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Ewing, Marvin W. oral history interview

Jeremy Robitaille

Interview with Marvin W. Ewing by Jeremy Robitaille

Summary Sheet and Transcript

Interviewee
Ewing, Marvin W.

Interviewer
Robitaille, Jeremy

Date
August 10, 2001

Place
Yarmouth, Maine

ID Number
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Biographical Note

Marvin W. Ewing was born in St. Petersburg, Florida on April 4, 1935. His parents were Melinda and Harold Ewing. His mother was a housewife and later nurse, and his father was a telephone line worker. The family moved to New Jersey when he was young so his father could work in a defense plant. His father died in 1945, when Marvin was ten. In 1951 his family moved to Maine, where he graduated from Standish High School. He enlisted in the Air Force in 1954, and was honorably discharged in 1958. He moved back to New Jersey in 1960 to work for the Peter J. Schweizer Paper Co., and became a union organizer. In 1966, he returned to Maine and settled in Westbrook, working for the S.D. Warren Paper Co. He organized the paper workers in Westbrook, and became a union leader, serving seven years as president of the local union. He was instrumental in merging the Westbrook Paper Union into the AFL-CIO, and served as vice president of the Maine AFL-CIO for four years. He also unsuccessfully ran for president of the Maine AFL-CIO against Charles O'Leary. He left S.D. Warren in 1979, and worked in Maine state government at the Bureau of Labor Standards.

Scope and Content Note

Interview includes discussions of: family history; Orange, New Jersey; Peter J. Schweizer Paper Mill; labor market in 1960; organizing workers at S.D. Warren; organization of the Maine AFL-

CIO; Ben Dorsky; running for president of the Maine AFL-CIO; Bureau of Labor Standards; MSEA strike of 1979; campaigning with Mike Michaud in the 1970s; political influence of unions; Muskie campaigning at union functions; Ewing's father-in-law's union history (Bill Yankowski); the reaction of labor to Muskie's stance on pollution; persuading union members to continue supporting Muskie; downfall of the S.D. Warren plant; paper companies seeking profits rather than re-investment; major issues of the unions; violent strikes in New Jersey; corporate greed; changes in campaigning over time; and grassroots campaigning at the union level.

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Transcript

Jeremy Robitaille: The date is August 10th, 2001. We are here at the Maine Unemployment Insurance Commission in Yarmouth, Maine interviewing Marvin Ewing. And interviewing is Jeremy Robitaille. Mr. Ewing, to start out, could you please state your name and spell it, and give us your date and place of birth?

Marvin Ewing: My name is Marvin W. Ewing, I was born in April the 4th of 1935, in St. Petersburg, Florida.

JR: And what were your parents' names?

ME: My mother's name was Melinda, my father's name was Harold, Harold Ewing.

JR: And where were they from originally?

ME: My father was from Ohio, and my mother was from Junction City, Kansas.

JR: And how did they come to live in St. Petersburg?

ME: Well, it was during, it's my understanding is that it was during the, a lot of. My father was a WWI, I'll digress a little bit,- my father was a WWI veteran. He had worked at the telephone, Western Electric, which at that point in time was putting up a lot of telephone poles, and putting lines for telephones all over the country. And my understanding, my father wound up on most, like a construction gang, and would up down in St. Petersburg, Florida. And I think he, as I recall being told by my mother, that they were, they, he was coming through Kansas and that's how they met.

My father was somewhat older than my mother. My father was, let me see, my father was, I believe thirty, yes, my father was forty-nine years old when I was born and my mother was thirty-four years old, so I was obviously, as they used to say in those days, 'a mistake'.

JR: Okay, and what did your mother do for work?

ME: My mother was, for most of her life she was a housewife, but she later in life became a practical licensed nurse. She worked in a lot of the, she worked in the state hospital there in Bellevue, New Jersey, the third shift as a LPN. And she also took her hand at trying to go into nursing, like leasing property. That's where we lived one time. We lived in Orange, New Jersey. And she leased this property and this house, and turned it into a, for senior citizens, you know, for nursing home type of thing. It didn't work out and she reverted back to going in and working for nursing homes, and she did that until she retired.

My father was pretty much an electrician. He did the, I don't know what was the circumstances, but I know he got knocked from a telephone pole while he was working still in Florida, and was disabled for a while. And then when WWII broke out, that's when my family moved from Florida to New Jersey. And my father worked at a defense plant there. They had to have that very high security at the time. My, one thing I kind of remember about the story of my father. . . . Of course you got to remember I was ten years old when my dad died in 1945, but- October, in October, 1945. One of the things that was interesting that I found out later from my mother that when WWII broke out, he went down to the recruiting station and tried to get in, to join the Army. And they kind of laughed and chuckled and kind of, you know, I mean he took a little umbrage at that. And told them in no uncertain terms that he was a soldier in WWI, he certainly could more than hold his own. And all he was asking for was a chance, you know? But his age at the time obviously was against him. So he wound up working up in New Jersey, and that's when we, my family actually moved to New Jersey.

And I wound up really going to most of my younger school years, when I say younger mean like in the first grade to the eighth grade, and all the way up to my first and second year of high school, I went to school in New Jersey. First I went to Summer, what they called Summer Place which is in, right off of Summer Avenue in Newark, New Jersey, at the school there. Then I went from, after sixth grade, I went into Webster Junior High School, which is also in Newark, and then on to Berringer High School for my freshman year. And that's when my family, my mother of course at the time was a widow, that's when she took a shot at this nursing home establishment that she, what she was doing was leasing the place with an option to buy.

And that was in Orange, New Jersey. That was in fact right across the street from, which is quite a famous site now, which was the East Orange Veteran's Hospital. And it was strange because South Center Street, which, the side we were on was Orange, and on the other side of that street was actually East Orange. So, but that's quite a well-known veteran's hospital, and that was established right around that time that we lived there. That would have been about 1951. So then I came to Maine, I went to school my junior and senior year; I went to school here in Maine. And I've been pretty much, graduated from high school, Standish High School. And upon graduation I went into the service, I went into the Air Force. I spent three and a half years, and got honorably discharged in March, late March of 1958. I was considered a Korean War veteran, even though obviously the war was pretty much wound down. I think the final whatever it was that was signed, was signed in '54. So because I got into the service in '54 I was considered a Korean, which I obviously took advantage of later on in life. I was able to go to University of Southern Maine here. I went actually, I think it was actually three years I actually, almost three years that I attended USM on that Korean benefits package, you know. And I was, obviously at the time I was working in the mill.

But I had two different periods of time in my life. I worked in a paper mill: I worked, 1961 to 1966, I worked at. . . . Because what happened, when my wife and I got married in 1960 jobs were not that plentiful here in Maine. I had to, I tried different places to work and it wasn't working out, so I decided to go back to New Jersey. And I got a job working in a paper mill, in Peter J. Schweitzer's which is, at that time, was a division of Kimberly Clark, just to show you how history has a way of kind of having strange twists and turns, if you will. Obviously years later, Kimberly Clark becomes, they join forces with Scott Paper who I also worked with. So, but anyway I worked there in the finishing department and then I went on to, worked in the, what they call the reconstituted tobacco. And what was happening there, they were making artificial, if you will, tobacco leaves which actually about ten percent of each cigarette had this reconstituted tobacco in it. And I was working on this machine that, from the very beginning, took the product, grinded it up, put over a Yankee which made it dry, a dry process, and they were a packaging unit which I worked on the very end on the other part of the machine. So I worked there for, in fact when I went to work there I had to sign a document, obviously no disclosure, or any secrecy of products or whatever. And then when I left, which I left in, it was around the end of July of the year 1966, and that's when I came up, my family and I moved back up here to Maine in 1966, this time for good. And I worked at S.D. Warren's on August 1st, 1966 until I left which would have been the, actually the end of February of 1979. And since then I've been in state government. So that's a quick overview, if you will.

But I had about nineteen years in the paper industry, of which at each different location, whether

it was in New Jersey or here in Maine, I belonged to the United Paper Workers Union. And I found them to be, I'd had an earlier stint in my life right after I came out of the service in '58 and was still, I was, at that time I had, you got to understand that when I got out in '58 I stayed in Jersey for a while. I came back up to Maine, and I went back down to Jersey, and during that period of time I worked, I got a job working for, as a longshoreman, as a Teamster worker with the Teamsters Union. And I was working in a warehouse, working out on the docks loading freight and what have you, unloading freight.

And obviously I was, the union was much different more democratic than United Paper Workers was. They had a representation of workers that I found in both sites to be very democratic in handling their membership. Now, obviously we, in doing that, from time to time you're not going to have everybody as happy as they should, as they think they should be. But still, the process that I found to be much more democratic, and the representation of workers, of workers in both locations was, I thought was very, very democratic and very strong. Again, when I was working in New Jersey I come up through the ranks. I was a shop steward, I was a secretary of my local union, and even for one term I served, filled out a guy's term as a vice president.

But I, then when I came up here to Maine I also got involved. Well, first off when I came to Maine, and I had a lot of family of mine that worked in, my father-in-law in fact worked in S.D. Warren. In fact, early on when I first got married he tried to get me into S.D. Warren. And that was back in, really back in 1960. I couldn't get in there because, there was job openings at the time. But one of the excuses- my father-in-law got, which really infuriated him,- that we're trying to break away and not have so many families working in the mill, and that type of thing. Which he knew and he felt very strongly that that was not true. That was, I mean, he could see it, he worked with people that were obviously. But it left a sour, really quite a sour feeling in my father-in-law, because obviously he wanted me to have gainful employment and, I was married to his daughter, you know. But what happened was that when I, in 1966 my wife's uncle, who was one of the top management people in the trucking department at, he had a lot to do with me getting in there.

JR: And what was his name?

ME: His name was Shepherd, Ed Shepherd. He's still alive today. In fact, he's a very strong supporter over the years of Ed Muskie. In fact, Ed Muskie was, at one point in time had one of his tours of his campaigning, and I remember my aunt was also, she has passed on since then. But Ed's wife was scared to death because she had never done anything like this before, you know, I mean to be hosting a. . . . And I believe at the time he was, I think he was, I believe he was governor so it goes back a few years. And she never forgot that, she was always very proud of that.

Now, to get back to the involvement in the union and the paper workers at S.D. Warren, as I said before, when I first got there they were not, they had not been unionized. And there would have been like twelve or thirteen whatever, I'm not sure that the paper workers themselves have an actual count on it, but it's at least twelve attempts they had made over the years to organize S.D. Warren. But S.D. Warren was a, at the time Westbrook was a very, a highly influenced, supposedly, and I think it's probably true, by the Catholic priest of the town. Who obviously,

from what I've been told, I mean, I'm not a Catholic, but I know some of the members have indicated it, he was pretty much against unions. And obviously that had an influence when it came time to vote. And also the fact was that S.D. Warren, you have to understand, at that point in time, had given a lot to the town and community of Westbrook. They were considered as good people as far as, and I'm sure they were.

But as the Warren family, which they did, they got more and more out of the paper business. And obviously the father passed on and the children were, I think were getting a little bit, you know, like a lot of families that take over a business. They get kind of tired of it or whatever and they decide that they, at some point in time they made a decision, that's when Scott Paper took over, and I believe it was somewhere around 1965. And one of the things that, the first half in there which I think was maybe one of the turning points of the union when they came in. . . . Now you got to understand it might have been even before. It was right around '65, because what happened, the Machinists' Union and the Carpenters' Union, and there was another, I think the Laborers', Carpenters', Electricians', and Machinists' Union,- they petitioned to organize and had an election. And it was around 1965 that they won their election. The Paper Workers' came on with their election, I think it was, I believe it was sometime in 1966, late '66 I believe it was. And one of the things that was obviously was happening here was that, as I started to say, that I think had a great impact on our election, and I think it may even have played a role in the trade union getting the, winning the election, you know, the election to unionize. And that was they changed the Blue Cross/Blue Shield Insurance arbitrarily. They just said, we're going to change from, and we're going to go into Union Mutual, I mean Unum. And as it turns out that a guy by the name of Rudy Kreeger was the plant manager at the time, also he was quite a shareholder in Unum. And all this came, obviously came out and it soured a lot of people. Because at the time people had a lot of confidence in the Blue Cross/Blue Shield, thought it was a better insurance program, and people were pretty upset about it. And as a result of that, I personally think that that had a lot to do with both elections, both the trades who came in a year before we did, and then us, which we were by far the bigger union. We were like, I don't know, I think it was about fifteen hundred at the time that voted. And they voted, it was almost, I think it was, the vote was like sixty to forty, which was quite a substantial margin. And they became unionized and I think it was sometime, again as I said, earlier so probably, oh, it would have been, I came there in August and I think it was, it might have been '67 that they actually wound up becoming unionized, after the elections and everything back and forth. I think it was, probably was, probably in the fall of '67.

(*Tape pause.*)

ME: So anyway, as a result of that I didn't really participate in the union activities that much. I did do some helping of trying to organize, I worked like a lot of other people did. And later on life, as I became a union official, I think a lot of people thought that I was a plant there, which is not true, it never was. I mean, it's just a purely, just by coincidence that, you know, I happened to be in New Jersey, I worked there in the union, and then I came up here. And I was, obviously wanted to return to Maine all along anyway. But I can tell you in all honesty it was, there was no. I don't know if it was just more or less kidding or whatever later on by management, you know, when I became a union official, at the (*unintelligible phrase*). But anyway, I did, I went up, I became, I was recording secretary, and then later on I was elected president and I served

seven years as the president of the local. And up until, I didn't seek reelection December of 1978.

In the meantime, too, we got active in the Maine AFL-CIO. That was approximately about 1970, 1971. One of the people that was influencing that, influenced to do that was a guy who was a former legislator from Westbrook who was also one of our union members. A guy by the name of Arthur Gordon. He's still alive today, by the way.

And he's a, and a great admirer of Mr. Muskie, I must tell you. He was, but he influenced us to join the AFL. And at the time, Ben Dorsky, who was president of the Maine AFL-CIO, and Ben had been, he in fact served, I believe, it was something like thirty-eight years as president of that organization. And him and Muskie hit it off immediately. They were, he was certainly, and the funny thing about it, Dorsky was a registered Republican. I don't know if people, not many people may not know that. And he was quite fond of Governor Reed. But of course Governor Reed you have to understand came after Muskie was governor. And one of the things that I think that was immensely, differed with Muskie's style of campaigning was, the first thing is that to my knowledge. He's the first governor that actually lobbied, if you want to call it that, or at least made an effort and came before the full body of the AFL-CIO and spoke. And that went over quite well. Now, if other politicians had done it before that I'm not aware of it. I think Ben Dorsky was probably the first who made an outreach, if you will, towards organized labor to say, "Hey listen, I believe in a lot of your concepts, I believe in a lot of your thinkings," and, which was, you know, became quite an advocate for labor causes. Now, I don't mean this to imply that he was ever a rubber stamp, because I don't think that he ever was that type of a politician. I think, Ed Muskie, and you had to talk to him and explain to him the issues.

You just didn't say, "Well, I want you to pass this," and, you know, that kind of thing. But at any rate, when I got involved in the AFL-CIO a few years, and I never served as an executive officer, just a member, and I was talked into running, and I mean literally talked into running, for the Maine AFL-CIO vice-presidency. And what had happened was that Charlie O'Leary, who at the time was in charge of the Maine Bureau of Labor Education at Orono, over the years he and I have become great friends. Charlie had been, if you will, slotted I think by Ben Dorsky to be his successor. Well, that was fine but when it came time, I think Ben was, I think he wanted to leave when he wanted to leave, and he didn't, and even though he was getting up in age quite frankly, I think there was a lot of people in the labor movement that figured, well, you know, it's time for new blood. But at the time, Ben, even though Charlie was going to be the nominee for the vice-presidency, and this would have been around in the year of 1975, that what happened was that Charlie, for whatever reason, I think I had my own personal thinking what happened, but he withdrew from nomination, refused the nomination. And the paper workers, guys like Arthur Gordon and Gary Cook, who was a Maine national rep at the time, said, come on, we want you to be the nominee. And I said, finally after thinking it over and talking with my wife, I says, "All right, I'll do it." And we had the conventions at Ramada Inn in Lewiston, Maine. And I was fortunate enough to win that election. And it was, I was on the first ballot because, see, it was three nominees, guy by the name of Wynn who was with AFSCME, and the other guy was, I can't recall now. I can see him, he was a meat cutter, I can't remember his name. But anyway, I was able to win over fifty percent of the votes so it was obviously a win on the first ballot, okay?

And I served in that capacity for four years. And I had all intentions, because it was pretty obvious that Ben was going to get done at the convention of 1979, in January 1979. I'll never forget that, January 26th or whatever it was. We had something like twenty-six inches of snow, that people coming up the highways, the turnpikes to, trying to get up there, because it was going to be held at the Holiday Inn in Bangor. And I couldn't believe that there was really the delegation, that's the way the AFL-CIO conventions runs, you take your, it's represented by delegations. I was the, at the time we had about sixty-some-thousand members of the AFL-CIO. Well obviously you couldn't have everybody there, so it was based on so many delegates per capita and that type of thing. So we went to the election and Charlie, at the time I was running against, Charlie O'Leary surfaced again, he was going to be, he was going to run for president. And he and I had quite an election and he prevailed.

And it was shortly after that, in fact it was end of February that things started happening because Brennan had been elected governor, and that would have been starting of the year January 1979. And it was a month, about some time in February I was approached to take the job with Bureau Labor Standards which is, the way that used to work. By that, by the statute at the time was, commissioner of labor, which was a very good friend of mine, David Bustin who was being touted as the commissioner under the Brennan administration. And what he did is he put my name in nomination, so in other words it's, the commissioner makes the appointment with the approval of, that was the way the statute was. It's not that way any longer, it's just strictly by the approval of the, it's by appointment of the governor. But at the time it was commissioner of labor's opportunity to make that appointment with the approval of the governor. So I, that's, actually March 1st of 1979 is when I started my career in state governments, and that was at the Bureau of . . . .

And another, talk about history, this was the time when MSEA decided to go out on strike. Here I am, a union man of many, many years, who stood in many, many picket lines. I had to, I was crossing-, it was, obviously they had no law, by the law they couldn't strike but they were out, and they had picket lines up. And I didn't know what I, I was walking into an office. I had about fifty people working for me, and there was about three people there. They were out on, I said, “Boy, things will never change I guess.” But anyway, that was my first day in state government was that they had that almost, it was a pretty good shut down, it really was. I know in my office there was only about three people that were there greeting me when I walked in.

But I have never regretted it. I have had great fortune of working with people in state government, which I think, I truly think that, I mean obviously like anything there's some good and some bad. But my history with state workers has been very good. I think that they're very good people, they're hard working, they do the state's business. And I think generally speaking they, I know it's not as profound as it used to be, but I can remember over my years that they were a kind of a, kind of a joke, you know, yeah, you work for state government, you know, “What’s your job”, you know. Anybody that works in state government, well I can assure you they get a kind of a bad rap. But I think over the years a lot of that has subsided, though. I don't think there's quite that kind of candor, if you will, joking around stuff that, but it’s gone on over the years. I think people have more or less accepted the fact that, you know, we need, you know. I know one thing, I've seen in my years at state government. You take a service away from some people and you hear them holler. And believe me, more than once they were glad the

plows were plowing and the roads were cleared in storms and so. I think it's a kind of an unfair thing, over the years. But like I said, I think a lot of it has subsided to more just kidding around type of thing now.

But to get back to the paper worker's union, I had, made some great friends over the years. And I think that they have shown that they have been quite active in the political arenas, too. They have made, I know the international has made a number of, you know, not only just working and having people. In fact I'll give you an example. I said before I became vice president, I had not done anything, you know, that, I didn't hold a particular office. But what did happen in two elections, it was within a span of, it would have been two years because we did it one year. . . . Our international hired two different people. What we did was, we took myself and one of the, one time it was the guy who's now the Maine Senate President, Mike Michaud, who worked with me one time and we went all over the state campaigning for endorsed candidates. Whether they were Democrats or Republicans, endorsed candidates. In the legislature, governor's race, Congress, congressional race. And of course only one time it involved actually a governor's race because it's off year. But, and then the next time, I think maybe it was the first time that I did it I was with Ray Hinckley, who is now an international rep from Farmingdale. And so, you know, that's quite a commitment. I don't recall any other international doing that, putting people out on the road full time.

What they did was they paid my, and the people who were, the other, it was myself and, on two different occasions it was myself, Ray Hinckley, and then the next time it was Mike Michaud. They paid our lost time, and we took a leave of absence from the mill, so we were covered as far as our insurance and the pension was concerned, and our longevity, you know. But they paid our salaries, they paid our wages for out time out, and also our travel time and everything else. So we were out working, you know, in the field and we also worked up in the AFL-CIO office putting together pamphlets and stuff like that. So we had to deliver, you know, we used to do deliveries at plant gates, we'd get out there with the candidates at five-thirty, sometimes six o'clock in the morning. So they made a committed. I think the paper workers made a strong commitment to their candidates. Now, this happened to be most of the time it was Democrats, but there was a few candidates that were Republicans that were endorsed by labor that, they got the same treatment.

So that was, that took place during the time frame that, I guess it was after, I think it maybe was after I was vice president. Because that would have been, I started, they started, we started doing that right around '74, '75, '76. Because I remember that it was, it might even have been later than that because I was on the road during that period of time that Governor Brennan ran, and also of course we lost Bill Hathaway to Bill Cohen; but that was, so I was involved in those campaigns. As well as the legislative campaigns as well. So they've been, I think it's done some very good work over the years in the political arena of trying again to get labor, favorable labor candidates in the office.

And to get back to Muskie, obviously, he was obviously a perennial. In fact Ed Muskie as I recall spoke, it might have been, I'm almost thinking he was the keynote speaker at the convention of 197-, it would have been '79 when Charlie O'Leary defeated myself. He was one of the keynote speakers there. But he's had a long history, and like I said, his ties to Ben Dorsky

have been strong, it was a strong relationship, yeah. Of course I met him, the last time I met him was at, he was at Poland Springs, and I'm trying to think when that was. That had to be. . . . Now when did he die, did he die in -?

JR: I think in 1996.

ME: Ninety-six, so it would have been, I was thinking it was around '94, '95, because each year what we did, we always have a member guest. You know, you bring a member and what have you, and he was the keynote speaker there. And I think it might have been, I'm thinking '94 that he was there at Poland Spring. And he was *well* received obviously, very well received. You know, he was a distinguished person, I mean he, and I, we mentioned the Catholic church at St. Pius X Hyacinth in Westbrook, and of course that priest has long since, not been involved with the church, and that was. I'm trying to remember when he actually left. But I know he wasn't there at the time that Muskie spoke at the Democrats, the Westbrook Democrats had a function, there, a bean supper or something. And Ed Muskie would be a, I mean I've been to two or three of them that I remember seeing come and speak at, so. And I think that was the thing that captured the hearts of a lot of people, the working people, was that, you know. A lot of working people, rank and file workers, you know, they can't afford to go to these hundred-dollar-a-plate deals and stuff, you know. They just can't afford that. And really, quite frankly, I'm not so sure the AFL-CIO can either, though they have to make themselves available.

But this was the kind of a thing that I think, and they used to do those things, little bean suppers and stuff like that at different churches or different locations. And it seemed like that was another thing that came out of the political background of Ed Muskie, and it was the common touch. That common, that people from all walks of life could have an opportunity to hear what he had to say. Now there were, there's always the, and I'm sure that you've interviewed people, you know that there are going to be a lot of people that tell you, “Well, at times we thought that Ed Muskie talked too long.” Well, and there was guys that went along with him I guess that would try to give him the sign, you know, and what have you. And, I mean, we used to see that, too. But I've heard a lot of politicians speak, a lot of them. And I would have to tell you that he, he was able to get and keep my attention, probably as well if not better than anybody. And I mean that sincerely, he was a dynamic speaker. And he had a way of, his messages or his speeches, whatever, of going right to the heart, right to the heart of issues with people who get up every morning or go to work at midnight.

That's a big thing in the paper industry, people don't realize that, that people are working twenty-four hours a day, they have shifts running twenty-four hours a day. They're working weekends, and they're working holidays. Now, I know, sure people say, “Well they get paid for it.” But I'm going to tell you something, there's a lot of times I would have liked to stay home with my family. Especially in summer time. Up to Sebago Lake Park and what have you, you know. I have four children. In fact, this picture right here, Jeremy, was taken, that was going to be on the brochure of, my election brochure for the AFL-CIO presidency. That's my son way over on the right there, that's my oldest son Michael I lost, he was killed in the Airborne Rangers. They'd just come back from Grenada and he was at the time going, he was on a leave and he was going back January 9th of 1984 and was killed in a free fall jump, a night jump. And, but anyways, that was the, and that's my son Larry, and my daughter Karen. Now Larry works for, I can't

remember the name of the company, but what they do is they, their in the service business that take care of products and different set ups of products for Depot, Home Depot. And my daughter Cheryl is sales manager for Embassy Suites. And Karen, she has her own business, she's a beauty, the beauty salon in Scarborough. And that's my wife of forty some odd years. She's Polish, too.

Well her father was Polish-Lithuanian, Yankowski was the name. And he was an ardent union man. Yeah, he was, and he was captured in the union movement in the sense that in his early life he was in the Merchant Marines and then after, you know, and you got to understand that during the time, this was prior to the real power gains, if you will, of organized labor, and obviously during the Depression years of the Roosevelt New Deals, you know. And so he'd served in the Merchant Marines during that time, and then he served during WWII, he was, in fact he was on that Maramass run, the infamous run they made to Russia. Oh yeah. And he's, that's when they had become unionized. And he said the difference is night and day, how they were treated as Merchant Marines, you know. Before they were just, it wasn't the most pleasant kind of jobs to have. But once they became unionized they, it was obviously, and that was during the war time and all that, but still they took care of people, and the pay and everything and the benefits were far greater than they were before. But anyways, I -

JR: And what was his name?

ME: His name was Bill Yankowski. Bill Yankowski, Sr. He's since gone, he's not around any more, but he, both my, well, in fact I'm sixty-six, so my father and mother both have gone, and my, oh, about, back, it was about 1996 that my wife lost her mother. And of course she lost her father, he was back in, or it would have been back in about 1972.

So, but anyway, the Ed Muskie contribution, if you will, to any kind of, you know, what I call industrial justice, it was, he played quite a role in that. Now, it's true that Muskie may have come under some criticism of paper workers for his, the infamous Clean Air Act. But there were enough of us who were, whatever you want to call it, who, and I think, I give Dorsky a lot of credit there because Dorsky held the ship together. And, but again, what they were showing was we can have clean air without the loss of jobs. And that was the big thing. And I know a lot of the credit goes out to Mitchell, and I don't take anything away from George Mitchell, he's a fine man, he's a fine, great American, a great senator and what have you. But it was Ed Muskie who really broke the, I mean it was almost unheard of to take on these industrial giants and say, "Listen, we can't have our cities polluted with this stuff that you're saying that we have to," you know, "We have to breathe in, our children and our families. This has got to stop." I mean, I'll tell you something, that took a lot of political courage to do that, a lot. People don't, I don't think, a lot of people today, young people especially, I want to see who you are, but I don't think a lot of people today realize that it was really, it was his pioneering commitment to this cause that where we are today.

And he, I think he came forward, I think his lawyering skills, he presented an argument such that people couldn't, you know, the industrial giants that. And I know the paper companies, they were infuriated by it because they were going to be told, "You got to clean up the rivers, you got to clean up the air." Not just the air, but the rivers. "And all this stuff that you're dumping in has

got to stop." And they were furious about it. And that's when a lot of these companies, in fact even S.D. Warren here, had to put out the, what do they call those, environmental plans, that they had to monitor this. And it did create jobs, it did create jobs because we had to have people monitor. Now, they tried to say, well, they weren't going to be unionized but we fought that out and in- and out of the courts as well. You know, and we said okay, well we'll see if they're going to be unionized. And they wound up being unionized.

But the important thing was that it did create jobs. And some might argue, some might argue they created more jobs. I know the paper industries today is claiming that this is one of the major things that's caused them to go overseas and all this and that, and that may very well be. But I still say, that I think the main reason they went over there was that they thought they could get it done cheaper. And it could be done, you know, to the markets maybe more closer than being here. And there's a number of reasons for it. But I honestly, and in fact I've heard arguments it's the worker's comp that was the cost and forced them out. And I just don't buy it, I just think it's the, it was the time that manufacturing is, and the paper industry, just has not been able to keep up with all the production that's going on. And it was very costly to put the kinds of machines, that the cost of, I mean, the kind of machines that put that kind of a product out. And so there's, I have my own personal, you know, thoughts about why the paper industry is gone, gone abrupt in, not only in Maine but pretty much across the country. But it seems to be, really been hurt very severely here in the State of Maine, and I would agree actually.

But I don't, and now to get back to the, you know, there was a time there where I think some labor work people, especially some of the trades who used to build these paper mills, and some of the workers themselves, got a little sour on Muskie. But I'll tell you again, I think once people realized, and see. You got to understand that they were, there was a lot of lobbying going on by the paper industry to fight this. And they, ultimately they found out that it was advantageous, it was advantageous to go along with it, and they finally came across and we started putting in these environmental plants and what have you to monitor and to keep these. And I think they did a pretty good job. I really do.

I think that, I know I remember one, I won't give the guy's name, but I remember a guy who's a distinct, in fact he was plant manager when I left the mill in '79, he said, you know. He, the only thing that used to upset him was, we spent all this money and we haven't got to whatever the standard that they wanted, it was ninety whatever it was, and they didn't reach that standard. And, you know, it's going to cost that much more money to finally get to the standard where we have to be, okay? And that was something. And I suppose that one could, you know, I suppose that that could be something that a person would get upset about. But the fact is that it was money well spent, and it's just too bad that it didn't work out, at least for the paper mill here in, in S.D. Warren here in Westbrook.

Now the thing is that -

JR: Can I interrupt you for a second, I'm just going to flip over the tape.

End of Side A
Side B

JR: This is side B of the interview with Marvin Ewing, and please continue.

ME: As I was saying, that the hardship of losing that pulp mill there in S.D. Warren, at the Cumberland Mills area there in Westbrook, I think that was the final straw when they decided not to build. What they had to do I guess was to put quite a bit more money into it to bring it up to specs and nobody wanted to do that. That's when they lost it. And I guess that had a lot to do with the standards of the state as well as the feds. And I think that was an error in judgment, but Scott made that decision, and you got to keep in mind that it was spending an awful lot of money building that new business establishment up in Hinckley that cost millions and millions of dollars. And I think that they just didn't, they just did not see fit that they were going to put more money into that mill at S.D. Warren at Westbrook. And as a result of that, not only was it Westbrook, which was an old mill, I realize that, but it got old because people didn't put the proper, in my judgment, the proper revenue back in there by the Scott company to keep these mills up to date and to keep them going. Now of course, I mean they could argue, and I'm sure that that's a legitimate argument, that they just didn't feel that was a management commitment they wanted to make, and obviously they didn't make it.

And the other mill that suffered out of that was the one up in Winslow. That was a mill that was a productive mill for years and years, just as the one was in Westbrook. I mean, millions and millions of dollars profit were made out of those two mills. And it just, it kills me to see that mills like that just going down. But I guess it's like everything else, it's becoming more of a thing of progress I suppose so much as anything else.

But I still think that, we know one thing, we all, just look at this desk- paper everywhere. I mean, we put out books, lotta books, and we put out different things, so there's always going to be a need for paper, the paper industry. And I honestly think that this country is selling that industry short. Because it's an industry that can make money, it can put people to work, and I believe in all, with all my heart, that it can be something that can be done to meet standards, environmental standards, and maybe some day it'll come back. Who knows. But right now it's in a very, very bad sort of flex, I'll tell you. You just have to look at the papers today and yesterday, and probably tomorrow. It's, seemingly it's weakening with each passing moment, and it's regrettable. But there's not much I can do about it, I guess, other than just to say that it is regrettable.

But a lot of the industry is true, it's been transferred to Belgium, transferred to different countries in Europe. They've even tried some I understand in South America. And I don't know how much success they've had doing it. Because the paper making process is, it's not something that you learn overnight, let me tell you. It takes a lot of skill, there's a lot of skill, you go into these paper mills and you some of these, these old machine tenders. These guys are, they may not have a degree, but brother, I'll tell you, they know how to make paper. And they know how to run machines and probably if they didn't know how to run them they would be down because it's, the Yankee ingenuity or whatever it is. But boy, I'm going to tell you something, they find a way to keep them running. And it's regrettable that it's becoming almost a lost art. But anyway, that's one of the saddest moments in my life is seeing the paper industries go down the way they are. To see an industry that was so profound, I mean, you know. And I don't know what the answer

is. I just hope that somebody, maybe another Ed Muskie, will come along and, or somebody will come along with the leadership to get the industry back on its feet again. But anyway, that's, kind of, it's one of my saddest memories, you know, is remembering how it was and how it could have been, and then to see it today the way it is. It's kind of a dwindling art, if you will.

But anyways, Mr. Muskie did take a, I think he took some political heat for it, but he stood up. He knew he was right and he stood by it and, and I think that's the kind of politician that we need today in all honesty. We need people that even though it may not be popular to do something, if it's really the right thing to do you do it, you know. You do it and you take your lumps. And I'm sure that, we may never know, I mean, had a controversy like that not have come up, would he have become the president of the United States? One will never know. But he certainly, he stood up and he was counted and that's a credit to him, that's a real credit to him. And I just wish we had more politicians like that today, I really do. And I guess probably, I think I've probably said enough. Thank you very much, Jeremy, for the opportunity.

JR: Thank you. Actually -

ME: Oh, you go ahead, I'm sorry, I didn't -

JR: No, no, that was all very great. But one thing I wanted to delve into is if you could tell me about, I guess the major, in your time in the unions, the major issues that, maybe like, you mentioned that you were on a lot of picket lines. What were the different issues that the unions faced during your time?

ME: Well, when I was, of course when we went out on strike, the first one I was involved with was with the paper workers was in Peter J. Schweitzers. And that was an issue of pure economics, and I think that there was a lot of labor strife. And it wasn't something that was all over that particular plant, but it was a lot of different foremen who, and supervisors who were, in our judgment, were just too hard on the workers. They were just, you know, just pushing, pushing things and they were disregarding a lot of safety stuff. Well that was primarily the issue.

The other, the one economic issue which came down, one of the real things that we took on was that, the paper industry never did have in their union contracts any sick days. If you took a day off, if you were sick and you took. And that's why I'll tell you, myself included, we went in many a time when we shouldn't have been working. I've always attributed that to a lot of times where there was a lot of accidents in the paper mills, as a result of that. But if you didn't work, you didn't get paid. So we had, we, first we started out, we wanted five sick days. Now I'm talking about the strike at, which would have been the strike at, I think it was 1964 when I was working for Schweitzer's. That was a, became a major, major issue with workers. And we finally settled the strike, and we settled for other monetarial things, too. But the big thing that I was, that I think made the difference, there was the sick days, they gave away three sick days. Now what they would do is that, which I think probably was a good idea, they said, “Well, if you don't use them we'll pay you for the day.”

See, the paper industry, what it was, why they didn't, in fairness one of the reasons they didn't

like to give sick days was because if you were, if I was out sick I had to be replaced. So if I was replaced, they were paying time and a half because the guy was coming in off his time off, which was in a contract, in the one in New Jersey. It wasn't in the one in Maine, but at the time in New Jersey it was. And also, if you worked over eight hours, which you could, you got time and a half, too. So that was the real reluctance.

We had a guy, a gentleman who was the, he was a fine man, he really was. He was, Peter J. Schweitzer himself, it was Schweitzer who, he had, you have to understand, Schweitzer had at one time, see this is what happens to, I mean, I think that's what really happening today, there's so much gobbling up of some of these companies. And sometimes it works out and sometimes it doesn't. But anyway, Peter J. Schweitzer some time in, I can't remember, I wasn't, it was before I worked there because I went to work there in '61. Sometime before that Kimberly Clark merged with Peter J. Schweitzer. And he had a plant, he had a plant, he had one in Lisbon, New Jersey and one in Spotsford, New Jersey, and that's the plant I worked at. He had one in Lee, which is in Pennsylvania, I'm sorry, yeah, Lee was in Pennsylvania and then he had one in Springfield, Massachusetts. So he had four plants, and they, and he merged those plants with Kimberly Clark Corporation. And, but he was strong enough that they tried to dictate some of the, you know, the corporate policies, if you will, of Kimberly Clark. Just to give you an example, Schweitzer had, now this is why I say this was kind of great because he was somewhat of an innovator, he had a plan then, if you worked five years for him you deserve to be in my pension plan. Kimberly Clarke had a ten-year program. They tried, I'm told that they were, that that, they probably fought over that as much as anything. I'm talking about the corporate leaders in the corporation. And he prevailed. He said, "No, I'm going to maintain, as long as I'm alive," and he was, God, when I was negotiating, part of the negotiating team with him, he was, he must have been at least my age. Oh yeah, he was no spring chicken. And, but he held firm to that five years thinking of once you're five years you're in my pension plan.

But there were other things, too. But he was, I guess what I'm trying to get up to is that he was the type of a leader, you know, within that company that he was not going to be dictated to, things that he strongly believed in he was still going to maintain in his plants. That's unheard of today. Once you merge today, brother, you better be ready to sell you whole life, your everything because, I mean, they're going to tell you what you're going to do. And I think that gave a lot of strength to both the companies, you know, I mean the merging companies as well as the corporates. I mean, I think there was a lot of strength gained by that. I mean, not only skills and what have you, but I think it had some credibility to it. And maybe I'm not making myself clear, but they really. He was the type of guy that, like I said, he believed something and he wasn't going to be having somebody, just because I'm merging with you, bully me around. In other words he was, he was actually, what it boiled down to, he was looking out for the people that he was, that were working for him.

And I remember when we had the strike, it was about a six, six to eight week strike. He was hurt by it, he was kind of hurt by it. And I don't think he realized how out of touch, you know, maybe he had become. He had brought in, Mel Salberg was the guy who was the attorney, and he hired him pretty much to be his HR man, human relations person. And Mel, I think, of course Mel was, had a big, legal office in New York, and we used to see him with third step grievances on arbitration cases. Well, probably should have been around a lot more than he was. And I think

one of the things that came out of this strike was that he realized that we haven't been doing a good enough job here of, you know, treating people the way we should. And by God, he, well they never had a strike after that. And he did finally, when he died they, again, they sold the business. And I, because I tried to trace back because one of the things that I, when I left there, obviously, I had over five years in and I was trying to recoup my, you know, what little bit of my pension I would have when I turned sixty-five. Obviously I couldn't do that. I really have, I've tried to, through the (*unintelligible word*) and everything else I've tried to get, and it's been sold I think two or three different times since his death. Of course now we're talking about 1966 when I left there, and when I turned sixty-five that was the year 2000 so there's quite a few years have elapsed.

But he was a good guy in a lot of ways. I mean, he could be tough, too, you know, but he was. But that was the first and only time that I ever dealt with the guy who was the owner, so to speak, of that business face to face. When we dealt with Scott Paper later on in life, I mean, we were dealing, you see, because that same type of thing happened at S.D. Warren. S.D. Warren had a plant in Muskegon, S.D. Warren had a plant here, they also had a plant, they didn't have the Hinckley plant, that's for sure. I guess it was just here, it was here and the one in Muskegon. I was thinking, they had a little, one of their little offices that they had in Boston, Massachusetts. That was not, that was just like a sales headquarters, you know, which probably made a lot of sense because, you know, Boston being a big city and Muskegon, in Michigan and here. So, but that's what took place there. I mean, it was, when I dealt with them at S.D. Warren, I mean, it was a different thing. You were dealing across the table with lawyers, but you were dealing with people who had to go and make phone calls and. You know what I'm saying, to the corporate office which was, for Scott, was in Pennsylvania; Chester, I think it was Chester, Pennsylvania. That's where the Scott headquarters was. I think it still is. And that's the way you'd bargain. I mean, it was a far cry from, obviously.

But to get to the strike in S.D. Warren, that was a strike of, I think it was a lot of years that built up animosities in management and union, I think that was part of it. But I think, I honestly think that the people who were running the S.D. Warren management for the strike, I don't think they thought that the people would go out on strike. I think they thought that whatever they gave them, whatever they made the final offer, that was what they were going to take. You got to understand that there had been all these years of resistance to unions. Here the union comes in sometime in '67, and this is like 1975, eight years later, they just did not take the union, I think, in my judgment, serious.

Only issues, the issues were wages, but there was a lot of, but the one big issue that was probably the most strongest, and it was, really didn't have a cost package on to it, and that was the concept of LIFO, last in-first out. They had a strike, not a strike, I'm sorry, they had a layoff, a big layoff, I think it was somewhere in the seventies, I'm not sure. I want to say '74, '75, or it may have been. I think it was maybe, I'm going to say in the early seventies to be more accurate. And what was happening was that people were going out of the mill that had more seniority than people that stayed in. We had one guy that left, a guy by the name of Al Timms, he had ten years in the coating department, ten years. And he was being laid off and there was guys that were staying that had six, seven, eight months seniority. And that was a pretty good layoff for S.D. Warren. I forget how many hundreds of people it was, but it was a pretty severe layoff and

people didn't like it. Even the ones that weren't laid off didn't like it. Of course, there was all the bumping and that type of thing, too. So when the, when we negotiated in '75, that was the big issue. Obviously the company was not going to budge on that; they ultimately did.

And the other thing was that, again it goes back to the years of when S.D. Warren had, when it was S.D. Warren and they had the Blue Cross/Blue Shield, Scott comes in, they change it to, and after that happened, when they got involved with Unum, that's when people started to have to pay, were paying for their insurance. Now, sometimes it was half, sometimes it was more than half. But as I recall I think it was like half of the dependent coverage that they were paying. Of course, it's not the price that it is today. I think the company put a price tag of about ten cents an hour. It meant the difference of ten cents and hour per worker, when they put the package together, you know what I'm saying, the negotiated package. Of course I said even then, I said, I'll tell you right now, I don't think it'll be that, that won't be the cost ten, fifteen years from now. Now, I have to tell you, I never believed it ever would escalate to where it is today either, okay?

So that was two of probably the major financial, well one was a financial, the other was LIFO, and we prevailed. They gave us, we wound up with a LIFO and they worked out the language so that, you know, it was not too detrimental to the company. Because we weren't intending on putting them down either, you know. And, you know what? They lived with it, and they had it for years. I think finally that was one of the things I think they took out in the last negotiations at S.D. Warren's, which was last spring if I recall. That was with Sappi, though, that was with the new mill in their negotiations.

So, but to get to the strikes, there was more, much more violence in the one in New Jersey. It got, I don't know what the answer is to that. They tried to bring in truck drivers and stuff like that, and of course that kind of infuriated people on the picket line. And we had some of that in our second, the strike that I was involved with at S.D. Warren, too. But I have to say that it was a much more peaceful strike, the one at S.D. Warren. It really was, it was, people were determined, but they were determined that they were going to run this thing and stay within the confines of the law. Oh, there was a few, you know, different things that happened that, you know, could have got out of hand if people didn't, you know. But I truly, for people who have never gone through anything like that before, you know, they just didn't have that -. People in New Jersey, they may not have been in the strike at Peter J. Schweitzer's but, you know, somewhere along the line they had a history of knowing what labor movements and strikes are about.

But this thing at S.D. Warren was a different breed of cats. These people were, I think just got, like one guy told me, he says you know, the first time in I forget how many years he was there, twenty-some-odd years, he says, “I've taken a full vacation from this plant.” In other words, he says, I might take one week, but I never would ever take more than one or two weeks. The guy might have four weeks coming to him. He says, “I took those weeks off” and, he says, “I'll tell you, it felt good.” I says, “Well, that's great.” But I mean, and they came and they picketed, and they did the things that, you know, that, what I think you're supposed to do on a picket line. You're supposed to carry your sign and stand tall with your union, and that's what they did. And they never wavered, they never wavered.

And in fact, to be honest with you, we had a little bit of a difficult time to get them all to come back to work. Now, of course it was in the summer time, I realize that. But there was a solidarity there that I don't think I ever saw before. I mean, they really stood together, and I never was more proud of people because they stood up. And I, you know, if somebody would have told these people ten years ago that they, or whatever it was when they joined the union, that they'd be out in the picket line I don't think they ever would have believed it. But they stood up for what they thought was right and they prevailed. Now there wasn't, I would admit the company probably didn't move an awful lot maybe, but they moved. And they moved on that life insurance, I mean on the health insurance, and that was a big issue with those people. People were tired of paying. Can you imagine how they'd feel today? I mean, it would be just, it's crazy, it's crazy. But they stood up and they did it in a respectful way. And again they had, a few years later they had, almost had another strike, but that didn't last. I think that lasted only about a week and the company was, I mean, I think they were just testing them again, quite frankly. But I wasn't there when they had that one. But they, it was immediate settled within a week or two and they went back to work.

But I guess that I'm maybe showing my biases a little bit, but I strongly, strongly believe in organized labor. And I think the day is coming when you're going to see the numbers start coming back again. And I'll tell you, the first guy I ever heard say it was Ben Dorsky, and he said, "You know, it isn't unions that bring workers to unionization, it's the employers. It's the employers." And I'll tell you, I think that's exactly what's going to happen within the next decade, or the next decade. I have no crystal ball, but it's going to happen. Because what I see happening in business today is this management by bean counters is what I call it. I don't think it's healthy, I don't think it's legitimate, and I don't believe that it can survive. Because at some point in time employers have got to be a little bit like Peter J. Schweitzer was and say, wait a minute. Oh sure, it may be the fashionable thing to do, and may save you money and all this, and make the accounts look real great. For me, going from five years to ten years, for an accountant to put those figures down, that might be, you know, well that might make him look good. But he said no, and he said no because that was something I said I would do, and I'm going to do it. And he did it. And I say to you, and I say this in all honesty, that there's got to be that kind of management mentality running these companies today. We can't have, we can't, and I'm getting a little energized here, because you can't have CEOs making millions and millions of dollars to run a company, and having that company face the standards, if you will, of what's a profit, and what's an acceptable profit, okay? I mean, this is, to me it's the most ludicrous thing I've ever seen in all my years of working, and I've worked farms, I've worked in paper mills, I've worked construction jobs and I'm telling you, this is crazy. There's got to be some commitment that, you know, okay, I'm going to make a profit, nobody should be against me for that, that's what this whole thing is about. But at a certain time I've got to make sure I'm taking care of the workers.

And then we talk about welfare in this country. If we were, if there was more of these jobs where people are not just making minimum wage and just not making, finding ways not to pay for their health insurances and stuff like that. I mean, when I look across this border of Canada, and everybody can make all the fun they want of Canada, but Canada has stayed the course relative to their health insurance. They've stayed the course, and they're not wavering on that thing. And I hope they never do because, I mean, they're giving something back. That's what we

got to be thinking about in this country, you know. Kennedy wasn't all wrong, we got to be thinking about something back. And it can't always come from the worker and from the poor. It's got to come, and it's got to be. I don't say people shouldn't have to work and earn what they make, I mean I'm obviously a hundred percent for that.

But I'll tell you, I sit across this, not this desk here but we have a, out there we have a conference room, and I hear cases after cases and I'm telling you, of unemployment, and I'm telling you, we're talking about the majority of it is, is jobs that are, that involve, not all of them, but the biggest portion of them involve jobs where the guy is working, if he's got a health insurance he's paying for at least half of it, if he's got a pension it's not a large one. Know what I'm saying? The benefits and the wages are not all that great. And, again, it goes back to what I said a little earlier, it's going to be the employers that are going to; because workers are not going to continue accepting this. I don't believe. Now, maybe I'm wrong, but I'll tell you, I see young people today, they may not even be in a union and I'll tell you, they don't put up with the nonsense. All these young kids they says, "Hey, leave and go somewhere else." But sooner or later they're going to say, listen, I mean, I went through a little period of that myself, I mean where "Listen- "or "I go somewhere else." But sooner or later you say, "Hey, you know, I got to make roots here." I want a job that's going to pay me a fair wage and fair benefits, and I want to work and I want to build a pension because, you know, some day I'm going to be sixty-five years old, I'll want to retire. And I still think the average worker today thinks about things like that. I really do. I'd be awful surprised if they didn't.

What's the next question. I didn't mean to get off, because I really, it's one of my, it galls me when I see Eastern Airlines, that time when they went under. And here the guy was making a million dollars in bonuses, and these people losing their jobs. That's unconscionable in this country, that's unconscionable. And I just, like I said, next question.

JR: You spoke at one point where, when you went kind of lobbying with Mike Michaud across the state.

ME: Yes, well it wasn't lobbying. What we did was we went out recruiting voters and getting people that weren't signed up to be voters, you know, voter registration. A combination of voter registration, going to paper mills, delivering, you know, the, obviously some would say propaganda, but we were presenting labor's point of view about different candidates and what have you. We did that. We also were with candidates at the. And that's the time to get them, four in the morning when they're coming to work or coming for their paycheck and stuff like that. So we did that as well. And that went, generally speaking that went well.

We also, we did something else, too, and I'm trying to think. I think it might have been when Mike Michaud was with me. We did some labor rallies, too, in different parts of the state. We did one here in Portland obviously, and we did one up in, I'm trying to think where it'd, I think we did one in Presque Isle, even, you know. And we did anything that we thought would get out the vote. Of course this is the time frame when Carter ran, too, you know. This was the time period when Carter went for president. And we had, we were a part of, as many other Democrats were, the Maine AFL-CIO, in getting him up to, he came up and spoke at the University of Maine up at Orono. And that was, and he, we had him down here, too, at one of the armories

here in Portland, Carter spoke.

But we, you know, we did things like that that was, again, the big thing was, the thrust was to get out the vote, we wanted to get out the vote. And we were, I have to say, I think without boasting, I think it was somewhat successful, I think it was. And the, you know, we did a lot of things. We tried to make as, again, grass roots, we had labor rallies, we had maybe, we had one over here at the, oh, on Congress Street there, the Elks Club, you know. Put out a little feed and stuff like that. And things like that. But I think it energized people to really take a -. We also, we had, we set up polling banks, making phone calls, again, get out the word. And, there was a lot of things.

But you know, but to get back to Muskie. I think Muskie was, for whatever reason, he was ahead of his time for one thing. He, no politician ever did what he did. I mean, he got in a car with this guy and he, all over the state of Maine, I mean he went door to door almost, you know. Bill Cohen did a little bit of that, and [David] Emery did a little of it, and it was effective way of campaigning, you know. This, that technically isn't door to door, but yet you're traveling, you're traveling the entire state, making contacts with people, you know. And again, I think that has, it energizes people, you know? Today the only energizing voters get, quite frankly, and that's kind of regrettable, is the television. It's, and that's why I say they're so high, they're so expensive because obviously they don't give TV time away for a dollar ninety-eight. I mean, they just, it's just incredible. So I mean, we wonder why we have such expensive campaigns and what have you. And I guess I'm of the opinion also that a lot of that money could go a lot better other places. I'd like to know how many jobs we could create with all that money.

So, to get back to him, I mean he did things like that. And it was, and I think it was effective campaigning. I mean, he'd take right off and he'd go into a particular city and he'd shake hands with people coming out of shopping centers and stuff like that. It seems to me that, as I recall, I don't ever recall any other politician here in Maine doing that type of thing that I can recall. I mean he was a, he was, of course he obviously had some vision, he had some foresight and he knew what was effective. He knew what was effective. And, I don't know what further to say, [*sic*] Mike.

JR: Okay, yeah, I guess one last thing I'd ask you is -

ME: I called you Mike, I meant Jeremy, I'm sorry. Must have had my son's name in mind.

JR: You mentioned that you, like Mike Michaud and Ray Hinckley that helped you out with these like get out the vote efforts. What other people were really influential in like the voter, the union rallies and like the rank and file people who were really involved in that? Do you remember others?

ME: Well, they had Al Camire at the time was with us.

JR: What's his name?

ME: Al Camire, C-A-M-I-R-E. He was involved very much in that getting the rallies going.

In fact we had, he and I had quite a discussion, if you will, with Ben Dorsky. Ben Dorsky didn't think it was a, would be effective, and I guess we kind of argued him down to where he said, well, we'll try it and he did, and I thought they were quite successful. I would note, though the next two years when we went out, when I went out with, I think that time I went out with Mike Michaud, we didn't, you know, we didn't do that. We just did it that one time. But I think it was an effective way to do it. But somebody told me a long time ago that you won a battle when you got him to do it even that one time. I mean, he could be quite stubborn at times. But, you know, they may say that about me now that I'm sixty-six years old.

But, and there was other people, too. I'll give you an example. I mean, we had this one thing, I forget what we were going to do. I think we were going to, it was a plant in Thompson, and John, John, in fact John now works for OSHA. He was the president of the, can't think of his name now. He worked for, he was the president of the union there, big tall guy, wore glasses. I can see the guy but I can't think of his last name. And we had to, we were coming in late at night, we had this U-Haul truck, there was Mike Michaud and myself. And we were, we didn't know where we were going to stay, so obviously we were all trying to save money and stuff, you know, and we wanted to be sure that we'd get up early enough to go picket that. Not picket but, what do you call it, leaflet, we used to call it leafletting that plant in Thompson. And so we stayed at Jim Tierney's house that night, yup, and he put us up and got up in the morning and we had a light breakfast and we were on our way. There was a lot of people along the way. I couldn't begin to begin to think about all the names. There's a family, a guy up in Madawaska that, Burns. Spoke very good French, though, I remember that. He was the president of the local up there with Frasier Paper Company at the time. And we stayed at his place one night, too, just so we could get an early start, you know. And so there was people along the way that gave us a little bit of help one way or another. And obviously by doing that it deferred some of the cost to the paper worker's union, and to the AFL-CIO. But generally speaking, people would help out in those kinds of situations.

Because we were, we really were, it was a big thing for us to get Carter in there, I can remember that. That was a big, you know. He did let us down a little bit on the Lander Griffin, not the Lander Griffin but the Labor Law Reform, that bill. We always, we came so close, so close. We had the votes, and we failed on cloture. And the thirtieth guy, the sixtieth guy rather I should say in the Senate that we wanted to get was [Sam] Nunn, Senator Nunn. He was an old Georgia boy and he just couldn't bring his heart to give labor anything like the Labor Law Reform, and so it died. It died a very, very bad death in the U.S. Senate. But it wasn't because of lack of trying, I mean we really gave it all we had and we just couldn't quite do it. And what's really sad is that it hasn't come back again. It should have come back, it should have been back a long time ago. And I think that that's one of labor's fallacies I think, that we made a big mistake by not coming back to that. Maybe not the next year, or the next congressional session, but certainly to come back within a reasonable time. And it's never come back again. And of course labor argues now that we just wouldn't have the votes anyway, but I think the time is coming when the people are going to speak again. They're going to say, “Hey listen.” And it's not easy sometimes to, when you get involved in these things, when you're doing this organizing, it's hard because a lot of people, if they're working from the inside like I was at S.D. Warren, I mean I was working for the company. There's another guy by the name of John Neal, he was working, you know, at the company at the time and he was organizing. There was Bobby Charette, there was Dale Brown

from out, there was, I mean, countless of guys that were working within the mill. And you know, we were always looking over our shoulder making sure, you know, that we weren't going to be watched. We knew that it was, but I will say nobody, during that period of time, nobody got fired. Nobody got fired for the union at least. That's a credit to the company. But there was an awful lot of companies that, I mean I see.

I would say when I first came on this job I used to see, it seemed like one a year that a guy got fired as a result of involving in this lobbying. In fact, we had one just two years ago who involved, this guy got involved with the trucker's, trucking company. And I can't give you any names, you know, because that's still confidential. But, and myself and the employer rep over here voted to give the guy unemployment. And there was tapes involved and everything else, and it was a real big hassle. But ultimately even this guy agreed, he was an employer rep for six years now, he agreed that the employer didn't, he just, he went overboard in his, you know, focusing in on this guy. This guy was no rocket scientist either, you know. I mean, he was just doing something that he really felt was right and I don't, and I think they did finally, I don't know if they ever rehired him or not but I know they were going to go back to, you know, the NLRB and try to get his job back.

But anyway, so that, from that point of view I think that labor's dropped the ball in not going back after Labor Law Reform. But that was a, I mean that's why we really felt that if we got Carter in there we could do that. But I think he made some mistakes, but I think he was a pretty good president. He certainly was an honorable man, that's for sure.

JR: All right. Thank you very much. Lots and lots of information here, and very valuable.

ME: Thank you.

End of Interview