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Gwadosky, Dan oral history interview

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Interview with Dan Gwadosky by Andrea L'Hommedieu

Summary Sheet and Transcript

Interviewee

Gwadosky, Dan

Interviewer

L'Hommedieu, Andrea

Date

January 18, 2002

Place

Augusta, Maine

ID Number

MOH 326

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Biographical Note

Dan Gwadosky was born in Waterville, Maine in 1954 and grew up in Fairfield, Maine. Of polish ancestry, his father's sister, Nellie, married Dick McMahon, one of Muskie earliest friends and political partners. Dan graduated from Thomas College with a B.S. degree in Management. Prior to being a candidate himself, he worked on five congressional campaigns, all losing. He was first elected to the Maine House of Representatives in 1978, serving consecutive terms for 18 years. He left the legislature in 1996 due to term limits. He was elected Assistant Majority Floor Leader in 1986, House Majority Leader in 1988, and the 92nd Speaker of the House in 1994. At the time of the interview, he was on the Board of Trustees of Thomas College and in his third term as Maine's 46th Secretary of State. In this position, he advocated for the increased use of technology in government services, especially using the Internet to serve the public need for information and services about government. He chaired the Information Resource of Maine (InforME) board, which oversees the new trend toward e-government. He has been involved in community athletics, coaching baseball, soccer and basketball. He held Muskie's seat in the state legislature for many years, at his request.

Scope and Content Note

Interview includes discussions of: Fairfield, Maine community: social, ethnic, religious,

economic, political; McMahon, his uncle by marriage; the 1954 gubernatorial campaign; Gwadosky's involvement in politics, including working on others campaigns and his 18 year tenure in the Maine legislature; recollections of the Muskie speech at the Waterville Armory in 1972 during the presidential campaign; Senator Muskie's seat in the Maine House and Gwadosky's story of how he came to have the same seat; John Martin and his significance to Democratic politics in Maine; term limits in Maine; the Secretary of State's office and what its functions are; e-government development through online technology (InforME); Aroostook County Democrats and citizens, and specifically how they differ from other parts of the state in terms of needs; how the "Aroostook delegation" represents its people; and the Maine Commission on Legal Needs and Senator Muskie's commitment to it.

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Transcript

Andrea L'Hommedieu: This is an interview with Dan Gwadosky at the state, secretary of state's office in Augusta, Maine on January the 18th, the year 2002. This is Andrea L'Hommedieu. Could you start by saying and spelling your full name?

Dan Gwadosky: Sure, Dan Gwadosky, and it's G-W-A-D-O-S-K-Y.

AL: And where and when were you born?

DG: I was born in 1954 in Waterville.

AL: And did you grow up in the area?

DG: I grew up in Fairfield, and I've lived there all my life.

AL: And tell me, what was Fairfield like?

DG: Small town, mill town for the most part, Keye's Fiber, a lot of families who grew up working at Scott Paper in Winslow and neighboring manufacturing entities in the greater Waterville area. But, you know, a small town, six thousand people, and a very interesting place.

AL: What was it like politically and socially and economically?

DG: Economically it, I think it tended to follow, you know, the national economy to a great extent. It was not distinct, it was not desperate necessarily, and a lot of people lived close by, tiny houses, in neighborhoods. And I grew up in neighborhoods where everybody's house was, you could almost reach it out to that extent, you know, small patchworks of lawn. And people not overly socially, politically involved in a lot of stuff; followed it from a distance. And I can't say that, growing up, that there was an extraordinary amount of political involvement at that time, even though between '54 and '72, the time I was born to going through high school, there was a lot of political activity in the nation. There were some areas of Maine that weren't touched by that, at least with the intensity we've seen in other parts of the country, and certainly in Washington.

AL: Now, you said there wasn't a lot of political activity, but did the people tend to be working class Democrats?

DG: Oh, they were very much working class Democrats, Catholic, strong Catholic communities in segments of Fairfield and certainly in the greater Waterville area; very much working class entities in terms of their philosophical perspective.

AL: And what did people do in Fairfield, what was it that brought the community together? Were there grange halls, or churches or . . . ?

DG: There were veteran's posts that generated some opportunity for people to get together. The athletic programs for the schools were always a big draw. Feeder programs for basketball, football, baseball. And so tremendous emphasis on school athletics and the Friday night games that would ensue from that. That was pretty significant. We had granges, still have granges; they were not as significant. The churches had good followings, a lot of social activities planning was around the church schedule as well, and so you had those kind of factors that were going, going on. But very much neighborhoods, I mean you knew, these were neighborhoods and you knew the south neighborhood and the north neighborhood and the different parts of town. And, and there wasn't a lot of transportation growing up, and so people kind of got focused on their neighborhoods.

We were able to go to Waterville because there was public bus transportation to Waterville and Fairfield for twenty cents. And so for the kids their life was complete, you know, for twenty cents you could take the bus to Waterville and go to the movies, which was not much more than

fifty cents beyond that, and it was a great place to take care of kids. So, we had a day care provider, my dad worked, spent his entire life working at Scott Paper Company, and my mom worked by choice, as a legal secretary. And so we had a day care provider, we just didn't know it was a day care provider. It was some lady who was our neighbor, who's name Fairy (*unintelligible name*), who is still alive, and Fairy took care of all the kids in the neighborhood whose parents worked, and that was day care. We just didn't know it was called day care. And so after school we went to Fairy's house. And then in the summer time we, for the most part we were at, not throughout our entire lives, but for a period of growing up we were at this neighborhood's house and people just took care of each other. I mean, neighbors, you know, became extended parents for parents who were out of town or at work, and everybody kept an eye on each other. So everything that was done socially was done through these neighborhoods, and people tended to keep an eye on each other.

AL: Now, you mentioned sports as being a community draw to bring people together. I understand that you've done quite a lot with sports teams, coaching and, how did you get an interest in that?

DG: Well, I don't think, my involvement was no more or less special than anybody else as a parent. My kids were going to sports, they're always in need of a soccer coach or a basketball coach or a baseball coach. And so I volunteered like many other parents, and spent a lot of time on benches, and still do to some extent, and I thoroughly enjoyed it. Because working with kids and helping them, and teaching them, instructing them, it's just, was always enjoyable. And it's an area that to this day is still very sports oriented.

AL: Now you went to Thomas College, is that right?

DG: Correct.

AL: And now you're on the Board?

DG: Yes.

AL: What do you think Thomas' impact, Thomas College's impact has been on the Waterville community?

DG: Well, we're fortunate in our area, we've got some prominent colleges with Colby College and Thomas College. And Thomas College's niche has been as a business school, preparing people for business. And as economies change they've done the same, and so their niche continues to be readjusted, six and eight years ago getting into computer technology and the necessity for having people understand information systems, to most recently getting into sports management, getting into criminal justice. They now have a master's degree in computer technology education, understanding the desire of so many people to integrate things at the, into the classroom through computer technology and understanding that we need training for teachers. And so, like a small private college, they're looking, like a Husson or other type, like a St. Joseph's, they're looking for a niche, area where they can provide stuff to students and done it quite well.

AL: I would imagine it's pretty valuable to have that near, say, Fairfield or the other towns, to provide a source for someone who can't go to Colby can still go to further their education.

DG: Sure. Once again, it's a, it's, we're fortunate in this state, we have a strong university system, people can attend it, it's affordable. And then also for some who wanted to specialize in business or other areas, this happened to be an affordable option that was providing a needed service, but high quality, and we've been very lucky. I mean, because we have a technical college in Fairfield as well, and that's providing a critical need and growing by leaps and bounds. So from an educational perspective in the area growing up, and even now, pretty interesting blend of educational facilities.

AL: So, when did you get the political bug?

DG: Freshman year in high school.

AL: That early.

DG: Yeah, 1968.

AL: Sixty-eight, oh, with, and what, was there a particular event or what?

DG: Well, a couple things. I was involved, I was interested in what, everything I was beginning, everything was beginning to happen in the world. I was just curious about this stuff, and there was a lot coming at the same time. And my sister, when I became a freshman, my sister, who is a couple years older than me, four, and (my parents believed in planned parenthood and they had the second child once the first child was going to be old enough to take care of the second one, that's how they worked that out) so my sister who was trying to be helpful said, "As a freshman, you might want to get involved, run for office, be president of the class or something." Or to be, get involved, because, you know. And so she organized a campaign for me and we had signs, and we had stickers, and we had all these, what we thought was quite ingenious; we thought we'd planned this to the nth degree. And of course I suffered a humiliating defeat in that first year, and pretty much decided that I wasn't, that I just wasn't cut out for it, you know, and that wasn't going to be me. I was still very involved in politics and interested in it, so I didn't, I just chose not to run for office. And I said, I'm not going to run, I'm not going to get involved in the school committees, I'm just going to do stuff as I can. And so we just, we had a group of teenage Democrats in, at Lawrence High School, we were called teenage Democrats and we probably had thirty people. And we met with some frequency and, you know, we worked on campaigns and were involved in different things, and right up through 1972 with the elections, and you know, got in parades and rallies in Waterville, and they'd call us up and we'd show up.

AL: When you said you worked on campaigns and such, was that on the national, for national candidates?

DG: Mostly, well Muskie's campaign, but most of it, traditionally it would be, it might have

been somebody running for the legislature in the area. I worked on five consecutive congressional campaigns in the second district and they all lost, every candidate I worked for lost. And it was actually in 1978 that I ran again. And my sister called me up, after I had worked on five campaigns and they all lost, and said, you know, you, "There's a seat that's opening in Fairfield for the house representatives and," she said, "and you worked on those other campaigns, if you're willing to put the time in why don't you do it for yourself?" And I thought about it again and that's when I ended up running myself and working through that process.

But prior to that, I was involved in different congressional campaigns, Jim Henderson's campaign, or Mark Gartley's campaign and these various entities. We just enjoyed it; we just thoroughly enjoyed it and were surprised that we could have, that we could actually get involved. They seemed to be thrilled, these, the older Democrats, were thrilled that we even had the interest and seemed to let us do anything we wanted to do, so that was just fun. We were putting out signs and we were going to rallies, and we were just, we were encouraged that people allowed us to participate and thought that we had something to contribute. So we did.

AL: What is your first memory of Senator Muskie, when, in '68 when he ran?

DG: Well, one of the, the family memory really comes from my uncle, Dick McMahon from Winslow.

AL: He's your uncle?

DG: He's my uncle.

AL: Oh, tell me about him.

DG: Well, have you talked to people about Dick?

AL: His name comes up, yeah, with the people who go way back with Senator Muskie.

DG: Yeah, because, well, when he first ran for governor, you know, in '54. And he was involved in that campaign and so, and he used to describe, he's no longer alive, but he used to describe himself as campaign manager. And I said, I said, well, and I'd say, I was just curious, you know, and I'd say, "What did you do as his campaign manager?" He said, "Well, we'd drive him around in the car." You know, and that was, I mean, the sophistication of campaigns was pretty different at that time. But still, I mean, it was knowing people and knowing the associations and the groups you had to talk to, and the messages and, you know, working through that, so. For years at family reunions, you know, we'd get together at, it was usually at Uncle Dick's house in Winslow and, for Easter and other occasions, and we all had spent the week making Polish sausage in advance, and we'd always compare our Polish sausage and see who had the best. And it didn't dawn on me 'til like five years later that he was always burning everybody else's so that his would always taste better, but that's neither here nor there. And so, he was just a very interesting guy, he was just, he was our connection, I mean, to us he was like, boy, he's been on the inside, you know, he knew Ed Muskie, and Muskie was just an idol for us, you know, growing up. I mean, we'd heard about the stories, you know, that followed him and

you talked to people, and so, you know, it was many years after, I mean, I had never even met him, you know, but we just heard about him through my family and my mom, you know, she said, this is a person that's larger than life, you know. And during the presidential election and how we were, you know, going to the armory and, you know, my mother was convinced to let us stay up all night to watch this stuff, this was a really important thing to be involved in, we just took it all in, we just went through the whole thing.

And I remember being at the armory in Waterville and they had things set up, because it was an earlier night than people had hoped for obviously, but Muskie made an appearance. And later on you had national news people there and others covering this thing, and we were just observing the whole thing, taking the whole thing in. And I remember the press people talking to this, looked like kind of a wild group over here, getting them to yell certain things so that Muskie would have to respond to them, you know. And people, and they were screaming out, 'remember the Pueblo', you know, stuff like this, you know, in the middle of his speech. And people in the crowd were so, I mean, they loved Ed Muskie and they, this is in Waterville, you know, and they were so, you know, they would say, "Pay no attention to him." I mean they were screaming down these other people but Muskie was just saying, "No, no, we'll talk about that." And just in his own way, he would talk about it and explain about it.

And so, you know, the connection was not, it was originally through my uncle that created this, intrigued us about who this person was and what he was like and, you know, then we began to follow him. And then, you know, for us to be able to go to, you know, to be involved a little bit in what we were doing in our little town in that election, to see him in that venue, boy, that was just about all we needed at that point.

AL: Did your uncle ever tell you any Muskie stories, especially driving him in the car?

DG: I didn't know what to believe, to tell you the truth, you know. When I, and later on in life, you know, I would, he would tell me some stories about trying to get to places and, I don't want to say bribing, but trying to make it easier to get into certain places and not, and making arrangements and do the bartering and stuff like this, and I could never confirm any of it. Later when I was in the legislature and I would meet Ed Muskie I would, I'd ask him occasionally about that, and I said, and he'd never comment on it. So I said, and I'd ask him, you know, for awhile because I was trying to make sure that he actually knew my uncle, you know, I had to verify that for myself, I said, you know, "Do you know Dick McMahon?" "Oh yes, yeah." And, "Of course, he was (*unintelligible word*) involved in my campaign when I ran for governor," ta-da-ta-da-ta-da, "I've known him for years." I said, "Okay," and I said, "well, he told me once" da-ta-da-ta-da. He says, "Now," he says, "how do you know him again?" I said, "Well, he's my uncle." And he said, "Well I won't hold that against you," you know. And he would never tell me anything. So I could never get any kind of verification of anything my uncle ever said, and so we never really knew. And then we decided we just didn't care, it just didn't really matter, you know, if he told us some peculiar stories or funny stories, it was just easier to believe them, you know. And in my own observation of politics, watching things happen, just about anything that can happens anyways, so I'm sure they had some interesting, I didn't have personal experiences, you know, to share that were necessarily memorable or humorous or whatever. So I, I was more really, once again, in admiration of, you know, following him, you know, before

we even knew him, and then being there in '72 and then just, you know, wanting to be there from then on, at that point.

AL: And Dick McMahon was your mother's brother?

DG: He was my father's, actually, my father's brother-in-law.

AL: Okay.

DG: So my father had seven in his family, and Dick married his sister Nellie.

AL: Now, after sort of those early years, then you went on to run for the state house.

DG: Nineteen seventy-eight.

AL: And you won.

DG: Yes.

AL: And what was that like, entering the legislature?

DG: Well it was great. I didn't know what to expect necessarily, never, I'd never stepped foot in the capital, I'd never been in the house chamber, and I was involved in a primary that year against the chairman of the, chairwoman, of the Fairfield town council. Her name was Dorothy Poulin, is Dorothy Poulin, and we ran in the primary and I won by sixty-five votes in the primary, and then ran in the fall and really didn't know much about, I mean, any sophistication. We'd worked on all these campaigns and all I knew was that you knocked on everybody's door and campaigned, and I had a card with the 800 numbers on it and I told everybody I don't have any fancy brochures but I do have some 800 numbers, and they were always apologetic. Oh, you don't need a fancy brochure, that's fine like that. And I just met them, and I enjoyed doing it, just enjoyed seeing them. And it was, and later on in subsequent campaigns, because after that I spent a total of eighteen years in the legislature and after the first year, you know, as my family, you know, was growing up, and you know, I have a daughter who was born on Election Day and a variety of different things happened, you know, over a period of time, but my kids were kind of able to campaign. And the best thing for them, I think, was being able to go to people's houses and see different people and understand how different people were, that they were living in different environments, and sometimes we were in rural areas and sometimes not so much. And it was, it's had a social effect on them I think that's been beneficial, that it's an experience they might not have had otherwise.

So I think that's been a positive thing to some extent and . . . I don't recommend giving birth on Election Day if you can help it. That was my daughter, and she, my wife, it was, actually it was the last two or three days before the campaign which we hadn't, you know, you don't sleep very much, you know, as it is in those campaigns, you're working around the clock. And it was the night before the election, we were actually just doing some stuff and she started to go into labor. And so we were talking about, you know, the dynamics of it, and this was like my fourth

election. And she wasn't, it was our second child and so we knew it wasn't time to go to the hospital yet but, you know, what do you do in the meantime, you know. So we had a big, we had people coming over for what we hoped would be a victory party that next night, and so we decided we'd make some finger rolls, and so we were making some finger rolls and just kind of trying to be as cool as we could about this but, we were less than three miles from the hospital. And then we decided we'd just lie down and sleep, and of course we couldn't sleep because there was just too much, you know, going on.

And then we finally went to the hospital about four or five minutes before seven o'clock, six o'clock, on Election Day. And at that time I was sponsoring a bill on hospital cost containment and the hospitals were not at all thrilled by that, so we just tried not to give our names too loud (*unintelligible phrase*). So we went in and, of course they thought it was hilarious that, you know, that this whole thing was happening. My wife didn't think it was nearly as funny as everybody else. And so she gave birth mid-morning, and some time right after noontime she slept for a while. And I went home and changed and went in to vote, because I hadn't had a chance to vote, and got an absentee for my wife because she hadn't had a chance to vote either. So, I was actually in a close election that time, that particular year, and of course the big deal in these small towns is being at the polling area all day long and greeting everybody, you know. So I show up a little before one and my sister's there and she's just kind of flipping out because she (*unintelligible phrase*), she says, this is unbelievable this is happening on this day, and so excited that Jessie was born and everything else. And so I had some cigars with me and my opponent was there and so I said 'hi' and I gave him a cigar. And he says, "Well I don't smoke." And I said, "Well, it's just tradition." So I took a cigar and I put it here [gestures] in his pocket. And then I left and I didn't come back, you know, I did the, I had someone register the absentee and I didn't come back until after the polls, just to thank everybody for working and see what happened, you know.

And I said to my, when I got back at eight o'clock my sister said, I said, "How's it going?" She says, "The best thing you did was give Bill Haggerty," this was my opponent, "that cigar." I said, "Why?" And she says, "All day long people came by and they saw that cigar in his pocket and they said, 'Bill, I didn't know you smoked.' And he said, 'well I don't, but Dan's wife had a baby today and he gave it to me.'" So how lucky that was. So it's great fun, I thoroughly enjoyed those campaigns, it was always fun to be involved in them, and of course serve in the legislature, which is great.

And so, my first day I liked it, I walked on the floor, I saw John Martin who said, "Hi, Fairfield." Because he, as speaker he has to remember everybody's town and he just kind of memorized the face and the towns. And I took a seat and kind of, just kind of settled in at that point, so. My seat mate was a gentleman named Jimmy Elias, Jim Elias from Madison, and he helped out a great deal, so. I was three from Ed Muskie's seat in the house though, and I knew exactly where he'd sit and I'd ask somebody where he'd sit. As a freshman I wasn't aware that the seating was dictated by the speaker and, because I just, I thought to myself, well, I could probably just ask for a seat and get where Muskie used to sit, because I knew that. It was only because I knew, 'course that was out of the question. In fact, one of the Indian representatives by tradition had used that seat, one in the front and one in the back. So, but after four years I got his seat. I made a deal with the speaker, I said, you know what, I said, I convinced him that the Indian

representatives from Passamaquoddy and Penobscot might like to actually sit together. And he said, "Well that might work actually." And he had asked them and they said that they would. And so as soon as they did then I moved to the end and got, ended up with Muskie's seat and that was my seat for, until I got into leadership, that was the seat that I had and so, just a personal thing, the same seat.

AL: And John Martin, what was it like working with him in the legislature?

DG: Well he, you know, John, you know, was a legend, brilliant, and controversial at times because he had such strong opinions, you know. Just extraordinary, dedicated servant for his area. He was forceful for, as one who represented northern Maine, St. John Valley specifically. And, you know, I had absolute respect for him and what his abilities were, you know. And I know people have strong opinions about John because he was so strong, he was just such a strong leader and, but I always respected him and was grateful for the chances and opportunities he provided me. And he allowed me to be speaker *pro tem*, which meant that I got to be speaker when he wasn't speaker.

And I spent a lot of time, it was actually my seat mate, who was speaker *pro tem*, Jim Elias. When John was up there giving the pitter-patter of parliamentary procedure during the day, I used to watch Jim Elias who was mouthing every word that John said. And I said, and I was just looking at him, he was going (*mouths words*), he's mouthing everything, I said, "What are you doing?" He says, "Well, I'm memorizing what he says." And I said, "Really?" And I said, "How do you do that?" And he said, "Well, you just have to learn it." I says, "Well is there a book?" He says, "No, you just have to learn it." So, "I'd like to learn that." And so within like two terms and I, Jim had left and I became speaker *pro tem* and it was just, it was a great way because a lot of people, veteran members, then came to me for advice on parliamentary procedure and it was only because I just learned the rules, that's all. It was nothing special, I mean they could have done the same thing, but that just seemed interesting to me. So I was always grateful to John who gave me the chance to do that.

AL: And now, tell me what happens next. What year, we just, we're talking about nineteen -?

DG: Seventy-eight is when I got elected, and we actually got, 1979 was the first year that I actually served, the January of that year. And then after that first term, continued to, I served a total of eighteen years. And it was, I ran for assistant majority leader after three or four terms and served as assistant majority leader. Then I ran for majority leader in the house and was successful in that, and I had that position for five years. And I was majority leader when John was speaker. And then when John stepped down then I ran, you know, mid-term, then I ran for speaker in 1994, and so I served two years, I served that, the balance of that year and one two-year term after that and then was term limited after that period of time.

AL: That was when the term limits -?

DG: Yeah, yeah. So I was in leadership for three years as speaker, five years as majority leader, and then three, two years, no, that's right, three years as, two years, sorry, as assistant majority leader. So I spent ten years in leadership, in a leadership capacity at that time, so.

AL: So the term limits issue is one that a lot of people talk about. How has it changed your career and your idea of where you were going to go?

DG: Well, I didn't, I never planned to spend eighteen years in the legislature in the first place, so that was just, I enjoyed it and I was surprised that it was an accessible process and that it was a process that people could work and make a difference and in a relatively short period of time of somebody's experience. And so, in fact, if I didn't live twenty-five minutes away I never would have spent eighteen years, I just couldn't have done it. But I was able to get back for games at night and get back for coaching and get back for other things, that a lot of others can't do because they're an hour and a half or three hours or four hours and they'd have to stay for the week. So that was something that, I had an advantage because of my geographical location. And term limits came in at a time, we were the sixteenth state in the nation and there was a bit of a nationwide movement for states to do it. And that's kind of subsided since then, but we incorporated it at that point and then so, I served my two years before I was actually term limited at that point. And then subsequent speakers, Libby [Mitchell] and Steve Rowe have been in the same situation, that was their eighth year, seventh or eighth year so they had to step down after that as well, so. That's how it works now, and that's what we operate under. I'm not a proponent of term limits but, you know, I also have a respect for the fact that people had a chance to vote on it and felt that that should be the policy, so. And you work within that direction. People really have the say, and that's appropriate, that being the case.

AL: And do you think that the pendulum may swing back the other way and the voters may go back to maybe a -?

DG: It'll take a long time, I think. I don't think, I'm not sure.

AL: Do you think if it was modified, saying, terms limits just on the leadership positions so that there's turnover on the leadership?

DG: Well, there may be. I mean, people were critical, you know, and I did not share the criticism, but people were critical of John because he'd been in leadership such a long period of time. And I didn't necessarily think that was a bad thing because I saw John and I knew where his heart was and I knew what he was capable of doing and what his interests were, and, for the state. But it did seem to be at the time, and other states that considered it, they were concerned about there being enough rotation, so. They're getting rotation now, I mean we really have two-year speakers now. And the only downside, and only time will tell whether it's an issue down the road, is whether, you know, the chief executive becomes so strong that the legislature begins to lose some of its ability as an equal branch of government, just because they don't have the historical perspective and some background that they might need. So, I hope not, I hope that we've got pieces in place that makes the legislature strong. We have a citizen's legislature in Maine, and people need a strong citizen's legislature and, you know, I think term limits are probably here to stay for a long period of time and we need just to work with that structure.

AL: I was just, from my perspective, it would seem that you would lose some of the understanding of long term planning, where different people keep picking up the ball and going

with it.

DG: Yeah, it's a tough, it's a challenge, because first of all a lot of the planning in the legislature is two years out, I mean you have to adopt a two-year budget and so you tend to think in two-year terms. And it's difficult to think in six and eight year terms when you might not be there, and yet you know it's to your advantage to plan in long term, to think long term, but it's not always the case given the structure. And there's quite a learning curve so, you know, new people coming on board now, they serve two years, then they pretty much got to get into a chair position, the chairman of something. I happened to, I chaired two or three different committees prior to getting into leadership. That tends to be the road to become a chair, you become more of a leadership and then you can advance to speaker, but you got to convince another hundred people that that's a good idea, you know, at any given moment. And they have to have faith, you know, in your ability to, you know, to be someone who's going to be a reasonable person they can approach and, you know, and have your interests of the institution at heart. And so, we've had good speakers, and we continue to have good presiding officers and, so far it's working. We just keep our fingers crossed that term limits doesn't become a problem with that.

AL: Now tell me about your job as secretary of state. What's one of your, oh, you know, the favorite thing?

DG: Well, I was intrigued by the diversity of it. Seemingly unrelated bureaus or departments, the Maine State Archives, you know, the state record keepers of state, you know, every record of the legislature, of the chief executive, of the judicial courts, we keep track of everything that takes place. And I was intrigued by the sense of history that they tend to be involved in, you know. We always tell school children when they come in, we're trying to explain, 'what does an archivist do?' you know. How do you put that in terms so they can understand the archivist, you know? And when you tell them that the archivist, they receive information and they make decisions every day on what people will need to see four hundred years from now. What will be important for people to know four hundred years from now? And these are some of the things that we collect, and we begin to show them artifacts from the Civil War and letters from Joshua Chamberlain, letters from people serving in the Civil War to their families that really share experiences, tell about things.

That, from something as, you know, opposed to what we do with corporations where, you know, if you want to organize or file a business, create a business in Maine you got to work through our office, through our corporate offices, so we have the economic development piece. We have the elections piece which is very exciting because we conduct the state's elections and, you know, through this office. Then we have the Bureau of Motor Vehicles, so we're involved in driver licensing to working with youth drivers to make sure they're safe, to commercial registration.

It's really a fascinating mixture and allows us to be advocates of, we say that we're in the democracy business because, you know, we do elections and we want people to be not just excited about it, we want them to feel good about the elections process. And so, we try to be very proactive about our programming, whether it's with, you know, non-profits, social service groups, the veteran's groups, trying to get people involved. We get to work with young people, talk about civics, democracy, those issues. And then you get to just to manage these wonderful

portions of state government, you know. We have four hundred and fifty employees in three or four different areas of the state and I just, very fortunate, you know, to be able to serve right now and just honored for the opportunity because it's a very unique offering of services and it's stuff we like to do. So, and being able to assemble a team of people who believe in that, too, believe they can really make a difference still and, in this process, and whether it's elections or what we do in, you know, the management of the institutions really can make a difference.

And we've used technology as much as anybody, we have more online services than any other department of state government, and continue to view that as a future direction because bricks and mortar are really not in our future. We know that providing services online and making government more accessible, whether it's on records or more convenience for some of the services, registering your car, getting your driver's license, can really make a difference in people's lives. So, and in return, people then have a different feeling about government. They're feeling that, you know, lots of times when people work with their government they don't feel like they're in the same playing field, it's 'me against them' to some extent. And we're trying to balance that playing field, to level that playing field, introducing self search models for people so that they can get services when it's convenient for them. They tend to feel better about government, and then, hopefully, they'll feel better about being a citizen, being a good neighbor, and being involved in the elections process. And so we see direct connection from the management of what we do in these three very diverse bureaus, to the excitement we get working with young people on elections and/or youth driving.

AL: Do you have a lot of input on the Maine government website? Is that part of what you do?

DG: Yeah, on behalf of Governor King. He appointed me to chair a group called, we have a group, an entity called Information Resource of Maine, or InforMe. And our department advanced legislation with Governor King in 1998 to create InforMe, which is a public-private partnership where state government partners with a private sector vendor to come in and help agencies with Internet based applications, but also to host our state's web page and provide assistance to state agencies. And so I chair a fifteen person board that provides oversight to that particular entity. And that's just terribly exciting, because that's going to change, you know, it's going to change government like, more so than anything else that we're doing right now, fundamentally, make fundamental changes. And so we're very involved in that, and enjoy it. And I've spent some time with our own employees thinking about that and helping them to learn how to think about it, because to a great extent what we've done is take some of the redundancy out of their own jobs, out of their own work, which has freed them up for more personal interaction with our citizens. And that's really, and if we can do that and offer superior service at the same time, then we all win.

AL: I think I recall last week on the news the state of Maine was given a recognition award.

DG: Yeah, we've been recognized by a couple of different groups. We got the Digital, there's a Digital Economy Award that we got, we were fifth in the nation, we tied for fourth or fifth, and we were like thirty-fifth last year. So we've made some great strides in terms of the amounts of things, in terms of the design of our website and the self service models that we're introducing.

More renewable licensing online, and then payment engines to allow people, to accept credit cards, and to be able to fill out applications online, too, so.

AL: And I have to say I've done quite a bit of research on that website in terms of people, and also I think it gives a much clearer picture to people how the Maine state government is organized. And I think that came about somewhat in how you wanted people to search on the website, but it also clarifies for people, it makes it more understandable as to how things are interconnected within government. I think that's really important.

DG: In the past it's always been kind of a dictionary listing of, encyclopedia listing of agencies, which is fine as long as you knew which agency did what. But if you didn't know that. And so we tried to begin to shift that towards something that was more task oriented, so if you have a specific task you could get that answer but not necessarily knowing where you're getting it from necessarily. And then, and so we try to break down some of the barriers in state government, you know. We have a hundred and ten web masters, they have a lot of turf issues about their, the propriety of their agency doing what it's doing, and trying to tell them in a sense that, you know, the public really doesn't make a distinction between this agency and this agency, they don't make a distinction between state government and federal government, they don't distinguish between state and local or federal, it's just government, and services that they want. And you've got to figure out a way to serve it up in a way that makes more sense to them.

And so when we began to work through agencies and they began to see this process, when we first tried to explain to people what we were doing with InforMe in 1998, they said, you know, "Sounds great, if you can get it off the ground let us know," you know. And it's just had great success, and that's really, I think, the direction of government.

It's a, and the good news for younger, the younger generation, is, particularly, they're more adept at this technology and, you know, if it's anything like my family the battles used to be who gets to use the phone; now it's who gets to use the computer. And I go down at night, my daughter, who's a freshman in Lawrence High School, you know, she's presumably doing homework but at the same time she's listening to music she's downloaded from, it used to be Napster, now it's Kazar, and she's listening to this music, doing homework, she's got an AOL Instant Messenger on the left side of her screen with a list of buddies she's talking to, MSN messenger service on the right side of her screen with a different list of buddies, different conversations going on. And I'll say, "So Jess, exactly what is it you're doing?" And she says, "I'm multi-tasking." I mean, that's a term that we've never thought about using growing up and thinking about, but they're just more adept with the technology and they expect government to be able to offer this stuff. They're used to it, they're buying stuff online, they're better shoppers and more informed consumers, and they just expect government, got to do this. And so people, if we want them to feel good about government, if we want them to feel good about being involved in democracy, then we've got to make some changes in that area. And I think that's a significant opportunity for us.

AL: I'm going to stop and flip the tape and then ask you a few more questions.

End of Side A

Side B

AL: We are now on Side B of the interview with Mr. Dan Gwadosky, Secretary of State. I guess the next thing we should go on to, is talk a little bit about your time on the Commission on Legal Needs. What are your recollections of that?

DG: Well, just a, at that time I was a member of the leadership and to be honest with you, my position was more *ex officio* than not. I served on the commission, met some just extraordinary dedicated people who, you know, each to a person was so inspired by Senator Muskie's initiative in all these entire areas that they would do anything, and just committed to make it happen. They understood the need for it in a very rural state like Maine, desperate need in many circumstances. And they were people on the inside who would do anything to make it happen, and put together the, you know, appropriate documentation to be able to communicate that to others, so that they had a sense as to the depth of the problem in the state of Maine, the issues that could be conquered. And that was almost, it seems like it was almost an automatic. You hate to say that about any project, but it was one of those few times when people were in so much agreement on the issue and, once again inspired by the senator in terms of his insistence that this is something that really could be followed through and people could do well, that it just happened and it happened strongly, so. And I didn't play any significant role in it at all, I mean, we were named to the commission, but there were people who, you know, worked their hearts out, who just did a phenomenal job. We all got tugged and pulled as part of the legislative stuff that we were doing at the time, and but, you know, that's a commission that, you know, was recognized and really emulated in other states in terms of the approach. They didn't call it the same thing, but once people saw that and began to understand, you know, the value of that function, the service it provided, it was pretty significant.

AL: Do you remember who some of the people were on the commission?

DG: You mean Don Nicoll and these guys?

AL: But some that played a significant role?

DG: I can't give you names, no.

AL: I'm interested in your perspective, having been in Maine state government for many years and senator, of the late Senator Muskie having been elected governor in '54 after, you know, in a very strong Republican state at that time. What is your sense of how Maine has changed politically over the years?

DG: Well, he opened the door for Democrats to say it's all right to say you're a Democrat, and support people. I mean, this has always been a state, I mean it's a rural state and you, it's also been a state where people were, had some conservative values, but it's also always been a state where people cared about different people, you know. And they understood that there was a certain value of government to provide certain services to people that might not have otherwise. And that was okay to say that. I mean, a lot of people thought it and, God, don't let anybody know publicly that I think that, because we were so conservative fiscally in so many issues. But

you felt like he kind of opened the door for us at that time, and people would talk about his leadership after he was elected there, with Clean Air, with natural resources, in areas that we could then begin to understand and kind of emulate at that point in time. But the, as a state that was, you know, traditionally Republican, that the door was opened through Ed Muskie for Democrats to kind of walk through at that point in time.

And to a state that politically, you know, through people like Ken Curtis, through people like John Martin, others who played some prominent roles, it was a, it began to be acceptable to talk about the plight of people who needed some assistance from government. And we've had some pretty strong Democratic constituencies since that period of time. And we very much are, I mean, I think it's a very balanced state, it continues to be, and our budgets show that and, you know, the politics of who controls the legislature shows that; conservative state in many respects, but also a state that wants to take care of people. So, you know, we always, as Democrats we always told our caucuses, you know, that we weren't perfect and we want to dispel that notion that we weren't perfect, but we always said this: we're the best hope for many in Maine, and we're the only hope for some, because we were the party that chose to represent people who would have no representation if it wasn't for the Democratic Party. And so that's something that we felt strong about, but we also felt good about because we knew that people needed that type of representation, and we were going to do it. And we weren't always going to be right, but at least somebody was going to have an oar in trying to help them out. And that's why so many of us got into it, and that's why so many of us stayed into it, because we were so concerned about that. And, but you know, once again, Muskie opened the door, Muskie said it was all right to talk about it, it was all right to say it.

And, you know, as I said, people have strong feelings about people, like John Martin and others, but, you know, they carried that on. I mean, you're going to, people have interviewed John obviously and know what he's done, you know, what his connection was with Ed Muskie and, you know, he lived Ed Muskie's life, you know, in and John Martin. And he articulated his values to us on a regular basis and, you know, he was motivated by that, and the desire to help his own district. But they carried through with it a lot of times, you know, it could have gone either way in the seventies and eighties in terms of the political strength of the legislature represented by the policies we ended up taking. And I think we've had a pretty good blending.

AL: I know you spent some time up in Aroostook County over the years. I was wondering if you found that there's different types of Democrats there than here? I mean, maybe in terms of what their needs are, in terms of being represented in the state?

DG: I think the people in, because when you're in Aroostook County, if you don't go to St. John Valley it doesn't count, first of all, I learned that my first year in the legislature. I said I'd gone to Houlton, and they said it doesn't count because you're not in the St. John Valley, so. And the St. John Valley Democrats and citizens are different from the rest of Aroostook County. They have some unique needs there. Sometimes they're border issues with Canada, sometimes they're, you know, economic issues, transportation issues. But, you know, if you're talking to Judy Paradis and you're talking to Ross Paradis, you're talking to different people up there, these people are, in the spirit of John Martin and others, they're all forceful advocates for their area. Because they think the rest of the state doesn't know they exist. They go out of their way to

educate people, to welcome people. I mean, you go to Aroostook County and the St. John Valley and, you know, you feel like you're going home and you don't even live there. And they're almost offended if you don't stay in their home. It's not, you know, it's not good enough to, you can't stay in a little hotel, you've got to stay in their home, that's what they expect.

And, you know, we talk about the politics being different in the congressional district in southern Maine, they, sometimes they don't really expect to, you know, to see the candidate, but you know, expect to hear from him somehow. In northern Maine, you know, unless you sit down at their table they don't, you know, they don't even vote for you, they don't even talk to you, you know. I mean, and same thing in Washington county to some extent, and there's a, it's a very per-, it's a personalization of the process up there that they expect. They're very, in northern Maine, they're, they take care of one another, they're very proud of their communities, they're proud of their homes, they take care of each other and that's what they expect. And, you know, they don't look for a handout, they really, you know, expect to make it. But, you know, as government dollars are being distributed for education or for roads, they want to make sure they get their share, too, they know how critical it is. They're very effective; they're very effective in the legislature. You know, you don't find people from that part of the country, that part of the legislature that, or the state, that aren't forceful advocates for those areas. They feel like they have an extra burden to some extent, to be able to communicate that. And so that's, I mean, going to Aroostook County is the most fun place in the state almost to talk to people because they just love it so much and they appreciate it so much.

AL: Did you serve in the legislature at the same time as Rosaire Sirois?

DG: Yes.

AL: I can't remember exactly what years he -.

DG: Now, I'm having a Friday brain cramp right now so I can't tell you, but he was in, well it's from '93 or some period of that time, I can't remember exactly, so, and certainly been in this office. He actually may have come in right after I left, and I was accepting this position when he was there. And he of course passed away, so it was in that block of four, I think after '95, '96.

AL: I just, I can remember his knife sharpening business truck.

DG: Yeah, yeah, that was so classic; he had them on the side of his truck (*unintelligible phrase*).

AL: His coat filled with mints.

DG: Yeah, I mean he was an absolute character, absolute character, so.

AL: Well, is there anything else that I haven't asked you that you feel is important to complete the record that we've talked about.

DG: If you've talked to three hundred and fifty people, you don't need to talk to me at all, so

that's not, that's, no. I think you, I appreciate the chance to share some thoughts with you and I wish you well on this project. We're all anxious to see this, this is an extraordinary commitment on everybody's part to make this happen.

AL: Well, thank you very much.

DG: Thank you, thank you.

End of Interview