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Interview with James D. Ewing by Mike Richard

Summary Sheet and Transcript

Interviewee

Ewing, James D.

Interviewer

Richard, Mike

Date

August 16, 1999

Place

Keene, New Hampshire

ID Number

MOH 143

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Biographical Note

James D. Ewing was born January 14, 1917 in St. Louis, Missouri to Helen (Dennis) and Oscar Ross Ewing. His father was a prominent New York lawyer and was head of the Federal Security Administration and vice-chair of the Democratic National Committee. James grew up in the New York City suburb Fieldston/Riverdale, New York. He attended prep school at Hotchkiss, college at Princeton class of 1938, and one year of law school at Harvard. He then taught Latin and Greek for two years. During WWII, he worked for the National War Labor Board, and in the Navy doing labor relations work. Around 1946, he bought and ran the newspaper *Bangor Commercial*, along with his wife and a business partner, Russell Peters. They ceased publication early in 1954. During the 1952 Republican primary for U.S. Senate in Maine, the *Bangor Commercial*, headed by Jim Ewing, was the only newspaper to oppose Ralph Owen Brewster, which Brewster later claimed was a significant cause for his defeat. After closing his Bangor paper, he moved on to Keene, New Hampshire to own and operate the *Keene Sentinel*. He operated that paper until 1993. Mr. Ewing died on January 21, 2002 at the age of 85. See the University of Maine, Orono library for papers on both James Ewing and Ralph O. Brewster.

Scope and Content Note

Interview includes discussions of: family background; *Bangor Commercial* newspaper;

economics of post-war newspaper business; Oscar Ewing; discussions with Oscar Ewing about the Truman administration; progressive Republicans in pre-Democrat Maine; Ralph Owen Brewster; opposing Brewster in the *Bangor Commercial*; Howard Hughes scandal; John Lindsay as a *Bangor Commercial* reporter; other Newspapermen in Maine pre-1954; developing Democratic Party; Bill Loeb's political power in New Hampshire; Manchester Union Leader; Bill Loeb's personality; development and history of New Hampshire party politics; election of Democrats as a turning point in Maine politics; comparison with Vermont; and discussion of moderate Maine politicians.

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Transcript

Mike Richard: The date is August 16th, 1999, and we're here at Keene, New Hampshire in the Keene *Sentinel* Office with James Ewing. Interviewing is Mike Richard. And, Mr. Ewing, could you please state your full name and spell it?

James Ewing: My full name is James Dennis Ewing, E-W-I-N-G. And the middle name is D-E-N-N-I-S.

MR: And your date of birth please?

JE: January 14th, 1917.

MR: And where were you born?

JE: I was born in St. Louis, but moved. My parents moved when I was I think about six months old to New Jersey because my father went into a law firm there in New York City and commuted to New Jersey. And then we moved to a suburb of New York after that. And that's pretty, the suburb called Fieldston or Riverdale, they're two adjoining communities, was basically where I grew up until I went off to boarding school.

MR: And what were your parents' names?

JE: My father was Oscar Ross Ewing, and my mother was Helen Dennis Ewing.

MR: Okay, and did you have any siblings?

JE: I have one brother five years younger than I am.

MR: And his name?

JE: George.

MR: Has he been interested in politics at all?

JE: Oh, we both are interested. He's also in the newspaper business. So, so if you're in the newspaper business you're interested in politics.

MR: Which newspapers has he been involved with?

JE: He worked originally for a paper out in California, a small paper actually in Silic-, what's now Silicon Valley. It wasn't then. And then he bought a paper outside of Rochester, a small

daily; which is now, it's roughly the same size as the *Sentinel*. And he also owns a group of weeklies that surround Rochester. So, and they're, they either are or will be published out of one plant. He's like I am, he's pretty much retired from day to day work. And his son, George, Jr. is the publisher and the operating head of this little enterprise. And his other son, my nephew, is the one who bought the *Sentinel* and is now the publisher. And we're sitting in his office.

MR: And is that Rochester, New Hampshire or New York?

JE: No, Rochester, New York.

MR: Yeah, okay. All right, so you said you were in a suburb of New York until boarding school, and then after that you went to . . . ?

JE: Oh, I went to Princeton, is that what you meant, where I went to college?

MR: Yeah, and then also if you moved, if your residence changed through there. I'm just trying to trace your residence through until we get to Bangor in 1945 or '46.

JE: Oh, okay, so I went to prep school in Connecticut, Hotchkiss, and then to Princeton, and then a year at Harvard Law School, which I succeeded in passing but hated. And I left and taught school for two years and then the war came along. And I was, for a long time I couldn't get into the service because of very, my, very nearsightedness, great nearsightedness. But I went to Washington and worked for a while down there and mostly for the National War Labor Board, on the staff there. And then into the Navy where I had a, what do you call them, an exemption for my eyes, because they wanted me to do specialized work in the general field of labor relations. And while I was in the Navy I lived in Washington, Detroit and Cleveland. And when the war ended I worked briefly back in Washington. And then went to Bangor.

And the reason I went to Bangor was that while I was in the service, one of my bosses, we had a very small office. It was- my immediate boss was a lieutenant commander who had had a very distinguished career in journalism. He was a managing editor of one of the big west coast papers. And I got fascinated with the idea of journalism so we said, well after the war we'd see if we could find a paper that we could afford to buy. And we would work together and I would sort of learn on the job and he would do the newspaper, the newsroom stuff primarily. And we found the *Bangor Commercial*, which was about one step away from a sheriff's sale, so it fitted in on the price criterion, and we stayed there. I stayed there for eight years and he left after a period, I can't remember how many years, we'll say five, five or six. And, his name was Russell Peters and he went on to become the assistant to the president of the Bangor and Aroostook Railroad.

And we eventually had to fold the paper up because we couldn't make a success of it financially. We were up against the *Bangor Daily News*. And we thought we could revive this old paper and make it viable, make Bangor a two-paper town. But the post-war economics of newspapering made that, as we learned, impossible. And then from Bangor I came here.

MR: And why did you decide to come to here in Keene?

JE: There was a paper for sale and a community that we thought was a nice community. And by then I had formed a partnership with a man by the name of Walter Paine who had worked for the *Baltimore Sun*, and he had access to some capital, so we bought this paper together. And subsequently he, we bought the *Valley News* up in the Dartmouth-Hanover area, and he went up there to run that. I was running this one. The first year we owned this paper, he was in Maine trying to do some creative writing. He wanted to write a book, and then he decided he wanted to get back into the newspaper business. So we found the *Valley News* for sale and that was a partnership that lasted a great many years.

MR: Okay, well getting back to your family background, what were your parents' political beliefs?

JE: My mother was a very apolitical person. So in the sense of anything that you might be interested in, I would say her attitudes and all were insignificant. She was a wonderful person but she was never really interested in politics. My father was a very political person, had been since he was a very young man. So I had a heavy exposure to politics through him. And then, as you know, he eventually ended up as head of the Federal Security Administration which was subsequently the Department of Health and Wel--, was it Health and Welfare, and is now Health and Human Services. It was the biggest civilian agency in the government. And he was vice chairman of the Democratic National Committee. So he was very much interested in politics. But he was also an absolutely first class lawyer and had a very successful legal career in New York. He had a partner, Charles Evans Hughes, Sr., and then went off and started a firm with Charles Evans Hughes, Jr. and some other men. It became one of the, I think I'm quite accurate in saying it was one of the best smaller law firms in New York and still is.

MR: And what field of law did he pursue?

JE: General business law. He did, he did a little bit of prosecutorial work. He prosecuted two men during WWII for treason I guess. They were broadcasters from Europe to our troops. And he was appointed as special prosecutor by the attorney general. And he established a, broke a, created a legal precedent. In that, prior to that time, in order to convict somebody of treason you had to have an overt act. And my father established the fact that in the conditions that existed in the WWII period, broadcasting Nazi propaganda, or broadcast, was an act within the meaning of the appropriate statutes and precedents for treason. So in effect, broadcasting became a basis for treason where hitherto it had never been. But of course broadcasting, I don't know whether there was any in WWI. But anyway, that's sort of a sideline, but it's interesting.

MR: And would your father talk about his work with the Democratic National Committee and the Truman administration with you?

JE: Oh yeah, sure.

MR: What types of things would he discuss with you?

JE: Gosh, I, you know, you're talking about a long time ago. Lots of things as they came up,

but I don't particularly recall any one thing. You know, we were a close family and even though we were living apart, when Dad was in public office I knew pretty much what was going on. But we didn't have, sort of highly focused conversations on politics. But I knew pretty well what his political philosophy was. I knew pretty well what was going on. It was a father and son type of thing.

MR: How would you characterize his political philosophy in general?

JE: Well, he was a political. In certain ways he was a conservative. What I really, what I really ought to do is let you read this monograph that I was referring to before you had the mike on. That'll tell you a lot about Dad and it's going to save a lot of talk.

MR: And how would you assess your own political beliefs and, that were mainly affected by him or affected by your own experience?

JE: Well I think, I really consider myself an independent, but on the liberal side. When we were in Maine for example, I don't think the newspaper ever supported a Democrat. And I don't think I ever voted for a Democrat for any office except maybe President of the United States, because all of the people whose general political philosophy were closest to mine were Republicans at that time. Bear in mind we were only there eight years, so as far as there were some people that I maybe didn't vote for at all. But Margaret Chase Smith for example was a very close, not very close, but she was a very good personal friend. And most of the progressive forward look-, what I'd call liberal thinking such as it was, was in the Republican Party and not in the Democratic Party at that time. The Democrats were mostly, mostly to be found, or the control of the Democratic Party. If my memory's right, was largely in the hands of Democrats from Lewiston and maybe some from Biddeford. The old traditional centers of Democrats in Maine, but they were, when they were in the minority.

MR: Okay, and also talking about your father, you mentioned off the tape that he was a Harvard Law School classmate of Ralph Owen Brewster, and your uncle was also, actually. How did their relationship with Brewster develop, and also your uncle was a member of Brewster's gubernatorial administration so how did that (*unintelligible word*)?

JE: Well, in that administration my uncle and Brewster were classmates at Bowdoin and were close personal friends. And when Brewster was elected governor he appointed my uncle as, I don't know, military aide or, you know, some sort of an honorary position. It was no administrative duties at all. By then my uncle was practicing law, private practice, in Washington. So I had that connection through my uncle with the Brewsters. And Dad had a connection with Ralph Owen Brewster through law school, and then because the Brewsters and my aunt and uncle were close friends my mother and father naturally would see them occasionally. They were certainly not close and, "here and there," I guess, is the best way to put it. There was no, Dad and Brewster I don't think ever had much to do with each other after, that I know of, after law school.

MR: Did you get to know about Brewster either personally or professionally through your work, or through your father and uncle and aunt?

JE: I can remember meeting Brewster when I was a kid and he was governor. I think my aunt and uncle, or my uncle, took me into the governor's. What do they call it? The governor's home or mansion, or, what's it called where the governor of Maine lives?

MR: The governor's mansion, the Blaine House?

JE: Blaine House, yeah, when I was quite young. I have no particular recollection of it except the idea of being taken into the governor's offices. It's sort of a big deal for a kid. I've forgotten your, what was your question again?

MR: Well it was just if you had gotten to know Brewster either personally or professionally through your uncle or father.

JE: Well I had that experience. Then later when we went to Maine, through, because of that connection primarily through my aunt and uncle, and he, Brewster would come to Bangor to make a talk or something in the Rotary Club or whatnot, I'd see him. But we never spent much time talking together. And Brewster, of course, was very close to the *Bangor Daily News*. But, so I saw him from time to time but we never had any sort of a close relationship.

MR: Okay, and also did the, I have some information here that the *Bangor Commercial* covered the 1952 Republican Senate primary in which Payne beat Brewster, were you still involved in that at that time?

JE: Oh certainly, that was, very much so. The *Bangor Commercial* was the only daily paper in the state that opposed Brewster. And Brewster subsequently told I guess May Craig in Portland (she was the political correspondent for the Portland papers) that we'd played a significant role in his defeat. All my papers on that score are in the University of Maine library in Orono, and they've got some sort of a collection of papers about Brewster. And we ran a very vigorous anti-Brewster campaign, and all of that stuff is there.

MR: And, just a brief synopsis, what were some of the reasons that your, you and your paper were anti-Brewster in that nomination?

JE: Well, we came to feel. First of all, all of a sudden somewhat out of the blue because we'd had a couple of critical editorials about positions that he'd taken on, I don't remember whether they were domestic or international politics or both, he got very upset. And one in particular came out I guess not too long before that campaign began. At any rate, he had a newsletter and he sent it out and it had a very nasty attack on the *Bangor Commercial* and I think maybe on me personally. Here again, all this stuff is in the library and I don't, I can't remember it in any detail. But we decided that, first of all it was a totally unjustified attack, and secondly that Brewster was a very poor senator. He was all mixed up with the China lobby. He was all mixed up with Howard Hughes and the investigation of Howard Hughes, I've forgotten the details. He didn't like Hughes and Hughes didn't like him. And I don't remember now exactly what the issue was, it was something to do I guess with one of the committees that Brewster was on. At any rate, we decided that we were going to oppose him. And having decided we were going to

oppose him we went after him hammer and tongs. And if you ever look at the file you'll see that we did. And then, so a lot of our stuff was picked up by the campaign and reprinted. And it was a, it, I'm sure we were a factor in his defeat. And I think he said so. That was good enough for now.

MR: Were you a personal supporter of [Frederick George] Payne? Or was it more anti-Brewster than pro-Payne? Was there a reason for that stand during that time?

JE: No, I'd gotten to know Payne when he was governor - he was governor wasn't he?

MR: Yeah.

JE: Yeah, and I think that I developed a, we certainly weren't close but I think I developed a feeling that he would be a highly desirable improvement over Brewster. And as time went along and the campaign went along I did get to know Payne and his wife really quite well because we were his principal supporters in the press. So, you know, they would keep in, would be in touch with us and we'd be in touch with them. Meaning the Payne people, not always the Paynes themselves.

MR: A few minutes ago you touched upon one of the controversies, the Howard Hughes scandal. Can you, do you have some impressions of, I think there were a couple of major Republican scandals at that time, do you have some impressions of those scandals, what it was like to cover them and the situation that the Republican Party was in, in those times, (*unintelligible word*)?

JE: If you'd asked me these questions twenty years ago, I would have, I could have talked for two hours on it. I don't even remember now the details of, of the Howard Hughes business and the. I think there was wire tapping involved, there were all kinds of really screwy things. All I can do is tell you to go back into those files if you really want any detail. I don't, I must say I don't quite know why you would, but there's plenty of it there, and it goes into that in some detail. There were some other problems that, there was a, there was some kind of a liquor commission. I don't know whether you'd call it a, well I don't know what you call it, but it was a, not a scandal. Maybe it was an alleged scandal involving the fellow who was the governor, whose name I've forgotten. Brewster was very thick with Stiles Bridges who was the, one of the two senators from New Hampshire at the time. And in my opinion he was another somewhat unsavory character. But all the detailed stuff, you just got to go to somebody else for, I just don't remember it.

MR: What about some of the reporters that you had working for you, especially on, to start out with, John Lindsay was one of your most important ones?

JE: John Lindsay, yeah, John Lindsay did, was our political reporter and he was one of the best reporters that ever worked for me, and I had a lot of good ones. Well, what about him?

MR: Just, what could you say about him personally or the way he worked? Anything that, any stories about him that stand out?

JE: John was a guy who had grown up in a rather poor family somewhere in the suburbs of Boston. And he and his brother, to make some money, used to go out in the, they were probably Saturday night wrestling matches. And they'd go to these clubs and I guess guys would sit around and drink beer and smoke cigars. And these guys, these two brothers would wrestle with each other and get paid for it. And then he went into the service and had a very honorable military career and came back, and got a job in, I think in Aroostook County as a claims, insurance claims adjuster, which he hated. And somewhere along the line he got the idea that he would like to be a newspaperman. And he, I can't remember what he. I guess he knew somebody who was working for us, but somehow or other he came in and we gave him a job. He had absolutely no prior experience. And he turned out to be a fantastic reporter, and went to the *Washington Post* and had a very, and then *Newsweek* and had a very distinguished career. He was a, he handled a lot of the reporting of the Payne-Brewster campaign. And he had a column that was once a week, Sundays I think, it was a, where he had a lot of stuff about the campaign.

MR: And who were some of the other reporters and people in the office of the *Commercial* that were significant while you were there, that you worked closely with?

JE: I guess the most, Kenneth Zwicker, who was the city editor and a wonderful newspaperman, came out of the University of Maine under, went there under the GI Bill of Rights. And started as a reporter and then became, eventually became the managing editor. And then after we closed the paper down he went to work in, on a paper in New Jersey for a few months. And when we bought the paper here he came up to work for me again. And for many years he was the assistant publisher or associate, I've forgotten whether he was assistant or s-, I guess he was assistant publisher here. But anyway, he was the number two guy here when he came. A terrific newspaperman and a very direct guy, been a gunnery sergeant in the Marine Corps, fought in practically every battle in the Pacific. Very outspoken. The phrase, swears like a Marine, would apply quite accurately to him.

MR: What were your impressions, you've mentioned this a little bit already. But what were your general impressions of some of the other papers and the press corps in Maine in that time, especially with the focus maybe on the Guy Gannett newspapers?

JE: Well, they were the, the *Bangor Daily News* was the largest paper in circulation in the state. But the Gannett papers were collectively the most important influence in the state. They had Waterville, Augusta, Portland, maybe that's all. And they had a big radio station, eventually a television station, so, and they had the Portland *Sunday Telegram* which was the only Sunday paper in the state. And they had this Elizabeth May Craig, known as May Craig, as their Washington correspondent and she was, got to be quite a national character. They had some good people working for them.

MR: Did you have any dealings maybe directly or indirectly with Guy Gannett himself?

JE: I met him. Not really, no. Just, I don't, I, probably, oh, at press gatherings. But not, no, I didn't know him very well. I knew his son-in-law, Chuck Williams, much better. And I knew

some of the other people on the, that worked in the organization pretty well. But he himself, he was pretty elderly when I was there.

MR: And how would you say the political slant of those papers' editorials, if there was such a slant, compared to your own papers' stance?

JE: Well, they were more conservative. The *Bangor Daily News* was, from my perspective, for the most part sort of pretty far out conservative. The Portland papers were conser-, the Gannett papers were conservative but nowheres near as far out. I mean they were definitely Republican papers, I would call them anyway. And I don't think they'd make any bones about it. But there was a, there was a moderation then. And they had a couple of political reporters that I knew pretty well that I thought were good reporters. Their slant didn't always coincide with mine but, you know, that happens all the time. Doesn't mean they weren't good journalists.

MR: Who were a couple of those reporters?

JE: I can't tell you their names. One was Peter something-or-other I think who, I think he was their principal political guy, but I don't know, I don't remember his name.

MR: In what ways would you say more specifically that the *Bangor Daily News* was kind of a far out conservative paper? Like how was it more radically conservative would you say?

JE: I can't cite chapter and verse, it's too long ago. It's just that. . . .

MR: Just in general, was it more fiscally conservative or socially conservative?

JE: Both.

MR: Okay, did you, did you cover much of the Democratic Party politics. . . .?

JE: No.

MR: at that time? Okay. Did you get to know much about the Democratic Party situation or any specific Democratic Party leaders or legislators?

JE: Yeah, I probably, again, yeah, I'm sure I knew some of them. The names are gone. But. . . .

MR: Maybe Frank Coffin might have been. . . .?

JE: Yeah, but you see he was part of that whole group of young Democrats that really took over the Democratic Party coincidentally with Muskie's emergence. If I met Coffin, it was only briefly. I don't remember in particular. See, I left; we closed the paper in Bangor down in the early part of 1954. And then for a while I was concerned with trying to wind that thing up. And then Walter Paine and I started looking for another newspaper or newspapers, and I was on the road a lot. So all of that development, or most of it, the people who were involved in what was a

new generation of Democrats, at least from my perspective, were not people I knew particularly well, ever. But I did know Ed Pretty well. But I can't tell you how or why I knew him well.

But, I'll cite one story which has stuck with me and which I reminded him of when he was here after he was running for president. Somewhere between, it was probably the early fall of 1954, he was not a candidate at that time and he called me up one night where I happened to be home. As I said I'd been, I was on the road a lot, and [Muskie] said "Jim, I'm calling some friends around the state to ask them what they think about the idea of my running for governor." And I said, "I would-" he was being urged to, and I said, "Well I would do it only if you succeeded in getting two commitments. The first was you could name your own state chairman, and the second was they would give you enough money." And I used a figure but I don't, I can't remember now what it was. Because, you know, what's the sense of running for an office if you're going to be so underfunded you can't run a campaign? And the campaigns then weren't like they are now where they're, you know, zillion dollar affairs. And so we talked a little bit more and ended the conversation, you know, wished him luck and so on. And the next thing I knew, he had run for office and neither of the things that I suggested to him as conditions applied. Somebody else stepped, he didn't get to name the state chairman, although I can't remember who it was. You probably know. And they didn't make any particular financial commitment to him. And I've always cited that as an example of my political acumen in giving him totally inadequate advice.

MR: How did you, did you cover the, his election as governor or. . . .?

JE: No, no.

MR: You had left by that time?

JE: Yeah.

MR: Okay. How did your relationship with him develop over time, did you follow his political career (*unintelligible phrase*)?

JE: Oh yeah, but we never, I never saw him. But Eliot Cutler, who was on his staff, was the son of our closest friends in Bangor, and so, and we kept in touch with the Cutlers. Dr. Cutler, Lawrence Cutler was subsequently the chairman of the board of the University of Maine. And we kept in very close touch with them and we still do with Mrs. [Kay] Cutler and their sons, one of whom is Eliot. And so through the Cutlers, I would- and just news stories in general, I would keep track of Ed's time in office in the state and then in Congress, in the Senate, but not in- ever in any detail.

And the only time I saw him in person after I left Maine was when he came here to Keene when he was running for office, for president, and he made a speech to the Chamber of Commerce annual dinner. I may have had something to do with getting him invited, I think I did. And he was in a motel room here, I had let him know somehow that I'd like to just say hello, and he was getting ready for this talk. And, was George Mitchell, did George Mitchell run his campaign?

MR: Yeah, George Mitchell I believe was involved at that time, for the '69 and '72 presidential nomination.

JE: Yeah, I think he did. Anyway, he was, I'm pretty sure he was the one who was in the room with Ed. And Ed was sort of getting dressed and I reminded him of this episode of, where I gave him what I thought was very profound advice, which he ignored, wisely. And then, you, this would have to be checked but it's, because it's my memory of it. Eliot Cutler came and spent the night with us when Muskie was in, campaigning in this state either the day before or a couple of days before the famous episode at the *Manchester Union Leader*. And Eliot asked me whether I thought it was a smart thing to do for Muskie to go and sort of challenge Loeb and do as he did, you know, (*unintelligible phrase*) you know, and made the speech in front of the *Union Leader* building. And I told Eliot that I absolutely thought so, that the only way to handle Loeb was to go right after him. He'd run all over you if you didn't. So they did. I don't mean necessarily, I'm sure there are people on his staff who thought he should, and I'm sure there were some who probably thought he shouldn't. But I, whether Eliot passed that along or whether it was influential in any way, I have no idea. But that led to the, what turned out to be the disaster of his alleged crying episode, which of course Loeb, he just grabbed it and got all over it right away.

MR: While we're on the subject, what's your, what are your impressions of the *Manchester Union Leader* and William Loeb at that time?

JE: That is a very broad question.

MR: What was, then what was William Loeb like as far as you could tell? You probably only knew him from a professional. . . .

JE: I only met him once and that was, I had some correspondence with him and some telephone calls, and that was in court. And we, when I say I met him, I, we actually didn't speak. Loeb in my opinion was a man who in many respects was driven by a desire for power, and he had it. He was a very powerful political influence in this state. And, you know, what led him to try to exercise the power that he had in such a frequently, or usually, cruel and vicious way had something to do with his personality. You know, I wouldn't attempt to psychoanalyze the guy, but he was nasty to a lot of people and so on, including a guy who was a friend of mine who was a former governor. And he put this guy's daughter in a mental hospital; he was so nasty about an episode. But, you know, this goes on forever if you get me going on that. But Loeb was a very powerful influence in the state politically and he knew it. And to some extent the state is still suffering from, I use the word suffering, from some of the policies that Loeb more or less forced people to adopt because they needed his support to win.

The only exception that I can remember, and there may be others, was Tom McIntyre who was a United States Senator, a Democrat, and McIntyre never knuckled under to Loeb at all. He, Loeb would swing at him and he'd swing right back. And I think it had a lot to do with McIntyre's success. But McIntyre got complacent and didn't really campaign and got defeated. He spent too much time in Florida instead of coming back up here and campaigning.

MR: And what was, that's the other part that I was getting at is what was Loeb's political stands, also the. . . .?

JE: Oh, very, very conservative in every, in all respects. The story about William Loeb, you, I mean, you know, you could spend a career getting answers to some of those questions. He, you know, one example, he ran short of money and I forget now exactly why. But anyway, and he borrowed money from the Teamster's Union pension fund down in, I guess the one, one of the ones in the middle west. And Jimmy Hoffa was then the head of the Teamster's Union and was in jail. Well, because, I mean I say because Hoffa had been influential in arranging this loan. He had an airplane with a, one of those streamers behind it, flew it over the penitentiary where Hoffa was, it said "free Jimmy Hoffa." He was out of sight. Anyway, let's not get off on that, we'd be here all night.

MR: While we're on the subject of the New Hampshire political scene, what were some of the other, actually first of all what were some of the other papers and chains of papers that were influential while you've been in New Hampshire, and especially during that '69 to '72 period?

JE: What's the '69 to '72?

MR: Oh, that was, I'm sorry, that was Muskie's presidential nomination bid.

JE: Well, the New Hampshire scene, newspaper scene, was and is a peculiar one. You have only one big city, or for years you had only one big city in the state and that was Manchester. Only one city that could support a morning paper. The next largest city was Nashua, which is significantly smaller. And then there, you had a scattering of smaller afternoon dailies like, like ours, that, whose circulation was in a certain (*unintelligible word*) market. So the power if you want to use that word was concentrated in Manchester and in the hands of William Loeb. And the rest of us could, and many of us did, take completely contrary positions and frequently with some success in our own markets, but there was never, there was never, you know, the kind of a contrary voice in the state.

MR: Actually, I'm going to flip the tape.

End of Side A
Side B

MR: This is the second side of the first tape of the interview with James Ewing on August 16th, 1999. And we were talking about the situation of the newspapers in New Hampshire. Also in general, how would you say the political situation, either in Keene or in New Hampshire, has developed in the past forty or so years?

JE: Well, it was, it was, without trying to put dates on it, it went like this: you had, in my early experience you had the period when Styles Bridges, Senator Bridges, was the kingpin of the Republican Party. And in my opinion he, basically he ran the Democratic Party too because he had all of these little plums that went with, that the Senator could, you know, influence an appointment for. I don't know, the sheriffs and, not sheriffs but federal offices that had to go to

minority parties, so he really had a very big influence on the Democrats in the state. And they oddly enough were pretty conservative in my opinion, and so you had the period of Styles Bridges. And of course he and Loeb were thick as thieves, which perhaps is a phrase that's not too far from the truth. And then he died and you had some other people that Loeb was sort of, henchmen of Loeb's, you know, people he supported and put in office.

And then you had a period of Democratic resurrection that was really headed by Bill Dunfee as, I think he was chairman of the state committee, he was a wonderful man, very successful business man. And we had a, for a while we had John King as governor, as a Democrat. We had McIntyre as senator, and I think we had a Democrat in Congress after, I've sort of forgotten about it. And then that period of emergence of some Democrats, election of some Democrats died out and Loeb (*unintelligible word*) some more of his political candidates and Mel Thompson was Governor, and so on.

Recently, of course, the Democrats have started another resurgence. But over all the situation until perhaps now, (*unintelligible word*) recently, it's been fundamentally a Republican state. But the Republicans that really ran the state for years until well into the Bridges period actually, Styles Bridges went to Congress pretty much as a liberal, progressive Republican, and then became very conservative. At any rate, the people, the Petersons, the Besses, there were a number of families that, sort of the Teddy Roosevelt type of Republican, they were good people. And Walter Peterson was the last governor of that coloration who's still alive, and is a good friend of mine. We supported him and then I, very fond of him and I have a lot of respect for him. The Democrats for a long time after we came here were like the Democrats we found when we first went to Maine. I mean, you know, you have to struggle to say they ought to get elected to anything. Some of them were nice people, but some of them, you know, they were off the wall when it came to. So, it was a vacuum that partly existed for historical reasons and partly because of somebody like Bridges and the *Union Leader*. Today I think that's probably changing.

In the Keene area, for example, when we came here it was rock solid Republican. The town had never supported a Democrat for anything. And, whatever it was, 1956 maybe, along in there someplace, the town supported the Democratic candidate for governor, and that was the first time that the city had ever supported a Democrat for anything. Today, every member of the legislature from this area is a Democrat. Now, why? I would guess that the paper had something to do with it, even though we were not at any time and still aren't either Democrat or Republican.

We were what I, whether you want to call it liberal or progressive or whatever adjective you want to say, it's not a party, we're independent. We have supported many, many Republicans politically, uh, editorially, but whether it, you know, to what extent the paper is involved, to what extent immigration, to what extent a generational change, to what extent voting habits change as maybe educational levels changed, and you began to have, the independents. In the state, registered independents are larger than the Democrats, I'm almost certain, and maybe almost as big as the Republican registration, so there was a trend here and in other parts of the state as well. But some of it I think was immigration, people moving into the state from Massachusetts, Connecticut, coming up the Connecticut River. And then you had, the Hanover

area was, of course Dartmouth was up there. But it's changed, it's changed. This area has changed a lot in terms of political orientation. But it's very, it's tricky to, I mean your project is dealing with a man who was a great public figure as a Democrat. Here, we at the paper and I myself personally, don't really think as a Democrat or as a Republican, I think of myself as an independent. I wouldn't hesitate to vote for a Republican, I wouldn't hesitate. That, if the paper, which I have nothing to do with anymore, but when I was running it, we supported plenty of Republicans, so it's not a Republican-Democrat thing, it's more a philosophical difference.

MR: Okay, and, there's a couple of things to pick up about your time in Bangor. How would you say, first of all, the Bangor community was like politically (*unintelligible word*)?

JE: Oh, it was conservative, definitely. There were some people, of course there are everywhere any time, who were more on the liberal and progressive side, whatever adjective you want to use. But politically, the town was Republican.

MR: And also, you were involved in the *Bangor Commercial* while Burton Cross was governor, during his terms, what's your assessment of his governorship and him professionally?

JE: Well, he's the guy, wasn't he, that had the electric commission problem?

MR: He might have been, (*unintelligible phrase*).

JE: I think he was. I knew him but not well, and I, my recollection of him is that he wasn't a particularly good governor, but that's nothing you could hang your hat on because it's purely an impression of forty or fifty years ago. Not fifty, yet, but forty. Getting up toward fifty.

MR: And also one other thing, what was your assessment of the new, the new growth of TV and TV advertising because, in Maine, this would have been just before you left probably?

JE: Yeah, it wasn't, it wasn't, to my knowledge it wasn't a big factor when we were there because it was just coming into its, into play. All of that happened after I left there.

MR: Okay, let's see what else there is to talk about. Okay, I'm not sure you can answer this or not, but during the '69 to '72 period when Muskie was running for the presidential nomination, would you say that that was a period in New Hampshire in which William Loeb was particularly influential, or was that more of the waning of the Republican Party in New Hampshire?

JE: No, no, (*unintelligible word*) he was very influential.

MR: He was, yeah, okay. Well I guess I'll just ask you what your impressions of Muskie in general are today, his influences on Maine and on politics and the significance that he had for those areas.

JE: Well, it's very easy if you're not up to date on anything, as I clearly am not by the way I answer your questions. You've got to just talk about impressions. My impression is that Ed Muskie's election as governor marked a significant turning point in the political situation in

Maine. It was a one party state and from that point forward it became a two-party state. Phillip Hoff in Vermont played very much the same role when he was elected governor, and Vermont has been a two-party state ever since. But you remember the old gag about, when Landon ran he carried, Roosevelt carried every state except Maine and Vermont. So I give Ed, and the people who were close to Ed and were working with him in various capacities and subsequently in office as Democrats, changed the political scene, the political landscape radically. That sort of thing by and large did not and has not happened in New Hampshire, but it did there. So I give Ed credit for that and I think he did a good job, from an outsider's point of view, as a senator, and I was sorry he didn't get nominated for president.

You know, Eliot Cutler's the only person, well I, there are others, but he's the only one that I knew well who worked for Ed. And you know, he thought the sun rose and set on Ed Muskie. So I got a lot of favorable talk from that source. But it was a, whether Ed would have made a good president? I don't know the answer to that because I didn't really follow his career that closely. Everybody said he had a very short fuse, and I don't think that, well they say the same thing about Clinton. As far as I know, probably true in both cases. That's, I don't think it a disqualification for major office, unless it leads to bad judgment on things. But just because you blow your stack about something that got screwed up or whatever, or were very demanding of your staff, which I guess he was, that's okay.

MR: And you mentioned earlier that you found that the Republican Party in Maine, at least in the immediately post WWII period was the more liberal and progressive party?

JE: No, no, I didn't say that. No, I think some of the Republicans were the more progressive. You had Hale who was a congressman, nobody would call him a liberal but he certainly wasn't a died in the wool old school conservative Republican. Brewster went to Congress as a liberal, as a progressive Republican, and became very conservative after he was elected to the Senate the first time. But when he went to Congress in the '30s, he went in there as a kind of a liberal. And I think as a governor he was not an arch conservative at all. That frequently happens to people apparently who go to get elected originally in somewhat of a, with a sort of liberal progressive label, and then they become more conservative as they go on. Norris Cotton here in New Hampshire was another example of that. Norris went in as a liberal and became more and more conservative. So, the Democratic Party in Maine as I remember it when we were there, pretty much until Ed took over, was, a lot of influence of the ethnic, the Catholic and French. Pretty conservative, and I always had the feeling, I, you know, I didn't really, I shouldn't say I didn't trust them. But I figured that, you know, that people probably could always make a deal with a lot of those guys there. That was not necessarily in the public interest, but it was in the interests of those particular people. That may be an unfair judgment. I know that, I can't remember a Democratic candidate for any major office that we ever supported in Maine.

MR: Okay, so you meant earlier that, more that the Republican Party had more to offer on an individual basis, more likely to offer a progressive candidate from time to time?

JE: Yeah, yeah, and the same was true here that, in the same period, in New Hampshire.

MR: Well, I guess, is there anything else that you'd like to talk about that you think we haven't

covered or any areas we haven't gone into?

JE: No, no, I'm sure what I've given you is enough. If you want to take ten minutes more and read this piece about my father, you can because there's no sense in my talking about it. It's all right there and it won't take you long to read it. It's maybe twenty minutes, something like that. If you want to; if you don't want to, it's okay. I think I've got it in there, I'm almost sure I do. I was going to take it home today and forgot to.

MR: All right, well. . . .

JE: So anyway, and if you've got any questions you want to follow up on, you can give me a call. But you're asking some pretty broad questions.

MR: Yeah, I'm sorry. Thanks for your time.

JE: Okay.

End of Interview