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Elwell, Eben oral history interview

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Interview with Eben Elwell by Stuart O'Brien and Robert Chavira

Summary Sheet and Transcript

Interviewee

Elwell, Eben

Interviewer

O'Brien, Stuart
Chavira, Robert

Date

August 5, 1998

Place

Augusta, Maine

ID Number

MOH 039

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Biographical Note

Eben Elwell was born on January 20, 1921 in Brooks, Maine. His father was a farmer, and his mother a homemaker. Both parents came from active Democratic families, and participated in Democratic politics. At the age of eight months, Eben contracted Polio in the same epidemic that struck President Roosevelt. He attended Morse High School of Brooks, and enrolled at the University of Maine. World War II interrupted his college career, and he went to Portland, Maine, to build ships. He returned to Brooks in 1946 and became active in town politics. He was on the board of selectmen, serving as the overseer, and also served one year as town manager. He made a living by collecting liens on area properties. He eventually was nominated for the school committee, where he served for six years. He became active on the Maine Democratic Committee, and eventually won a seat in the Maine Legislature. He brought forth education legislation that reimbursed school departments for interest on school building loans. He was also active in roads and agriculture, and served as minority leader. Eben sold insurance for a time, and was appointed State Treasurer. In 1966, he made an unsuccessful bid for the Democratic First District Congressional nomination. At the time of interview, he lived in Augusta.

Scope and Content Note

Interview includes discussions of: meeting Ed Muskie (DSC 1946); clipping bureau debate; 1954 election day; Big Box; dealings with Ed Greeley; debt subsidization on school buildings; debates with Dave Stevens; debates with Emory Dickey; school funding formula problems; sales tax legislation; Republicans for Muskie; gaining Neil Bishop's support; getting a free hour of television from George Hale; supporters of Muskie; working on the Maine State Housing Authority; Muskie's relationship to farmers; Burt Cross' re-election problems; Cross' unwillingness to debate Ed Muskie; Elwell's leadership on school funding; school consolidation; influence of a Democratic minority in 1954; a statement about the impact of Elwell's legislation; bussing students; school reforms; illegitimacy in Maine; Muskie's main issues; "Tax and Spend" debates in Augusta; and rebutting Republican speeches against Muskie in the Bangor Daily News.

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Student: . . . second interview with Eben Elwell on August 5th, 1998 in Augusta, Maine. Mr. Elwell, can you tell us about your involvement with Ed Muskie's first campaign for governor?

Eben Elwell: I became acquainted with Ed when we were both members of the Democratic State Committee, 1946 I believe. And I was impressed by the way he dealt with controversial problems and so straightforward, candid, and effective. Then something that I can remember is when a candidate for governor in the preceding election brought in a bill for clipping services, clipping bureau. And Ed said, "No way," he says, "that's his expense," and he says, "clip is the right word." That's his pun, he'd use a pun to make a point and he could get away with it, you know. But it stuck with me because he seemed to be so straightforward and effective, no arguing about it all afterwards. And I said to myself, "That's my man if he ever wants to go further."

He went in that year, I think he went to the legislature, and I went into local government. And so when it came time that he showed some interest, he come back through the county in '48, which would have been a couple years later. And he sent word to me, and I forget by whom, that he's gonna be in Belfast and, at the movie theater, which they were quite active then but they were always poorly lighted. And it was a place he could get. So I got a couple of guys together, a couple of my cousins, and took them down, heard him speak.

He was on his way down to Campobello, seems as though I talked about this before. He'd been down to Campobello, was on his way back. And I thought there was a connection with the Roosevelt memorial which would have been about that time, '45, but he talked about things, he'd say just in his own way, you know, for new acquaintances. Talked about finding a whale, a seal whale washed ashore on a beach bleeding to death the way they do with their weight. And so, but he was so, made such a clean cut appearance, and thoughtful statements, that the two cousins that I took with me said, "That man will be governor of the state someday." And they were old-time Democrats.

And come the day he was elected, they were standing outside the voting poll. The man who ran against me for the legislature had come over and he said, "*(unintelligible phrase)*, I guess you're spending a lot of money, aren't you?" I said, "I'm not spending a cent, Burt, those people are all volunteers." These two, cousins on Election Day, said, "We gotta work today but if you'll give us a list today at five o'clock that hadn't gotten in, we'll see that they get in." Of course there were other volunteers, too, so we, but they got every voter. Matter of fact, there was one voter in the next town that a man drove forty miles to get because he hadn't. He was in town and the roads were out from the flood, you remember people telling you about the hurricane? Diana and Edna?

STU: In '54?

EE: Pardon?

STU: In 1954?

EE: Nineteen fifty-four. You didn't get those? You didn't get that anywhere?

STU: I got that. Stan Tupper had to deal with it a great deal because he was the Sea and Shore Commission head.

EE: Okay, so on the weekend before the election, we had, we'd had, the floods I think were about a week apart. But, I can remember on the day of the election I go up to the farm to check things out, I head out and my mind's off somewhere else and wondering if the work is all done in the different towns. And I drove onto a piece of road that had split right down the middle, half of it gone. And I drove on it from the other side and look right out and can't see it. By the time I brake my car went on its head, front bumper, right near the farm, so we just took a tractor and hauled it out and I went on my way. I checked in fairly early with the town clerks who were friendly, but we only had one or two in the whole district that weren't Republican. And they were a source of strength for the Republicans because they checked the list and gave Democrats a hard time if they wanted to register and made it easy for their people to register. So I called a town, Waldo, between Brooks where I lived and Belfast. And the town, asked the town clerk if he had, if they had all the material out there. He said, "Yes," but he said, "do you want a blank ballot?" And I said, "What would I do with a blank ballot? And besides that, you gotta account for them." He said, "Don't you know the system?" And I said, "What system?" He said, "Well I give you a blank ballot, you put it in your pocket and when somebody comes along that you got a bottle for or something else, he owes you a vote, now to be sure that you get it you take that ballot, put a big 'X' up in the," days back, with the straight ballot voting?

STU: Yup.

EE: "Tell him, 'put that in the box and bring you back his blank ballot,' then you know how he voted." That was part of the system. And he was a Democrat but he was part of Belfast and he knew, you know, what was going on as far as elections are concerned. So that was two events that happened before seven o'clock was my car standing on end and coming in contact with this clerk. But I'm getting ahead of myself because we did a lot of campaigning before that obviously and, I'll back up to where, well get into where we, your question, next question's going to be Bishop and Greeley.

STU: Yeah, okay. How did you become involved with Neil Bishop and Ed Greeley?

EE: I became involved with Greeley in 1946. I was elected chairman of the selectmen in Brooks, I was twenty-five years old. And Guy Twombly and Phyllis Murphy were the state committeeman and woman in the county. And they asked me if they could write my name in on the ticket, they had thought up a ticket which they did just for respectability's sake, they didn't want to leave it blank. Asked me if they could write me in for the state senate and I didn't have any objection, I didn't have any ambition to run but they were (*unintelligible word*) a write in.

So I became acquainted with Greeley and this way, I never met him in the campaign.

But I was in the corner store one day and the manager of the store was chairman of the local town committee. And cold turkey asked me what I thought about Eddie Greeley, and I told him. I was trying to study government at the time, but, in office, go up to the university, take different things, courses that come along. I said, "Eddie Greeley is probably the most competent public spirited man we've got in this county." He goes and tells Greeley. Well, he turned out to be a pretty damned good friend. He was in Muskie's corner, and when it come time he was in my corner. And he helped me get major legislation through, not by lobbying for me but just give me some advice in the beginning as to how you, how to go about it, you know.

And here I am going down to the legislature as a freshman while we were outnumbered, at the time of the election we were outnumbered ten to one in the legislature. Time we, after Muskie's first victory and we went into office, it went up to five to one. And I, going in with a piece of major legislation, piece of legislation that could build a billion dollars worth of school houses. Piece of legislation that Bill Clinton's copied for the pass, the Congress to pass, that would subsidize the debt service on school buildings. In other words, lots of people built their own buildings, each town, school district, whatever. When it come time to pay the bill, subsidize the interest, principal interest on it. And they say that's worked to the tune of a billion dollars worth of schools here in Maine and a billion dollars spent in Maine, can't help but notice. Especially when it's something positive, constructive, like the school system we've got. Sometime I'll run that by you as to what, just what that's done. If you want it now, I'll give it to you.

STU: Sure.

EE: Okay. The district that I was in down there, Waldo county

STU: Can you start by giving a date of when this happened?

EE: Okay, of course I had the bill drafted on this table and on that desk in there before I ever went to the legislature. I sat down and I'd learned local finance as far as the towns are concerned. I'd been on the school, local school committee; I knew the formula that they used for distributing state aid. When I built my house, my neighbor was the superintendent of schools. He used to carry a folder with him which would have twenty-six payrolls at the end of the year, because every two weeks they made a payroll. On those it's broken down as to what category the expenses come in. You could flick through that and pick up the bottom line on the last copy, tell what the balances were all the way along and how much had been spent by adding the columns.

So I learned the formula which was involved, and very few people took the time to do it. Even some school superintendents didn't always know what was in it. And I discovered that when I went into the town office, we were in debt and couldn't borrow money the first year that I was there. First week we couldn't meet the school payroll. I went to the bank to borrow money on a temporary loan and they said, "Eben, we can't loan the town money without co-signers." We've gotta, two people who usually signed, one of them was this Republican town chairman I told you about

STU: What was his name?

EE: Freddy Molten. By the way, his son, Al Molten, was in my wife's class and I knew him well and he became a supporter of Muskie and he's been a, had a position in the Governor's office in Vermont, must be twenty, thirty years, he stays right there. But anyway, and he helped us big in the, for the Republican Journal, that's in the Republican Journal as far as carrying materials concerning, we could generally get a release, you know how sometimes we get it under our name and, over our name, sometimes it didn't. But it appeared in there. Well, anyway, as far as these two men are concerned, far as Greeley was concerned, Greeley was soft spoken, very much committed to helping the small towns, you know, to do things for the small towns. He was on the outs with the incumbent governor, Governor Cross had appointed David Stevens as chairman of the state highway commission. And he had been told, you know, instructed to cut out, cut the red tape and be efficient in terms of spending the money. And to begin to narrow it down so that the town roads didn't count for much, because he had what they called an "efficiency rating" for roads. Well of course, a major artery turned up fairly well on that. But then when you go to take his ratings and compare them with the state ratings, and come time for us to budget in the legislature for these highways for example, he would try to get all the money he could out of the towns for their share of building the local roads. And try to get all the money out of the feds he could for that. You know, make it so he'd have, might even have a bigger budget, but it would leave certain deficiencies in it because the feds didn't subsidize like state highways, not in the federal system.

And, but they, people get killed on them, you know, and somebody has a responsibility to do something. So, Eddie went down to Augusta one day, something that his town needed. They had a town meeting coming up that night, he didn't have an answer The problem, he'd been chairman of the highway committee in the legislature. But I guess this hurt him some when he got cut down so that he didn't have the influence. So, I forget what the matter was that he wanted, but he said, "Coming down, they were painting the white line on Route 3 between Augusta and Belfast," and when he come back they were tarring over it. That didn't speak very well as far as their efficiency was concerned, you know. So whatever it was, Stevens had told him what he couldn't do. And Ed says, "Well, what am I supposed to tell my people at town meeting?" He says, "Tell them that son-of-a-bitch of a David Stevens wouldn't let you have it." He said, "What do you suppose I told the," Eddie says, "what do you suppose I told them at town meeting?" That's just what he said, you know. After coming back and seeing them so damned efficient and tarring over the white line they just painted.

So, but he would, told me that he would go into the legislature, Muskie was in the legislature six years and the floor leader at least the last year of his term. And he would listen, and he'd hear Ed Muskie talk, he said, you know, "You'd see people turn around in their seats to listen. You don't see it very often, but you can recognize it if you're there. They start showing that sign that they're listening." He says, "I've read copies of his speeches, never an improper punctuation," whatever. And Ed did everything, what he could, he'd send his speech, give it in writing to the clerk because if you don't, the horse blanket comes out and it looks pretty rugged because somebody would try to take down what you're saying vocally. So he became very respectful of Ed and he was anti-Cross; he just thought that Cross wasn't the man for the job. And Cross was

just the opposite from Greeley in that he would, I don't know if I should say some of the things that come to my mind. You know, I don't want to be that critical. But he was, he allowed that, as how maybe he wasn't a master plumber but he was a master politician. Can you imagine anybody campaigning on that program today?

STU: No.

EE: But this is, points up the difference between the two men. And Cross would try to pull strings here or there. So we started out with the campaign down in the county and the first thing that I go to is a county There was a group, it wasn't an extension group but it was a group where they invited all the Republicans and all the Democratic candidates in the county to appear. I appeared on the stage with all Republicans, about twenty Republicans, because I was the only Democrat to seek office. And I'd been familiar with what happened in '46 when I ran to fill a ticket and that was just laying over, you know, rolling over and playing dead far as the Republicans were concerned.

So I said to the leaders at the time, "I have no desire to run that kind of a campaign. I'll run with anybody that wants to run with me to win, but I won't run this way," so I wound up running on a, sole candidate on the ticket. So I get down there to the meeting and I'm sitting beside that man from my home town who was the incumbent legislator. He wasn't a candidate for reelection at the legislature, he was a candidate for reelection to the senate. And the, come time they had to work off the protocol as to who was going to speak. And so I allowed as how I'd get the chance to speak, out of the twenty of them, I'd get one twentieth of the coverage. And I wanted to speak to the Democratic Party and for Ed Muskie. And I got away with it. So I got a chance to rebut, every man that would speak, I'd get a chance to rebut, and

(Telephone interruption.)

EE: Emory Dickey who was the incumbent legislator from my district, and it was more or less He was, well, the guy in town that got up in town meetings and objected to anything and everything that he could to get attention and try to open it up, and he would be booking for or against topics.

STU: What was his first name?

EE: Emory, Emory Dickey. So, I found, it seemed to work out in town meeting, the way to handle him was he had a quick temper and a booming voice, sounded gruff. And I would say something, you know, just to put him off. And *(unintelligible phrase)* when he lost his temper. But on the way down my wife had said to me, "No, you don't have any reason to tangle with Emory tonight, you want to give him a wide berth; you're not running against him." And I thought, 'makes sense'.

So he's sitting beside me and, on the platform, and something was said about Dave Stevens. He'd been tax assessor before he was highway commissioner and he had tactics in his, in the tax collecting, in the tax assessor's role somewhat of what he had in the highway, basically arbitrary. And for the reevaluation program, he was responsible for the reevaluation program of the towns

and cities. Well, the school formula that I told you about, which is the biggest item in any budget now, schools are, the school formula was tailored such that you could raise or lower that valuation per capita, valuation against the value. So he was raising the valuation of the towns which cut their school subsidy, and he hit rural Maine.

Well, Eddie Greeley could see this, Bishop could see this, so what, they had I guess they call it the three Rs: Reevaluation, Reclassification, and Reapportionment of the legislature were the issues. There again, the Republicans controlled and they, even though the ten year census showed certain strips of population, they wouldn't honor it, and we made an issue. The Democrats picked up I think six seats when the legislature, in the senate now, which can ordinarily make or break a thirty-three member group. So, those being the three issues, we were talking about the one on reapportionment. No, excuse me, on reevaluation. So I said to the group, "Now, the legislature didn't pass any laws that brought this about, it's an executive thing, administrative thing, executive administrative." And so I said, "You can blame your governor for that; he's the one in charge of the executive department." Greeley says, pops up and he boomed right out, "That's a lot of political gobbledy gook," he says, "that wasn't done by the bureau of, by the executive, that was done by the bureau of taxation." Then I guess he realized that he'd put his foot in it, and he sat down and I looked at him and smiled to show, so he could see I wasn't mad, though he sounded like he was, and I wouldn't do that if I didn't know his habits. And I said to Emory, "You say that that's not an executive department but in the bureau of taxation."

STU: Now this is Emory who said this?

EE: Yup. So I said, "We have three departments of government, right? Executive, legislative and judicial." Now I'd say, "Would you say it's in the judicial part, Emory, part of government?" He said, "No." "Would you say it was in the legislative part?" I just said "I don't think it was." He says, "No." "Well there's only one other place to go, the executive." So I said, again to try to be lightweight, light, talking about it, I said, "Then it's in the executive department, right in the lap of Burton Cross." And he sat; he didn't get up the next time. So then Bishop gets up, down the corner

STU: Now, what was Neil Bishop? Was he a legislator at this time?

EE: He'd been a senator. He'd got the biggest vote as an independent running for governor two years before than anybody had ever gotten up to that time. They called him a "celebrated independent". Articulate as hell, you know, he was, he spoke in a low tone, but he seemed to, well, like McCarthy, Gene McCarthy. So anyway, I'd never met the man. I'd heard about him through Greeley. He gets up down in the corner and he says, "I've got to agree with Mr. Elwell as far as Burt Cross and education is concerned." He says, "He's not an education man. He's not an educated man." He said, "They say he's a highway man, I say he's a highwayman." Popped this off and here there are all the Republican candidates there for the primary, you know.

STU: So at this time Neil was in the leg-, was still a senator?

EE: No, he wasn't a senator, he'd run for governor previously. And what happened was, and

I've probably got around here somewhere some pictures, but when he ran for governor. He would, for this reason, that he was a candidate in the primary against Burt Cross and another fellow down the street here,

STU: In '52?

EE: In '52, two years before. And they, when it came time for the election, the people here in the Christian Civic League were very aggressive. And Cross cultivated them; they were on his side. They got out a brochure for the three candidates and Bishop was a, I guess you could say ugly looking person, although, not repulsive anyway but just coarse features and a jaw way out here, you know, and he was very sensitive to it. They got out a brochure, the Christian Civic League, and I know the person who printed it for them, he's gone now, no sense talking about it. But they snowed Bishop's picture, which was bad enough before they snowed it, and then they just put white flecks on the picture. So here's Cross who was immaculate, groomed, you know, and they show him and [Frank] Hussey, that's two, and then they've got Bishop off here, whatever reason, they didn't like him. And they had ways of doing that. I can remember when I met the director or spokesman for the group

STU: Who was that?

EE: Oh, let me, well, I could probably tell. It's a woman over here in our local church, our church. Anyway, she said to me afterwards, she said, "Why Mr. Elwell, when I joined the church here in Augusta, I never expected to see you a member of the Methodist Church." I look at her and I said, "Why would you ever say that?" She says, "Well after your record in the legislature." "Well," I says, "I still don't understand what there was in my record in the legislature." She says, "Well, we never could quite put our finger on you." I didn't tell her that's just what I planned it be, you know, because I figured when I was in the legislature, on the moral issues, stay out of it. I says, "I've got other things that are more important and I haven't got any strong feelings." So anyway, this was, they were pretty adamant and pretty arbitrary making their decisions.

So Bishop resented it, he lost the election and two guys here in Augusta fought it out for the nomination. And I knew afterwards, I didn't know over a period, quite a period of years I knew Hussey, that I've known some things about Cross, you know. I've been to his home and visited with him and talk with him now on the phone. And he's ninety-five, he's still as much up with things as to how government is run as most anybody in the city.

One day, for instance, the city made a mistake, the newspaper made a mistake in printing the size of a bond issue put out by the state and Burt called them up, said, "That bond issue was bigger than my whole budget when I was governor." So, fact was, they'd made a mistake and he didn't know it. So when I read his article I called him to tell him that they'd made a mistake. And I haven't heard more from him since. Well, he called me back, I left a message and he called me back, but the bond issue was printed for something like two hundred and seventy-seven million dollars. The budget back then was right around that amount, maybe even less. But it shows that, the newspaper that published a retraction, and all the people in the community read it, Burt says, "Well who but you would pick that up," you know. But the fact is that even now he takes the

pulse of the legislature and knows what's going on. In that respect, you've got to give the guy credit.

STU: So Neil gets up at this seems like a Republican meeting, primary debate or something?

EE: What's this?

STU: Where you were speaking and you were talking about the education and re-evaluation.

EE: I'm trying to think the name of the group, but it was Donald Thayer, in Swanville was chairman, he was Republican county chairman. And so he was partisan and very vocal, and it didn't bother him a bit to go out and talk with other Republicans. What they were doing, the local people down there, what they were doing was putting their own local problems, municipal problems. They had the Cross program down there at the legislature and he thought it would be inefficient, and maybe was strictly from the state's standpoint as far as their budget's concerned. They had just put on a sales tax not very long before, two cents, and I raised it to three, put the bill in that raised it to three. The first time I put the bill in was for Ed Muskie in my first term, and the next time I put it in my second term and it went. So I got credit for that when it come time for me to run for reelection, I had that wrapped around my neck. But that wasn't the reason why I didn't get my third time elected, because I'd spent the time, my time on the school issue. See we, I'll get back to that.

So we had Thayer and Greeley, Bishop, and of course the usual people; Byron Heath was a big factor among the Republican group. I don't know that he had any opposition that night, but he picked up on it. And election night, the day before election, election eve, he came by my house just at dusk and asked me for material for his cars. The sheriff's department had the strongest organization in the county and they asked me for material to put in the back seat of his cars so that the people would know. He didn't have to speak to them about it, they'd know that he was hauling for Ed. I (*unintelligible word*) maybe some of my material went out, too. I didn't have a hell of a lot.

So starting from there, the next morning after this, that meeting, I went down to Bishop's to talk with him, see how much interest I could generate in his, get him involved in the, if I could get him involved in the campaign and Guy and Phyllis, Guy Twombly and Phyllis Murphy went with me. And up to that time I had very little partisan exposure in the county. I'd been a town manager and, no, yeah, I'd been a town manager and been on the school committee for eight years and chairman of the board of selectmen for four, three or four. And so when we get down to the house, I said to them, "Why don't you let me go in because he might, you know, be cooperative if he gets partisan" He was basically brought up as a Republican.

Matter of fact, let me tell you the story that he told to that group that night. He said, "You know, when I was growing up," he says, "I was brought up in a good Republican home but I was told to stay away from them Democrats because they're the rum party." He says, "And then later I thought I saw some Republicans drinking rum and," he says, "now I've got proof of it, they can drink just as much rum as any Democrat, no," he said, "and they can drink as much rum as any Democrat and there's Fred Palmer over on that corner to prove it." A Republican candidate for

county commissioner, his face was red and three sheets to the wind, you know. Happy as could be, just laughing right along with everybody else because it was, not realizing the joke was on him. But this is how incisive Bishop could be, you know?

So when I get there, I say, "Knock on the door," he says, "Well, we waste a lot of time in politics don't we, Eben?" As much to say, 'I know what you're here for'. And I soft pedaled that (*unintelligible phrase*), but anyway, I get inside, he invited me in the bedroom (*aside to someone else*). So this is where his briefcase was, which was like a doctor's bag, about this wide, maybe it was a doctor's bag, but it had all the material in it from the previous campaign. And he was, he really hurt about the way he was treated and all, you know. So he starts taking the stuff out of that briefcase to show me, and I forget how it come out that he (*unintelligible word*), you know, when I stood on the steps and he said I was wasting my time to getting in there. But anyway, I guess mostly I just listened. And as he pulled the different things out, he had for instance newspapers folded the usual way, center. And he pulled that out and here's the headline, and the headline is, one of them speaks to a twelve thousand dollar bribe accepted by a former governor, another one, that guy who was convicted of something in relation to the liquor commission. Incidentally, this was a liquor deal that the bribe was supposed to apply to. Another one was that van they found, had a number for the governor, to the governor; this made the headlines. So as he pulled those out, I took them aside that were colorful, you know, useful. And we got, (*unintelligible phrase*) month or so.

George Hale, did you, Don said he knew George, remembered George Hale; he was advance man for Adlai Stevenson? He's still alive, I'd like to get to speak to him, see how much of this he remembers because he was a, it was a key position that he was in. Television had just come in. There was the fall, the election came out, that is, come into, more people had it for that election. Only a few got it at first, but by the election we all wanted it, you know. And matter of fact, I'll tell you a story in connection with that, and I'll get back to George Hale.

But the highway supervisors in the counties were all, had to be Republicans, they were appointed and they had to be Republicans. But they lived in the rural communities and their feelings were alot like the other people in the communities. So one of the workmen who worked for the local supervisor lived next door to him, and they bought a TV set. And his wife said to me one day, she said, "We pull the curtains down on Harold's side and we watch Ed on television." This, his mother to one of the two cousins I, she was the mother of one of the two cousins I told you about. They always called him Ed. They felt, they'd been down and met him and spent an hour listening to him. So when it come that night at the polls, when they knew he'd won, before Ed knew we knew by the turnover that was taking place here in our own community, you know, pretty big, by big enough numbers. Incidentally, Ed apparently looked it up. I don't know that I did, but he said that, told folks in the caucus one day that, they were giving me a hard time and I wasn't there. He said he couldn't criticize a man that got more votes in the election than he did. But I was down at the bottom of the ticket and he was up at the top, so I probably could get those numbers somewhere.

But anyway, we contact George Hale. I don't know who made the con-, don't remember who made the contact. He says, "I can give you a half an hour for free." 'Special events' they called it. Half an hour on TV was something, you know, for the number of people who are going to

watch it. So I took those newspapers, set them on a typical easel that you see down at the store when they have a display, so that different headlines come over each one, got those so the camera would pick them up. Bishop never mentioned them, a lot of people recall seeing them, you know. And they brought him on, he didn't photograph good at all, they put, painted, the screen was black, you know, black and white anyway, but shadows and all so that, but effective as hell, far as what he had to say was concerned, far as stimulating Republicans to think differently. So we got away with that, and then come the question of the, we had straight balloting in Maine then, you remember what that was?

STU: Um-hmm, big box?

EE: Big box, yeah. And so this is where we could have lost. You had to get people to split the tickets. Because who would vote for Margaret Smith and that particular, down the row, you know, all the way down. We were probably running against Margaret Smith without saying so, we had to be concerned that they didn't mark that big box. So he goes on with the ballot, blown up, and he was showing people how to properly split a ticket, didn't mention Margaret Smith, how to properly ticket.

Well the first thing was that there was interest in knowing how to vote, have your vote counted; the next was by getting half an hour him talking about it and people going to work the next morning and chatting with each other, there was a psychological side to it where they were thinking, well, maybe we should and who are we going to vote for, you know. So he goes down with his pointer, he picked out certain names, just by coincidence he picked one of his favorite Democrats that's going to run against a Republican, got my name in there, and so we had in total an hour on TV, how much would that cost today, you know, to get?

STU: Quite a few dollars.

EE: Yeah.

STU: Was it prime time?

EE: Yeah, yeah. So, and George Hale, he must have had partisan feelings or he wouldn't have been with Stevenson. By the way, I've got here, well, we were on another subject here. We, well that, this is it, we've covered haven't we, far as TV is concerned, far as Bishop's concerned?

STU: Yup, I was just, you know, I mean, you talked about how the core of the Republicans for Muskie campaign, the major players were Neil Bishop and Ed Greeley. Can you remember any other people that were prominent in the Republicans for Muskie?

EE: Yup, Thayer in Swanville, and then there was up in Palmyra, you've heard of Perry Furbush, other people must have mentioned him. He worked with Ed in OPS and he was working there with a fellow named Millet who joined up with him and that helped it on that end, too. I was trying to think if there was anybody that I've left out. Anyway, one of the school superintendents down in Searsmont, Louis Gray, was a member. And I think maybe the way it

shaped up would be interesting to you. That, Ed's a very cautious person.

STU: Greeley or Muskie?

EE: Muskie. Very cautious, conservative in the way he dealt, so he was reluctant to meet these people face to face. He didn't want to speak and for him having to, you know, justify what they said. So he kept an arm's length relationship. I could see that this might put them off, you know, so I tried to bridge the gap between. They would go down and ostensibly write a speech for him. Well, you don't need somebody to write a speech for Ed Muskie, you know. He knows what's going on, he can do his own articulating. So I remember telling them, "Well look, you get it done, I'll see that he gets it." So one morning at six o'clock I had a speech delivered to him, because I just picked it up, and they worked all night putting it together. But he had it, down to his camp over here to China Lake, South China, but how much he used it, whatever, you know, I don't know. But I think that the fact that he and Frank didn't know how the election was going until about eleven o'clock says that he didn't, wasn't that close to the ground, his ear wasn't that close to the ground anyway, because we knew at eight o'clock when the numbers, you know, that were coming in as we get in previous years.

And I seen the numbers on Stevenson that fall, matter of fact, wife's got a picture of him being in Belfast and pass you the picture and you would never pick him out as an important candidate. The newspaper got him at a disadvantage and he's bent down to the ground and they take the picture of the mayor and the owner of the local plant. But he got probably a third the number of votes that we got later, I mean as president.

STU: Who are you talking about, are you talking about Adlai Stevenson?

EE: Yeah, yeah. So that kind of sets the picture for what we were, where we were at. But the word got out and something about it, there's some people here in Augusta I'm sure, like Peter Damborg who was with the Let's see, Don Hansen was with the Gannett papers,

STU: Don Hansen?

EE: Don, he wrote the book on Ed Muskie, do you remember that? Remember somebody that's prominent in that book named Richard MacMahon, Dick MacMahon? Do you remember that? Well, the first or second time he come into the county, Dick was driving him and I remember his personal flash of temper of Ed. He was tailgating and he damn near bumped somebody, you know. Ed says, "Fine thing," he says, "I get my name in the paper tomorrow morning for rear ending somebody." You know? This was a concern all the way along that he, this being (*unintelligible phrase*), because Greeley had said to me, and I know they both said the same thing. He says, "When you go in there," he says, "Don't be looking for all the people that are with you, they'll all say they're with you but it's the ones that's going to be against you that you want to be watching." Well, anyway, Ed was very cautious in everything that he did.

So I found myself, some thirty years, twenty years later when I was establishing the State Housing Authority, I was the organizing director of the Maine State Housing Authority, another multi-billion dollar program, tax exempt and self-supporting to all intents and purposes. And

they were displacing the Federal Housing Administration. It was that thing that George Romney who was secretary of housing and urban development wanted to get back to the local level wherever they could. But we, I had that tax exempted so we could go up and build schools and fund them. And so McMahan of course being administrator began to feel the pinch that they'd do away with this agency, which they did. But before they did, he was hurting and he would make snide remarks. And one day one got in the paper, the newspaper. And he had said somewhere that I was dealing with old cronies at the Housing Authority. It was one thing I didn't do. So I had a job to do, I was committed to Housing. I bought a thousand mortgages for seventeen million dollars when I was treasurer of the state, out of petty cash. I got that petty cash by revising their system, leaving money in the checking accounts, fourteen million dollars the year Ed was elected, in checking accounts, giving away the interest. Hansen, I think, spoke to it. And I put the money into something that would help Maine and pay us a good return. This we got fifty basis points, or half of one percent more than we could get on similar government insured investments and these mortgages I bought were insured.

So anyway, (I forgot where I was on my [story]), we got by Bishop and Greeley in the election. So when it comes election time I think we had about a fourth of the registered voters in the county, and of course we tried to feed my campaign to everybody, you know, Republicans and Democrats alike. And a few (*unintelligible word*) Republicans just put that right up there first, the (*unintelligible word*) Republican. And this is where Bishop come in so handy because they voted for him as an Independent. And you know, the people that he knew he could influence, he was such an effective speaker. And so he kind of put the thing up just like [Angus] King has done now. King is bringing something different to the table, [than] what Ed brought. But there was a time when I can remember saying that this county's lost half its population in a hundred years. We're growing the kids and educating them and out they go. Nothing here for them to come back to. And this was the truth, you know, and it hit home. The, one man had reported, one of the supporters in the final analysis, and said that he'd found sixty thousand acres of field, once field, in the county where people

End of Side One
Side Two

STU: Let's talk a little bit about, if you will, Muskie's relationship to rural farmers and rural people, in general. How did he get support in rural Maine?

EE: Well first off, Bishop had set the stage, as far as the atmosphere was concerned by saying the, telling the problems he had on the negative side, especially with David Stevens and bouncing it back to Cross. Greeley had, very articulate, very highly respected in his town, and in the county.

STU: So they got the word out through that one television spot?

EE: Well, I think first that meeting with the farm bureau, local farm bureau that we were at before, with the panel. And so the word got out then and at least part of it ran in the local newspaper, and the local newspaper was *The Republican Journal*, very partisan, but see, old, Albert Molten, Jr. was the editor, who was the son of the local Republican chairman in Brooks

and

STU: Now, when you say the county, you're talking about Waldo County, not Aroostook, right?

EE: Right. I'd forgotten that there was only one big county. But when you got Bangor, you got up to Aroostook, too. And so far as they were concerned, you know, they kind of worked around so they were throwing all the problems back into Cross' lap. And when you get five thousand people that you signed on as members, which is the number they were throwing around, I didn't . . .

STU: For the farm bureau, or for the Republicans?

EE: Republicans for Muskie, that they had five thousand members. And I have no reason to doubt it, but certainly more than that showed up at the election. So that was the atmosphere that, as I say, that he worked in, but he wouldn't ride those issues home. He'd come on as an intelligent, forthright clean cut candidate and obviously committed to want to do something, running. They didn't know but he did, that he couldn't win that time, wasn't supposed to win because you've got an incumbent governor and he'd built up his machine, and you run next time. Get known this time then you run to win next time, and that was his philosophy. And like I say, I think it caught him by surprise when he did win, because he didn't know what support he'd gotten over in the rural areas. And there was lots of it because of this thing blossoming down there in Belfast at the panel meeting, and then Bishop taking it on TV.

And I don't know how many people that meant, got, you know, but probably somebody in every neighborhood would have a TV. And coming from a Republican, Bishop had been a Republican all his life, and Greeley. And I don't know, it's Miller up in Palmyra, what his background was, but he was a local leader. So Ed kept (*unintelligible word*) in the campaign, probably Don could tell you better about the detail of that.

But I can remember one thing that impressed me was that he knew his own capabilities as a debater and this basic, this was probably the strongest point he had that carried him where he went. Nobody could stand up to that guy in a real tough, you know, rough and tumble argument without somewhere along the line he'd come on so strong he'd intimidate them. Even in the Senate, in Washington. But if you knew him, why you, it wasn't a case of intimidation but you're gonna cross him, you know, you gotta figure out the final analysis, how the thing's going to come out.

But he invited Cross, he challenged him to a debate and Cross was always too busy, had another appointment, what all. So one night Cross was, had, his schedule took him to Camden, the steps of the City Hall where he was going to speak. Ed was there without any invitation, and he, but where was Cross, you know. Cross got worried that he was going to be there so he, as Ed said in his speech, he says, "I told him that I would be here at seven o'clock in Camden, steps of Camden City Hall." He says, "Where is he?" He said, "Just as far away from me as he can get and still be within the confines of the state of Maine," down at Eastport. Then he goes on and he points his finger, you know. I don't know if you ever, did you know him at all?

STU: No.

EE: Anyway, his fingers were, he was a tall man, long fingers. Waves that finger and he says, “Of all of the stumbling, fumbled, bongling administrations, you’ve got to really write Cross off,” because on the face of it, on the grounds that he wasn’t there to debate with him, you know, which was still a strong point and the newspapers had to carry it. Well *The Bangor Daily* didn’t roll over, they had, [Lorin] Doc Arnold was the political writer

STU: It wasn’t, *The Bangor Daily* at the time was really a Republican voice, not a?

EE: Yeah, matter of fact, it was afterwards. I’ll give you an, I’ve got a picture in here that I could show you to, in fact I’ll make a note of it, to prove what you’ve just said. That writes about like my pens do. Anyway, so they were, had their way of favoring the Republican candidates. So all I can say is that the voters responded and at eight o’clock at night we knew from the number of people we’d hauled in and their conversations as they come in, you know, expressing themselves how they felt, how the election was going. But I wanted to get the country total so I headed for Belfast, which is where *The Republican Journal* tabulated the vote. Ed and Frank were in Waterville, and I think they went down to John Martin Manor, it’s now John Martin Manor, the Jefferson Hotel. Ed was always going to the nearest Chinese place, he liked Chinese food. And so like I say, I drove to Belfast and back, heard the count down there, it was bed time. And I didn’t know that they were having a gathering, far as Ed was concerned, nothing was said about it. So it was certainly quite an upset and the people that were involved, like the guy there the editor of *The Republican Journal* came aboard as far as I was concerned, wrote good editorials and anything they did, you know, he put it in a good light.

And that’s the year, that’s the time when I introduced the school legislation and I didn’t go into leadership that year. Here again, see, Ed had a concern about rural Maine which was represented by arch conservative Republicans, that was the line. He come from the city, lived in Waterville then. He was progressive himself and liberal, and the legislature made up, a lot of them were farmers. And a farm, being on a farm isn’t necessarily a way to get well informed or well educated, you know. And he had a concern about some of the decisions they made without having the logic that he thought ought to go into them. So anyway, I was rural, and when it come time to select the leadership, he hand picked the leaders. I wasn’t included and I said, “Okay, that’s good from the standpoint of my school legislation because I, you know, I can report down the middle of my term dealing with what, where we have five-to-one Republicans so I’ve got to sell it to that group, and I’ve got to (*unintelligible phrase*).”

So one of the first things I had was, Ed called me in, the department of education noticed that I’d been a school committee member, they asked me to carry a bill for them which would have given them an architect. The year that we first voted for the school construction. You build a billion dollars worth of school construction without that architect, because Ed Muskie said, called me in to tell me that he didn’t want that in the program. And so far as I was concerned it’s not a big deal compared to the bill itself, my bill, I let it go. And they tell me over to the State House that two years ago they got that architect, in forty years. I backed down, which I wouldn’t have done probably later; just sheer respect for the guy. And I did know that he could veto the bill if I got it

passed and I would waste a lot of good will getting it passed if I did good. And in fact I would have known what I would have done about trying to run a bill through with him as governor because whatever he wanted, you know, we had respect for him and just didn't stop to ask or second guess, you know. But that's one time when it worked that way.

The next time we had a question about legislation, the next session, the first session the house enacted my bill and the senate wanted to have a continuous study of it. So they raised twenty-five thousand dollars to send to, to pay to a firm in Chicago, the Jacobs Commission, to study the legislation and come back and make recommendations. They recommended that my formula should stand, but also they said if you're going to do this construction, you ought to make sure that your grouping of schools is such, to be efficient. So they required a high school to have three hundred students, it sounded reasonable.

Now to get a high school down to Waldo County that had three hundred students, we took eleven towns, put them together, closed five high schools. Can you imagine closing five high schools in one sweep? And built one, and on a different site than any of those five for political reasons, you know. There's so much feeling for each high school, the alumni from one school versus the other, somebody had a basketball team and they got roughed up or something in some town, but they were pride, mostly pride. So I've done research since that tells me that in those eleven towns where we have one high school and five grade schools, I've located a hundred and nine school houses that existed in the 1870 census. Every one of the school houses had a school board, a school district; was handled as a school district. Now we're down to one school district with a, you know, a small high school really, three hundred kids, you probably went to bigger ones than that.

So we got into the next session and there was something wrong with the formula that the consultants worked up as far as the subsidy itself, not the construction subsidy, they agreed on that, that's what my bill was. But they had a former commissioner as a consultant to upgrade the formula to match it because my legislation said that they should be reimbursed for school construction expenses, including the interest at the same rate they were for school maintenance, teachers, whatever. And so they got to tinkering with that formula as far as school maintenance is concerned, the basic formula, it was already on the books. And it's complicated but once you get it, you know, you apply things to it.

So they made a mistake, and sometimes I wonder if it was a mistake in the formula, but it was wrong, you know, the calculation was wrong, and we could lose the bill. The superintendent had to put, the commissioner of education, that was the key man, Warren Hill. So I, he said to me one day when I found the error, I set up to eleven, twelve o'clock working on it, thinking that I was close to it, that I ought to be able to, see, it kicked out of the computer down there in Augusta for all the state. And I was trying down at the local level, knowing how the distribution should be made down there, to see if I could find an item in the budget that was off. And sure enough, I did, I went to bed and about two o'clock, I couldn't get to sleep, and about two o'clock in the morning I found it.

What it was, every tuition-receiving town in the state was being docked by the amount of that tuition twice. They intended to do it once, they took it out twice. And the man who was doing

the programming, he had a, went around with the sheets in his pocket, copies of what the law was going to be, but he'd programmed it on the first page. Then he turned it over and at the very end, probably forgetting, programming it again. And it didn't cost my town an awful lot of money, five thousand dollars, though it cost Gardiner down here a sizable amount, over a hundred thousand, which for a town, back in those days that was money.

So after I talked with the commissioner and his being pretty damn happy that I'd found it, matter of fact I went by and showed my local superintendent on the way up. Didn't have a hell of a lot of sleep that night, you know, thinking now I've got to get this, get back to the legislature and correct this. So I tried to turn the consultant around. And I don't recall all the conclusions to what his problem was except that he's just over the hill, I guess, and couldn't quite keep up with what was happening.

So I head for Ed's office to tell him that that was the error and that's what we ought to be correcting. He was just going to lunch, he had his hat on and was just walking through the door. And he could see that I, I guess my expression, that I was uptight. He says, "Eben, what's your problem?" He says, "Come on in," and he hung his hat up and he took his coat off and, on his lunch hour, and I laid it out for him. And I said the guy that I just talked to is just being plain arbitrary. And so he goes on and, what did he say? Well, 'we didn't want to upset the bill'.

And we had a hearing in an hour and a hearing at one o'clock and I was supposed to go down to the hearing and support the bill. And he says, I told him that, he says, "I don't want you speaking for me with any reservations." He wasn't for the bill the first time I got it through but he was the se-, this one after it had gone to study. That's where he was cautious. Wanted to know what he didn't know of his knowledge he wanted to get (*unintelligible word*) on. So I had told him that the guy who sponsored it was, who was, the consultant, was arbitrary and when he told me that he didn't want me to go down, you know, with reservations speaking for him. I said, "Ed, I guess then we got problems. Far as I'm concerned, if I got to take that bill the way it is, it's no damn good," and I threw it down on the rug beside his desk. I was standing up and he was sitting down. He looked up with that big grin, he said, "Eben, now who's being arbitrary?" Reached over and poked the phone to his secretary, asked her to get person in the senate, speaker of the house, the Republican floor leaders in both houses, and the Democratic floor leaders in both houses, the commissioner of education, the sponsor.

The second time around I didn't sponsor the bill because the Republicans were in charge, they took the bill because they knew it was a good bill and gave it to one of their people. So anyway, he asked her to ask them to come in, gave them a time, I waited, and he laid it out, laid out what I had told him. And the guy who was being arbitrary as I said, the guy that was the consultant, was in the group. And so one of the (*telephone interruption*), so Ed lays it out for them, just what I had told him, and the Republican floor leader in the senate who was also I think on education, the education committee, he turned around to the

STU: Who was this?

EE: Seth Lowe.

STU: Now who were these people? Seth Lowe is the

EE: He's the floor leader.

STU: Floor leader. Who was the minority leader?

EE: We didn't have enough so they even counted, we had three. So they got all they needed, you know. Jean Boucher was, Jean Charles Boucher from Biddeford [*sic* he represented Lewiston] was a Democratic leader. Previous session to that

STU: He was there?

EE: Pardon?

STU: So he was at this meeting?

EE: No, we had, I think there was a different leader that year. First year he was so Republican senator, he talked about caucusing in a phone booth

STU: Democratic leader.

EE: Democratic senator, so, let me try to think now, it's awhile ago. Bob Haskell, commissioner of education Warren Hill, and their leader was a guy from Aroostook, but Lowe was on the floor a lot so he must have been a leader or an assistant leader. And he had also previously been chairman of the committee on education. But all the people that called the shots were there, and Lowe, down his way they pronounce my name "Eeben" instead of Eben, and he says to the consultant, how come you don't figure this the way "Eeben" does in the first place. The guy who was arbitrary when I talked to him, Wilton, (*unintelligible phrase*) on that group, he says, "He's right." That either should be net to net or gross to gross," which, what he was saying was that he had, he didn't say it in so many words but he'd taken the tuition receipts away from the towns twice, and he was supposed to take them away once.

STU: Before this he was disagreeing with you, saying he didn't do this?

EE: He wouldn't acknowledge to an error, that there was an error in the formula, in his formula and the thing is

STU: Wasn't it plain?

EE: the way I remember it and the way I read it at the time and I didn't say it at the time, but you asked me a question, I'm going to answer it. The guy was a retired commissioner of education, very likeable fellow. But I think he was a little demented from old age, and you can't fault a guy for that, you know. So, he was slow, put it that way. Change the word demented to slow. And so when they, as I say, when they threw it at him until he felt he had to defend himself there, he gave up, he gave in. So I asked, said to them, "Now, here, I want to see the bill pass, I said I'd rather you didn't go out of this room and involve me in the solution." I want to

keep it out of politics. And that year, at that time I was assistant floor leader, Ed had nominated me for assistant floor leader, and I carried, on the floor I carried certain debates.

STU: Of the legislature?

EE: Yup, but I kept, some of the debates I was asked to carry, basically Adam Walsh was the floor leader and he carried the ones that I, but the ones I knew about like highways and schools and rural problems. Those are the things that I handled.

So anyway, we get back into the house and we didn't have much of a, the first time around, we didn't have much support in the beginning but we generated a vote ninety-nine to twenty-four, and I have a, found a clipping where I mentioned that to the members when they voted the second time the in next term the same bill that they'd supported by a vote of ninety-nine, twenty-four.

Then the senate cut it off for the study and I asked, remember asking them to get out and support it because it was probably the most progressive single piece of legislation that we passed in our generation. You look back on it and wonder with the consolidation we've got at our schools, the quality of the education we have. Have you seen all the numbers on Maine competing with the other states? I've got a, something right on the other side of the door, don't (*gets up - slight break*) . . . the, see the thing is, with that school construction bill in here, we had state aid for highway construction on the statutes. And the towns would get matched two to one if they built a road, or if they build a state road, which was quite an incentive. So you go to town meeting and you say, now look, you spend a dollar here, they'll give you back two over there. You've got twenty-thousand miles of road in Maine. They built, they got twenty-one thousand now.

STU: Now this is during, twenty thousand during what period of time?

EE: No, no, no, cumulatively we have built in Maine, at the time we were there, cumulatively the state, the local people . . .

STU: Yeah, but from when to when?

EE: Cumulatively it would be at the end, '54. In '54 we had twenty-one thousand miles of road starting from zero.

STU: Okay, starting from zero.

EE: Right? Now we have twenty-one thousand miles of road forty years later, so that'll give you an idea.

So my theory was, and I spent all my time, I got two hundred dollars a year for salary when I was chairman of the selectmen, spent all my time at it, except a few things that I'd do, well, I did in my second term, I took a job with an insurance company, but spent an awful lot of time just educating myself as to what the problems were and what the programs were, you know. And so I considered that there's a serious problem in that the state had never, I emphasize that, never put up a dollar for local school construction. Towns had to do it themselves. Well, can you imagine,

somebody's building a lot down here, we're talking about a twenty-five million dollar school, to replace the one we've got, and aren't going to get any state aid unless somebody, we write it into the law. And, but if they were to get state aid that would be an incentive, you know. You could go to the voters and, so the result was that we got a lot of one room schools and a lot of sweat equity in them by the local people building them.

And the end result was that with those, like, for instance, the high schools that I talked about before, the five, Ed called them the three teacher high schools. Had to have a course for the commercial kids, had to have a course for the college kids, going on to college, and the general course. And the end result was that very few kids were going to college.

I had a son, when I lived down there in the last year that I was there he was a junior in high school, came down here to get him into the high school, in a good high school, get him into college the next year. He turned out to be the only boy in that school that went to college, went on to college. And there was about two thousand people within the communities whose children were in that school. It's a pretty damn bleak record. But it was that way across rural Maine. So now, just for size, try this. I'm saying that I was down to Memorial High School, Morse Memorial High School in Brooks, and I had, this isn't particularly well organized because I was doing something else at the time I got this out. (*Reads*) "The length of time it took for me to school in an unheated vehicle, virtually all college students who can commute in Maine, can get a college education by commuting in a safe heated vehicle. As the author of the state aid for school construction statute, chairman of the sponsoring committee for district three, former chairman of the sports directors, it's heart warming to see the results being heralded both here and nationally." Now, this is *The Republican Journal* in Belfast.

"Come a long way since the 1870 census when what is now the area of district three had a hundred and nine school houses, school house locations, where we now have six. Every school then was a school district with a school committee. It certainly speaks well for the parents and tax payers' foresight who had to vote in town meeting to close each of those hundred and three schools over the last century. School districts across Maine are not only providing a better education but doing so less expensively than cities of an equal size and equal number of students. Credit voter involvement in budget meetings."

And this is the part that, where the voter would know because they have, they're not going. "Notice in your report of the June elections that twice as many voters participated in the school budget vote than voted in the state primary election. Thank you Republican Journal for your tabulation of the votes by each town." See, they're involved. "When we read reports of the efficacy of school districts nationally and find two Waldo County districts in the top ten among thirteen thousand districts, then we see Maine which has achieved nearly a statewide consolidation with students rating first in NEA fourth grade reading tests, tied for first in seventh grade science, and first in eighth grade math, we realize that our students are excelling in a world class educational system, which also includes a good technical school, good county technical school. Consolidation has allowed class groupings to maximize the aptitudes and training of the teachers. Good teachers are more easily attracted to teach in these situations. Transportation was a major concern for those proposing school consolidation. Prior to that, students living in towns without a high school had to find their own way to and from the school." Can you

imagine in a winter day, girls waiting on corners or whatever? “This contributed to absenteeism, as well as dropouts; teenage pregnancy was more rampant than now.” By the way, I saw a couple days ago in the paper that Maine is now fifth from the other side of the graph on teenage pregnancies. “Students are now transported in safety and comfort by busses to school in the morning and home at night, students enjoy one of the most wholesome living environments on this earth.”

I keep in touch with my own classmates and friends in the county; I laugh when they laugh and grieve when they grieve, and I rejoice when I recall that we were on the right side of history in education. The president of the United States has recommended to Congress a nationwide plan to fund debt service on school buildings, a mirror image of our program here in Maine. One of the proponents of consolidation who has since passed away used to say, “Eben, it’s a might precious cargo you have on those busses.” Indeed it is. I wish I could tell him the school buses drove thirty-three million miles in Maine last year without a fatal accident because the bus drivers were being conscientious and well trained in driving the buses that are well maintained over the roads to which the town and state officials pay special concern, courtesy of the school superintendents who are up before daylight checking road conditions on storm days and winter. The bottom line is that parents, school officials and teachers are usually involved in providing a world class education within the Democratic process. And Waldo County offers a wholesome living environment and schools that are reasonably free from drugs and guns. But that’s, I read all those different reports and I’d attach them way up here, you know, I thought somebody ought to tabulate them, to come from where we come from, without our kids going on to college . . .

STU: This bill was passed in what year?

EE: I introduced it in ‘54. It got hung up between the house and the senate. The senate was on the defensive so they said we’ll place the bill, they call it a substitution, we’ll give you twenty-five thousand dollars to send it out to consultants. Okay, that’s in ‘55. We’d been elected in ‘54. Budget session didn’t convene until the first week of ‘55. So the speaker of the house, the last night of the session, and I had, well, I had tried to cultivate rural Republican support, and I had it in the house, but they said that vote, four to one vote. But the senate, because there were, I had damn few votes in there, but I had one very good friend who was former superintendent of schools in my home town.

So the legislation that I speak of here is the school construction phase of the law, which both sides had to be put together but the fact is that if they couldn’t get the help on constructing schools, there was no incentive to consolidate. So when they came back, because I told you, they gave the bill that had been my bill, with this recommended addition to it, to the chairman of appropriations committee who was Republican. So my reaction was, “They’re going to pass it, right?” They put their own label on it, so they did, but the people in the house knew who had started the thing rolling. And so on that basis, I guess, that plus the fact that when they wanted somebody to sponsor the sales tax that was there, they figured, he’s selfless at least, you know, you’re going to win votes sponsoring the sales tax. So that would have been prior to our, my meeting with Muskie about the formula, just about two years. You know, early on in the session. So, you got that copy, did I give it to you? So that’s not accurate, that one abbreviation there, that should be, it says MEA, it should be NEA because the MEA is the Maine Assessment,

Maine Educational Assessment, NEA is national. So

STU: You said that Maine was at the other end of the spectrum in terms of teen pregnancy. What end of the spectrum do you mean?

EE: Well, when my son was in college, my daughter-in-law who just called my grandson. They did papers and they'd come home and they'd kind of talk behind their hands about the illegitimacy along the Maine coast, and rural Maine. And it was something that, you know, they felt badly about. Their professors did. And they didn't put it in the newspaper, but it was there. And on the national scale, I didn't see the reports then but this is what they were being taught in school, that we were way down in, well, I'll just give you for an example. You got a daughter, sixteen years old, say, which I know a girl in that category who is the daughter of the fellow that told me I had valuable cargo on those buses. I've seen her setting on a street corner waiting for somebody she knew to give her a ride home. Well, there's a difference between being picked up at home under supervision at school, and then being delivered back home at the door at night. That's where the thirty-three million miles come in, a lot of travel. So it had benefits other than just the convenience. So I don't know where I could find that earlier statistic, but we're fifth nationally in a particular group, and I think the commissioner of education had it in, just as I wrote that article. I know the secretary to the commissioner.

STU: Now what were the other issues, main issues, in '54 through '56. You talked about education, you talked about highways, what were the other main issues that you dealt with?

EE: Well, I was on the highway committee and I had this interest in education. The educationers asked me to sponsor a bill giving them an architect and I told you about what happened to that. Anything that had to do with agriculture, I was on the agriculture committee. I handled, I brought a bill in that would provide a sealer of weights and measures, a truck that would go around the state and check all the platform scales and gasoline pumps and whatever, which is still in force. I didn't draft that bill.

STU: What were Muskie's pet issues?

EE: Well, he was a little thin on highways. He wanted to, and Perry Furbush was the guy who steered him on that. He wanted to have the state to be allowed to anticipate the state aid road money, the two-to-one matching. And they could go ahead and, at that time they could go two years ahead and they'd go to the bank and borrow the money and they'd be repaid on a note, the note would be repaid by that return from the state for two thirds of the expense.

This got, you know, if you've ever looked at a map, (*unintelligible phrase*), it was a different generation, but they had a system of little short pieces of road. When they'd come through a given town, they'd buy, they'd build their share and go here and the next town, when they come through, they'd build a little portion of their share depending on how much money they had. And so they had a map that they called the Angeworm network, with so many Angeworms on a map. So this, instead of building like an eighth of a mile road or a tenth, you could build maybe a quarter of a mile. It was still not a lot but it's what built the twen-, they all added up to the twenty-one thousand miles of roadway. So this is, Ed had gone with the, his plan as against the

Republican plan was to have a bond issue, ten million dollar bond issue

STU: What's a bond issue?

EE: What is a bond issue? Well, this ties into the school funding, too. See, the constitution allows the people in the legislature to have a working capital account of two million dollars that's revolving, got to have that to do business on. Then they are authorized to spend for each category; that's highways, schools, whatever, whatever's appropriated by the legislature unless somebody challenges it with a referendum. But beyond that, you can't go in debt without amending the constitution of the state. The constitution doesn't allow you any leeway.

So you come down to a case of this instance, of Ed meeting it head on, he asked me to introduce a ten million dollar bond issue, which I did. And the Republicans are thinking now, we got him, here we are asking for new taxes and a bond issue. So they come on with something that would be as palatable as they could make it, had a lot of little nuisance taxes that added up to as much or more than what Ed had asked for. Then they go on TV, they were being political about it, and called him a tax and spend artist, and liberal, all that stuff. And so, I'm not sure the first, if that passed the first time or not.

I went on TV in '55 or '57, I don't remember, when the bond issue was out there, I sponsored it the first year. Then I sponsored it again the next year so it must have not have passed the first time around. So anyway, I can remember come time for Ed to run for reelection. And he run against the speaker of the house who had befriended me on that school bill, more than I knew at the time. See, the house had passed the bill by a strong vote, when it gets in the senate and they try to fluff it, you know they sent it to the study, not realizing the study's going to come back favorable. (*Unintelligible phrase*). So when it got down to the last night of the session and they were cutting the pie in the senate, the speaker asked me to, well he didn't ask me, (*unintelligible phrase*), put his arm up for me to go preside over the house, without a calendar. You know, with the thing kinda in limbo. And he goes in and lobbies the senate. And I think he's the one who got the twenty-five thousand dollar study.

STU: So a bond issue would just be when the government would need more money they would issue bonds?

EE: Right, when the sales tax and the gas tax and all the different taxes won't pay the bills, then you can say well we, especially capital improvements, they don't issue bond issues for maintenance, day-to-day housekeeping, whatever, for the schools or whatever it is. But when you've got a capital improvement you want to make which has a long life, you know, like a highway or a school house, you can issue bonds. Excepting they didn't issue bonds on schools, that's a matter of history.

STU: How many bond issues do you remember, did Ed Muskie get introduced in his ten years as governor? A lot?

EE: No, right off hand I only think of that one.

STU: Would you consider the tax and spend big government?

EE: You want me to comment on that?

STU: Sure.

EE: Let me tell you something. Like I said, I didn't know how much the speaker had befriended me that year. It didn't matter because I was a Muskie man. So the speaker came down to my town I think it was in April, to my Lodge Hall where I'd been master of the Lodge. And he took off on Ed Muskie's program. And my wife was waiting on tables. The Lodge prior to Ed Muskie's running, they always had a dinner for the Republican Party, the Republican candidate.

STU: What Lodge is this?

EE: Masonic Lodge. And I said to my wife, "Now the Star, the Order of the Eastern Star," I says, "when that comes up, just, why don't you just ask him to have a Lodge dinner for the Republicans and the Democrats, amend the motion, have Republicans and Democrats." Well, they weren't partisan people in the Lodge, and it went through. And Ed was the first Democrat to participate in it. As a matter of fact, I set beside him to introduce him, and he turned to me and he said, "Eben, do you realize that if I'm elected governor I'll be the first governor, first Democrat, or Catholic ever to be elected governor of Maine?" And I, with my tongue in my cheek, I said, "Ed, I think all these people know about your religion is that you got some." That passed it off, but anyway.

Comes the next session, next time around and the Republican candidate is there. And I said to my wife, "Now I need to know what he says, I want to see if I can get it in the morning paper right beside his release." So she said, well, she had to do this, that, do that. I said, "Look, you're matron of the Star, you don't have to stay and wash dishes. I want to know just what he said." So she comes home and she had a whole page (*unintelligible phrase*) you know. The first line was, "Ed Muskie's program was the biggest snow job that has ever come down the pike." So I said, "Don't go any further, that's all I need." So I rebutted by saying, "Speaking of snow jobs, the snow job of the season were performed by speaker Trafton himself when he pegged Ed Muskie as a tax and spend artist, and then proceeded during the course of the session to support and sign into law more money in terms of taxes than the governor had asked for.

And I called collect to *The Bangor Daily News*, I'd had (*unintelligible phrase*), I'm running on a shoe string, you know, because I didn't have any expense money or anything else. So I called and I got in with a collect call

STU: This was '56?

EE: Yeah, this was '56, and so, and I guess that makes a difference to you, right? You're not doing '56?

STU: No, we have time, you know, (*unintelligible phrase*).

EE: So they put the story up on the upper left hand corner of the front page, had his article and my rebuttal right in his article, which Ed, running for reelection here, he never mentioned it to me until he's down to Washington, coming home from Washington one day, and this is something that I noticed and never thought about it since, I just thought, "Well, maybe he didn't see it." But when he come back he said, "You know it's important that somebody's alert, saying something when it's needed," and he referred to that situation there with *The Bangor Daily News*.

But, see, our position in *The Bangor Daily News* had shifted some in two years. Doc Arnold, I bet I mentioned his name before, was editorial writer and I cut editorials. In fact, I'll give you a copy of something that I've got here. But he, later when I became treasurer of the state, you know, he was very much in my corner. As a matter of fact, they were looking for somebody to support from that area, you've heard about the "two Maines", right? Rural northern Maine and southern Maine, the "two Maines" they call it. We had that issue come up. Again it was highways that was at stake, the whole highway budget. I was a minority member of the highway committee, but they asked me to bring the bill out of committee, which is unusual. And when this issue come up, the debate on defending the budget after they'd introduced their resolution to cut off all construction for two years south of Augusta, I guess they would have had the votes because they took, in the house, I don't know about the senate.

But I had, by that time Stevens and I had put out things so we could work along together. And I could tell you a couple things if I wanted to relate to what kind of a situation it was in '54 that, in highway, that made it such that Ed could win. But the people with good faith and all in the county who were sponsoring the bill didn't know what roads were going to be built for the money that they had planned, engineered and financed. And so I had Stevens check to see what the biggest project there was that would be killed under the bill when they cut off appropriations south of Augusta. So Tookey Bridge in Portland, I don't know if you know where that is, it's a clover leaf, right. So I put to the Democrat that was representing that district and asked him if he'd get a, if he would ask a question through the chair

End of Side Two