy who was a classmate of mine in law school, and they work ungodly hours. Which is the way I did it, I guess, at the beginning, but you know, every weekend it's, and these, you know, you're expected to have so many hours, billable hours that you're producing.

But if you're on your own, of course you've got to sort of become known and I think that a lot of that, a lot of the young lawyers do a lot of assigned counsel work on criminal matters, they, when people don't have lawyers of their own and they don't have the money to pay for it, the state will pay. They don't pay them an awful lot but at least it's some money coming in the door and (*unintelligible word*).

MB: How has Maine's political scene changed since you've been involved throughout your lifetime?

JC: Oh, it's changed radically. When I came back here, it was very predominantly a Republican state. The, there had been a Democratic governor in the thirties, Louis Brann, who was a Lewiston lawyer. But then both before and after it reverted to Republican control. The legislature was controlled by the Republicans, the governor was always Republican, and it wasn't until Ed Muskie, for whom this building is named or these archives are named, who won in a great upset. There had been a very bitter primary fight between Burton Cross and a fellow named [Leroy] Hussey, both from Bangor, and Muskie won in a big upset. And then Bill Trafton, who is another lawyer from Auburn here, ran, and had been the Speaker of the House, he ran against Muskie in his second term, and Muskie was, beat him pretty decisively. Muskie was a very charismatic guy, and he was a good campaigner and did well.

One thing about Muskie as I remember, he, it was before he, it was shortly after I came back to practice. He fell, he lived in Waterville, and he was practicing, and he was doing some work in his house and he fell and broke his back. And a number of the lawyers in, around the state, particularly a fellow named Al Lessard who was here in Lewiston, was Democratic, later became a judge. Anyway, he, but he had been active in politics and he contacted a number of lawyers and they took up a collection to help him financially and Muskie wouldn't take the money, he returned it which is, I don't think you too many, find too many guys doing that today. And I, it made him maybe respected more. Later on when he, long after he retired from the Senate and secretary of state, he was named chairman of a study committee on legal aid for the needy, and they had hearings all over the state. And although I didn't expect, again, that he would do it, he was actually, took an active part. And he went to all the meetings and so on, which I don't think too many people in that position and at that stage of his life would have done. But it was very, very much to his credit.

MB: You mentioned Al Lessard. Who were some of the other people who were involved in politics then with Muskie?

JC: Tom Delahanty, Jack Maloney, who was a, later became a, one of the industrial development directors of the city. Tom Delahanty is related to me by marriage. His, he married John Clifford's wife, John Clifford being my uncle, and, he married John Clifford's daughter I should say and gave me my first case as a matter of fact. He had, there was a fellow who was charged with operating under the influence, driving under the influence of alcohol. And he had been, the facts were that he was, there was an accident, and the cops came upon the scene later, and he was there, nobody actually had seen him drive. And of course I was, there was a doctrine called *corpus delicti*, he did admit that he'd been driving, but there was a, there's a doctrine in the law, *corpus delicti*: you have to first establish through some other means the commission of a crime before an admission is admissible. And I probably wouldn't have known this except I was well coached by all the people around me. And I went down to court and brought this all out and so I got a nice little, a friend of mine was writing the story in the paper, "Young Attorney Wins First Case." And he went on in great detail. But the thing, but anyway Tom was good enough, it was his client that, no, there was no pay by the way. But and I'm sure that he knew there wasn't going to be any pay but there was pretty good pay for me in the publicity.

Oddly enough, the first jury trial I ever had later on, this same guy was the plaintiff in the case, and I was defending at that point, and he had claimed to have been injured, and we had records of his employment. And, that he actually, and he claimed to have missed time at work and we knew that he didn't miss time at work, and so they would bring this out before the jury, and the jury's out about ten minutes and came back for the defense. Same guy, that was rather peculiar.

MB: Who was John Maloney?

JC: John Maloney was a fellow that was engaged in different activities around town here, and he ran for Congress. Very nice guy, very likeable guy and the best MC I ever heard, you know he would do, he was frequently called upon to be master of ceremonies at local functions. Al Lessard was a lawyer who came from the same town as Muskie did, Rumford. And he and, at

one time he and Tom Delahanty were partners and both of them later became judge, judges, Superior Court judges, and Tom went on to become, on the Supreme Court, as my brother Bob is now. But they were all very much active in politics. As a matter of fact, the first time I ran for alderman Al Lessard was running for mayor. He had been mayor previously, and there was a fellow named Ernest Malenfant who was a gatekeeper here for the railroad, and a kind of an ignorant guy and a kind of a, spoke ill of everybody but oddly enough he got,kept getting elected. Well anyway, as I was campaigning around town, it became evident to me that Al Lessard was not going to get elected, that Malenfant was going to defeat him, and he did. But anyway. . . .

MB: How were Al Lessard and Tom Delahanty and John Maloney tied with Muskie?

JC: Well, they were all friends of his. There was a relatively small, as I mentioned, Republicans were predominating, and there were, these people all ran for, I don't think Lessard ever ran for Congress, but both Tom and Jack did. And they were sort of sacrificial lambs, it was sort of known that they weren't going to win, but they went through the duty of doing it. But they were all friends of Muskie and active and helped him in his campaigns.

MB: You mentioned Ernest Malenfant. Malenfant?

JC: M-A-L-E-N-F-A-N-T, Malenfant, yeah.

MB: I heard that he referred to some of the members of your family and some of the people involved with your family as the "Clifford Clique".

JC: He probably did, I'm sure he did.

MB: Were you familiar with that?

JC: Oh yeah, sure.

MB: What did he use that term for, do you. . . .?

JC: Well, we were, one of the things that we were, as young lawyers we were striving to become corporation counsel of the city. It was a part-time job but it gave you a little income and gets you some publicity. And so frequently when we were trying to help a mayoral candidate it was with the idea that if he was successful, we, one of us would become corporation counsel. And Malenfant did not like this because we never supported him, and so he was rather derogatory in his comments about my dad and I guess the rest of us.

MB: Was that related to economics as well, him being a gatekeeper, or was it solely because you didn't support him in his politics?

JC: I think it was strictly because of non-support. And he was a, he was kind of a negative guy.

MB: How well did you know Al Lessard and John Maloney?

JC: Oh, very well.

MB: What were they, what were they like as people? Could you describe them?

JC: Oh, good guys. Al Lessard had a cottage next to us at the beach, and so I knew him through that among other things. And Jack Maloney I got to know through, you know, various activities, civic activities.

MB: Where did your family vacation at the beach?

JC: Pine Point in Scarborough, south of Portland. Old Orchard Beach becomes Pine Point at some point. It's a very long beach, and it's much more secluded, well, not secluded exactly, but it's much less crowded at the northerly end of the beach, which is Pine Point, than it is in Old Orchard itself.

MB: Do you remember any stories from your time at the beach and your family's vacations there?

JC: Oh sure, the, I mentioned my uncles and my staying with my grandmother and so on. We would play softball on the beach, and my uncles would help us, you know, become more adept at playing ball. And my dad did too; he was a very good athlete. We had a paper route down there, and the, I, there was, you got, in those days it was three cents a copy. We delivered both the *Sun* and the *Journ-*, at that time the Lewiston newspaper was two, there were two of them, the *Sun* and the *Journal*. Now it's just the one, the morning paper. But that was the morning and evening, and we would deliver both of them, and we did it on bikes. And we went all the way from Pine Point, the extreme northern end up to quite a ways beyond Old Orchard on our bikes. And at one, the, at one point there was a guy that I had that was, took the both papers, so that was thirty-six cents a week, six days a week, three cents a crack and double paper. And I thought he was the greatest guy in the world because he was a cook at the Hotel Beaumont, and he'd give me fifty cents, so I got a fourteen-cent tip every week.

But my uncle worked, was a lawyer, and he worked for the telephone company, and he would, he had a month's vacation, and he would take it down there. And he would, during much of the time he'd drive us on the paper route, and we were all, and we used to go up and buy these, in the morning, and buy these doughnuts, they were greasy as the devil I think, but they were delicious. And there were, oh, probably six or seven of us in the car and jumping out at one spot or another, and we had more fun doing that.

MB: You mentioned that you had a rather large extensive fam-, extended family. How close were the members of your extended family?

JC: Very close. We, they would play cards, and my aunt, both my aunts were school teachers, and one of them particularly was great with kids, and she would take us to the movies and everything. We had a lot of fun.

MB: Have many of them remained in the Lewiston area or in the Maine area?

JC: These were all, many of these were from Massachusetts. We would do this in the summer.

MB: Oh.

JC: My uncle, John, who was a judge, died a long while ago now, about fifty years ago now, so. And my father's family was much smaller. There were only four on their side, and there was two sisters, two sisters and the brother and my father. And, they, the two boys practiced law together, and eventually John went on his own, went into public service. But the girls both lived in, outside, one in Montreal and one in New York, but we'd see them periodically but not as many, not near as much as my mother's family.

MB: You mentioned your uncle John going out on his own?

JC: Well, becoming district attorney and then judge, I mean in that sense.

MB: Was he particularly active in the Democratic Party?

JC: Yeah, he was, he had been much more active, I think, than my dad in party politics.

MB: How?

JC: I'm not sure. But, you know, I was not that aware of it in those days because he was, he became district attorney in 1933, and I was then six years old. And of course once he became district attorney then he went, did campaigning and so on I guess. But he had been, and much of, judicial appointments and so on was the result of being active politically earlier on. As they say, every judge is a, was a political friend of a governor. Bob was quite friendly in the senate with Joe Brennan, and that's how he became appointed. But. . . .

MB: Was your uncle at all involved with Muskie, do you know?

JC: I don't think so. He, because he would have been, I'm sure he wasn't because he would have been a judge at that point, and a U.S. judge wouldn't have been involved at the time Muskie came into. . . .

MB: What are your recollections and impressions of Judge Albert Beliveau?

JC: Well, he was a very stern guy. Severin, he's got two sons, Severin and Albert, who were both lawyers. I knew him when, I first knew him when he was a judge and I was, ran afoul of him in one thing in court one day. I went to speak to my client, and I stepped over the railing, and he gave me hell for doing it, thought I was not being very respectful or something. He was very tough on drunk driving cases. I don't think I ever had one with him before, but my father had and had fairly success, good success in them. But he retired shortly after I became a lawyer. Or no, first he went to the Supreme Court, and so you really didn't have the direct contact, you'd have much more contact with the Superior Court judges than on the Supreme Court. I've argued

a few cases before them but they were more distant figures than the Superior Court judges.

MB: I know that most of the members of your family are Democrats, however, almost everyone has said that you're a conservative Democrats. What exactly is meant by that?

JC: Well, I think that, for instance I have the lowest regard for our incumbent president, [Pres. William Jefferson Clinton] I think he's a scumbag. But I think that the Democrats generally are more inclined to be, nationally at least, you know, be, spend money and throw money at problems; that's the answer to all problems is expenditure programs. And they're much more inclined to be in favor of taxing and larger budgets and so on. And I think that they're, I think a conservative Democrat would be less inclined to do those things and think in that direction.

MB: Is the reason then, what, or what is the reason then that the people who consider themselves Democrats in this area consider themselves Democrats? (*Unintelligible phrase*)?

JC: I, if the truth be known, I should probably be registered as a Republican. But I never did because you, I don't know, you know, at one point I ran for office and you just couldn't do, you couldn't get into office. It would be almost unheard of to win in Lewiston as a Democrat, as a Republican I mean.

MB: Are most of the Democrats in this area, the large Franco-American population is Democrat, are most of those Democrats conservative or liberal Democrats?

JC: I think they're generally conservative. Georgette Berube, I think, is probably representative of most incum-, most of the inhabitants than for instance James Handy is, I would say. But unfortunately the vast majority of the population seems to, regardless of their basic underlying philosophy, the Democrat wins. I mean, despite their actual position, I think it's an automatic predisposition to vote Democratic here.

MB: Have you ever been involved with the Republicans at all?

JC: No, not really. I've given money to some Republican candidates and so on, but not, I've never actually actively campaigned, I guess, for them.

MB: Have any of the members of your family registered as Republicans or been particularly involved?

JC: One of my brothers did, I think, Paul. He, Paul died last year very suddenly, and I think he had registered as Republican. Not that that had anything to do with his demise. He died very suddenly, and it was very sad.

MB: How did the family respond to him becoming a Republican?

JC: Oh, fine, nothing wrong with it. . . .

MB: So it's not, Republicans, not particularly. . . .

JC: No, not in the least.

MB: Over the years there has been splits within the Democratic Party in Lewiston. Can you tell me about some of those instances and the people involved and issues involved?

JC: No, I, none come immediately to mind.

MB: Does the name Louis Jalbert?

JC: Oh sure, Louis, yeah, knew Louis well.

MB: Oh really? Okay, can you talk about him with me?

JC: Sure.

MB: What was he like as a person?

JC: Well, he was a pretty good guy, but he had a very bad reputation as far as honesty goes. But he helped me when I ran for alderman and gave me advice and so on. I, he asked me for a loan of a hundred bucks, and I gave it to him knowing I would never see it again, and I didn't. But that was his payment I guess, in his mind for helping me out. He was a, he was a long, long term legislature-, legislator in Augusta representing the city and was pretty successful in bringing home the bacon I guess. And he, one of the buildings here at the Central Maine Technical College is named after him.

MB: How did you become, how did you come to know him and be involved with him?

JC: Well, you know, just by being active in, to describe generally my, the extent of my activity in local politics, just through that. And he ran for mayor once, and I supported him when he did.

MB: Although you had a good relationship with him, you mentioned that others generally didn't?

JC: Well I, no, I think he did not enjoy a very good reputation. He was considered to be not entirely honest I guess.

MB: How did he get that reputation?

JC: Well, I don't know, he just had it. I mean, when I came upon the scene, he had it. I didn't inquire greatly about what it was.

MB: Was he much older than you?

JC: Oh yeah.

MB: Oh, okay.

JC: Louis must have been fifteen years older than I am at least.

MB: How were you or the members of your family connected to Muskie?

JC: I didn't have any great connection with him. When I, the first time I ran for alderman I was successful, and it happened that I beat all, my vote totaling beat all the others in the race against me, and so I got some publicity at the time. And Muskie came down to speak at the City Hall. One of the local attorney was the, like the MC, said, "Here's the next Muskie," or something. Muskie had, by that time had been governor and was governor, and I don't think he liked it very well the fact that he was, somebody was being compared to him. But I mean, I never really had any great dealings with him. I did go up to, with Frank Coffin, to see him on behalf of a fellow we were, thought should be made judge, and he was made judge. But, and then when Ed Muskie would see Al Lessard at the cottage there, and I saw him then. I mean, I never really had any great dealings with him.

MB: What were your impressions of him as a person who didn't know him very well?

JC: Oh, very favorable. I mean, he was an honest guy and a good speaker, and I thought he had, I mentioned earlier, you know, some of the things that I thought were very much to his credit as far as character and so on.

MB: Do you have any stories of any sorts of involvements that your family's had with him? I know one time he came to your home. Were you, I don't know, you were (*unintelligible phrase*).

JC: I don't think I was there. No, I really don't have any great stories to tell.

MB: How do you feel that he has impacted the state of Maine, that his. . . .?

JC: Well, I think he had a great deal to do with the change in the general acceptance of the Democratic Party as opposed to the previous situation. I thought he was a very effective governor and very well regarded, and I'm sure that he greatly helped change the balance of power there. And he was, you know, a very respected senator later on.

MB: Has that swung back so to speak? The great Democratic uprising in Maine with Muskie?

JC: Well, it's still, it's still more Democratic than Republican I think. The state senate is that way now and the house is also Democratic. Of course we have an independent governor as you know. But, and, the second independent governor is Jim Longley of Lewiston had been before him, and he was also a good friend of mine.

MB: Is there anything that you could add or that you feel that we've missed discussing?

JC: No, no.

MB: Great, thank you very much.

JC: Okay, you're very welcome.

End of Interview

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