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## Hall, Barbara Abbott oral history interview

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## **Interview with Barbara Abbott Hall by Nicholas Christie**

*Summary Sheet and Transcript*

### **Interviewee**

Hall, Barbara Abbott

### **Interviewer**

Christie, Nicholas

### **Date**

June 15, 2001

### **Place**

Lewiston, Maine

### **ID Number**

MOH 290

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### **Biographical Note**

Barbara Abbott Hall was born in Fort Fairfield, Maine on February 19, 1920. She grew up in Turner and Hallowell, where her father taught school. She attended Bates College and graduated in the class of 1942. She knew John Donovan and Frank Coffin, as well as other prominent Bates graduates. She and her husband Richard Hall, whom she met while working at Harvard, have contributed extensively to the Bates campus through financial contributions and volunteering in alumni organizations. She and her husband, both Democrats, have been interested in Maine politics and Edmund S. Muskie throughout the years.

### **Scope and Content Note**

Interview includes discussions of: family life; coming to Bates College; teaching; Lewiston and Bates College relations; gender bias on campus; Brooks Quimby; Frank Coffin; Muskie anecdote; meeting Richard Hall; campus politics; G.I. Bill; Bates changing; Democratic party; Nixon/Agnew; 1972; the environment; Muskie Archives; Kent State; Judith Isaacson; Chapel strike; and Kazushige Hirasawa.

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## **Transcript**

**Nick Christie:** This is Nick Christie interviewing Barbara Hall for the Muskie Archives. Barbara, could you state your full name and spell it for us?

**Barbara Hall:** Barbara, B-A-R-B-A-R-A, Abbott, A-B-B-O-T-T, Hall, H-A-L-L.

**NC:** And could you tell me where you were born and when?

**BH:** I was born February 19th, 1920 in Fort Fairfield, Maine; the "county".

**NC:** And how long did you live in Fort Fairfield?

**BH:** Six years.

**NC:** Six years.

**BH:** And my dad, who had loved being in schoolwork, he was the class of 1912, and he went on to be superintendent of schools in Turner and then in Hallowell. And he talked into going into retail business by his in-laws, and we, that's when we moved to Fort Fairfield. But when the potato famine, or the Depression, hit up there, and my grandparents died, he was delighted to be able to get back into school work. And a Bates friend got him a job, a temporary job teaching school in Amesbury, Mass. until a principalship showed up in Providence. So the whole family moved to Providence, Rhode Island when I was six years old, and that's where I lived when I entered Bates. Reluctantly, I might add.

**NC:** To come to Bates.

**BH:** Yes.

**NC:** Why was that?

**BH:** Well, my father had gone here. I sort of had it crammed down my throat. I really wasn't terribly interested; I had friends going to places like to Smith or Wellesley. My father being a schoolman, no way could he afford it. And no way was this child going to go any place except Bates, and if I want to go to college, by George, it was going to be Bates. So I came up a little reluctantly, and loved every minute of it. It was the best thing ever happened. There was a positive and a negative thing before that, however.

I was a little edgy about it, and a wonderful man named Jack Curtis came to interview me, and he was then, I think, associate director of alumni affairs, and he came to my high school. And I was so impressed by him. I thought, "Well, if Bates produced people like him, it can't be all bad." But then I came back for my father's 25th, and such a dull time. Oh, those people were so old. I thought, "Good Lord, if I ever get to be that old, you know, put me out to pasture." It's quite a contrast between that and my 25<sup>th</sup>, when our class pushed a bar across campus. And we, needless to say, we didn't get very much publicity.

**NC:** Right.

**BH:** So actually, I'm glad my father persisted. I'm glad I came to Bates.

**NC:** What was it that Jack Curtis said that made you feel like Bates was the place for you?

**BH:** Well, in the first place we discussed things like Benny Goodman. And I know that doesn't sound terribly academic, but I was very much into swing and jazz and dancing, and I had thought perhaps Bates was going to be a little dull until I talked to him. And he was, he was a dear, he was here all the time through my college career. And we remained good friends. And he just, he was sort of with it.

**NC:** A little hip.

**BH:** Yes. And high school kids sometimes are influenced by not the greatest things, but in this case it was great.

**NC:** What was your father's name?

**BH:** Charles H. Abbott, class of 1912. Good friend of, we grew up with Hope and Harry Rowe, being very close friends. And that was great because I saw a completely different side of Harry Rowe than most of the kids here who saw him as a stern disciplinarian, and he was a great guy. We used to visit; he used to come up to our place up in Franklin, Maine and visit. He had a terrific sense of humor; a really nice guy.

**NC:** Now, when you first came to Bates do you remember your initial feelings?

**BH:** Oh, it was great. And I was in Cheney House, and the girls, I remember that first day all marching downtown and buying curtain material, and they came from all over, and they were a really neat crowd. And many of the people I met that first year, they may be upstairs now but I still think of them as my closest friends. I think Bates ties are very long wearing.

**NC:** What did you end up majoring in?

**BH:** History, under Paul Sweet.

**NC:** American history, or?

**BH:** European.

**NC:** European history.

**BH:** And then I wanted very much to have one of the professors my dad had had, and there were still a few of them roaming around. And Dutchy Leonard taught German, I didn't want to start German, and Goosey Chase taught Greek, I didn't think I wanted the Greek. But there was dear Freddie Knapp, so I took a semester of Latin, just to say I'd had one of my dad's professors. And he was a sweet, sweet gentleman. And then, in order to get a job, I had to teach just about everything. And I ended up teaching Latin, with a trot in my lap, I might add. You know what a trot is?

**NC:** No.

**BH:** It's a translation. It's all right for teachers to use them, but students aren't supposed to.

**NC:** Oh, okay. Now, coming from Rhode Island up to Lewiston, Maine, was there any sort of shock of the atmosphere, in terms of the community?

**BH:** No, no, all my relatives are from Maine, and we'd come back here on visits, you know. My husband and I spend three or four months a year, we have a place up here, so Maine was not the hinterlands.

**NC:** You've come back for multiple reunions.

**BH:** Oh, always.

**NC:** So you've probably had the opportunity to see Lewiston change.

**BH:** I haven't seen too much of Lewiston actually. I know it's changed, but we usually come in off the turnpike. I have relatives in Auburn. Actually, my father used to tell me that a relative of ours was the first mayor of Lewiston, and my dad grew up on Pleasant Street. And in fact, my great grandfather was the agricultural editor of the *Lewiston Sun*. So I have quite a Lewiston-Auburn background.

**NC:** When you were attending Bates, what was the relationship between Lewiston and the students and faculty here like?

**BH:** I'm not, I don't really remember too much about it except, if you had to really pin me down, I'd say it wasn't good. And my understanding is that Don Harward has done a marvelous job. I had no trouble. Many of my friends were local kids, and so we were able to cross the border. But there was a distinct difference. I know the Lewiston girls were in a club with a Greek name, and they were pretty clubby. And, of course, so, you know, they were referred to as the 'townies', and I was good friends with several of them, but there was a barrier.

And I have to say that the ones I was friendliest with were not, we're sort of considered upstarts by their local friends because they crossed over. I never felt that way, and have always remained friends with the, quote, "locals." There used to be a restaurant here in town called (*name*), and there was a daughter in my class, and the (*name*) were wonderful. And they used to provide a home away from home or an occasional free meal, and, you know, how can you fight that?

**NC:** When you came to Bates there must have been a Dean of Women?

**BH:** Yes.

**NC:** How -

**BH:** Hazel Marie Clark.

**NC:** Hazel Marie Clark. We recently interviewed Judith Isaacson.

**BH:** I wish I had known her.

**NC:** And she said a lot of interesting things about how Bates has changed in terms of gender separation and turning into coed. I was wondering if you had any memories about what the atmosphere was like, in terms of that separation, when you were on campus.

**BH:** Well, to me it was a normal thing, because that's the way it was. I mean, coed dorms, good God. Visiting hours, we had to be in at seven. And the one thing that really annoyed us was the fact that the, this is awfully small potatoes, but it was very annoying, there was some

sort of a government program that paid the guys money for dishing up meals. Not very much, but anything was money back then. Whereas the girls, it was the last one at the table had to dish out the food. None of the waitresses got paid money or got their food. But we always thought that was rotten, that, you know, we'd always sort of race in so we wouldn't be the last one.

**NC:** There was a bias.

**BH:** Yeah, and I'm sure the guys made more money as proctors. We got \$18.75 a semester, and our main job, yeah, that's eighteen, period, seventy-five, and the main job was counting dirty sheets. Well, of course, see, the girls would get clean bedding, whatever, and we'd have to make our own beds. The guys, of course, had, I don't know what they were called, but little ladies came in and changed their beds for them. So, for our \$18.75 we counted the sheets, and we essentially were there to spy on the girls. You know, if they got in at five minutes past ten we had to report them to the student government and so forth, you know, turning in all your own friends. But that wasn't too great.

**NC:** When you were on campus did you get involved with certain campus organizations or clubs?

**BH:** Oh sure, yeah. The (*unintelligible phrase*) Association, more of the social end of it. Gosh, I'm striking a blank. Seems to me I was always doing something, but I don't remember the actual names. I'm sure I was part of the group that had ballroom dancing classes. That gave me a great chance, you could dance during the week while you were supposed to be teaching. And we would go away on retreats for C.A. There was a place up in Winthrop we used to go to, and it was a great organization, it sort of touched upon everything from strictly social to religious. It was a good organization. Then, oh yeah, I was very active now that I think of it, in committees preparing for freshman week, mostly on the social end. You know, I did all right academically, but I, my mind was really, was not as much on the academics as on the social end of it.

**NC:** Do you remember Brooks Quimby?

**BH:** Absolutely.

**NC:** What sort of memories do you have from him on campus?

**BH:** Well, he did an awful lot for Bates. One of my roommates was a debater, so of course I used to hear a lot about that. And he was an icon, and everybody thought very highly of him. I'm sure that Frank Coffin probably gave him a lot of praise, too, because Frank was one of his star debaters.

**NC:** Did you know Frank Coffin?

**BH:** Very well.

**NC:** Very well? What do you, how did you meet him?

**BH:** Well, he was in the class of '40, and socially we used to mix quite a bit. I don't want to embarrass my husband, but I'm one of these very fortunate people, I always say Cinderella had one prince, and I've been lucky enough to have two princes. I married a college sweetheart, and, who didn't return from WWII, and he was a close friend of Frank Coffin's. And so, when we would go to dances and things, you know, we always swapped dances, and we just always knew each other.

And then Frank's wife is part of a wonderful group from the class of '42 [1942] that have stayed together a lot. And we're lucky enough to have Frank's name on our Christmas card list, so we get a very nice letter from him every year. And I've run into him from time to time; in Puerto Rico where he's gone down to judicial affairs. And he occasionally comes up to Franklin, our summer home, to visit Martha Mabee, Martha Blaisdell, another class of '12 child who married Irving Mabee, whose father was a chemistry professor here. So there's a lot of mix up.

**NC:** Or connections. Frank Coffin, some people say he was a very serious man, but it sounds like you got to see a very social side of him.

**BH:** Oh no, no, he had a great sense of humor, and smart as a whip. And he tried, you have to give him a lot of credit, because he tried to do a lot of things. I was laughing and saying he was not the greatest track star Bates ever had, but he was out there trying. I think mainly to get out of the idea that he was nothing but a greasy grind, because he wasn't, he participated in everything. He's a really great guy.

**NC:** He went on to have quite a political career.

**BH:** He certainly did. I remember so well, Dick was in New York, and he came home with a *New York Times*, and front page stating that JFK was about to appoint Frank ambassador to Panama. And of course the next day Kennedy was assassinated and Frank never went on to be ambassador of Panama, for which he should be grateful, I think. But there were differences of opinion between him and LBJ. I don't, I really think Frank would have been on Supreme Court, maybe, if he'd come along at a little different time.

**NC:** In terms of LBJ he had difficulties much as Muskie had. Senator Muskie had difficulties with LBJ.

**BH:** Yeah.

**NC:** When you were on campus, or more on your memory of Bates, how much does Muskie, has it played a part in any way in your memory of Bates, any (*unintelligible phrase*)?

**BH:** Yes, I've met him, but I don't really know him. We've met him socially here. My dad thought a lot of him, except that he ran with the wrong crowd. Anybody who was a Democrat was the wrong crowd.

**NC:** I have that written here, in my notes, "You're an awful nice fellow, but you run with the



wrong crowd.”

**BH:** Yeah. I’m not sure if that was dad, or that could have been Harry Rowe, but they were two of a kind. I have a funny reminiscence about the Muskies. Our next door neighbor in Baltimore - am I rambling too much? - very, very political, and Democrats, very, very impressed that we knew the Muskies. And we played that up a little bit. And they went down to Duke when their child was being enrolled, and the Muskies were going down to Duke because they had a child in that same class.

And Phil and Betty got separated, and Betty picked up a conversation with someone, and Phil was standing in line. And pretty soon he came back, and he kept saying, “Betty, come, come.” And Betty kept saying, “Later Phil.” And Phil got very embarrassed, and he finally grabbed her and he says, “Betty, I want to you to come up here, Ed Muskie’s in line.” And Betty turned to Phil and said, “Phil, I’d like to have you meet my new friend, this is Jane Muskie.” And they’d been chatting for a half an hour, and Phil had only seen Ed. And we just thought that was wonderful. But, so, whenever he would run into him he’d always try to say, of course, I live next door to Barbara Abbott Hall. Ed Muskie had no idea who I was, but he knew my father’s name.

**NC:** After you graduated from Bates, where did you go immediately after?

**BH:** I went to Bryant Pond, Maine and taught school for nine hundred whole dollars a year. Now, I only paid eight dollars a week for room and board, but I guess I made out better than the students, because I think I was a rotten teacher. I had to teach everything under the sun. And there were, there was a principal who taught science and math, and there was a commercial teacher, and there was ‘the’ teacher. And I was ‘the’ teacher. Everything: English, history, Latin, French, prize speaking, graduation, school play, the works. All those for nine hundred dollars.

**NC:** How long did you do that job for?

**BH:** One year.

**NC:** Understandable. And from there, where did you go next?

**BH:** Well, I got married, and went to a couple of Army camps until my husband went overseas. And then my wonderful in-laws said that they would like to take care of me for a year, anything I wanted to do. And so I went to Katherine Gibbs, and then I got a job at Harvard, which, I turned down a job at MIT, which was probably the smartest thing I ever did, and I went to Harvard. And I had a very interesting job in the admissions office. And then I moved on to Harvard House, Turpin House in the Harvard House system, which is similar to Oxford and Cambridge. They’re like individual colleges, and many of them had been Navy houses during the war. And so, in February 1946, they reopened as a regular house system. And this meant you had your own staff, your own athletics, your own dining room, your own social program. It’s just like a small school, and it helps break up a large university. And my first day on the job, two very nice young men opened the door at nine o’clock, and one was Richard Hall coming

back to start graduate work, and get free room and board. And one was his roommate, who later became the best man at our wedding -

**Richard Hall:** And is a world famous physicist.

**BH:** So, we were married two and a half years later. And I think it will last, it'll be fifty- three years in September.

**NC:** Your fifty-third anniversary.

**BH:** Yes.

**NC:** Congratulations.

**RH:** Thank you.

**BH:** And Dick has been very, very loyal to Bates, and he's been very, very loyal to Harvard, since he went there on a complete full ride, from a little tiny town in Nebraska. But he's come back to all the reunions with me, I think starting with number ten, enough so that many of my classmates who saw me in my first big romantic involvement have completely forgotten about that, and they think Dick is a member of the class. And in fact, we've gone to things where people have identified him as being at the Qual-, that used to be the hangout down here, the Quality Shop for frappes and banana splits and-.

**NC:** Quality on College Street?

**BH:** Yeah, yeah, Roger Bills and all these wonderful yummy things. And so everybody is, they're very surprised to find out that he actually went to Harvard and not to Bates. But obviously any gifts we had made did not come from my hundred dollars, nine hundred dollars a year. But Dick has been very good, whenever he sends something to Harvard he's also sent something to Bates. So I'm -

**RH:** We play a little larger role at Bates than at Harvard.

**BH:** But it really is neat, you know. Usually their alumni funds are funded by the guys, and actually, since 1941, we've had some very generous in-laws that have been great. I've been class secretary forever, and fundraiser, and it's always great when these people come through.

**NC:** The actual landscape of the Bates campus itself must have changed significantly since you came here.

**BH:** Wow, well, we had a great tour today in the little golf cart. We missed the regular tour, and a very nice young man took us all around. I was amazed at the amount of investment the college had made in the local houses. Frye Street, for instance, where as I think there were four houses on Frye Street when I came here. And they have Wood Street, every other house was a Bates house. And then to go, well, JB was practically down in Portland as far as we were

concerned. And now to find it right next door to Chase Hall, and to go over to Merrill, and up to Olin, just amazing. I think they've done a wonderful job, and I think the care of the campus has been wonderful. Always has been, as a matter of fact. And Bernie Carpenter and Norm Ross, all these years have done a super job, and whoever has charge of it now.

**NC:** Did you get a chance to see the Pettengill Building, the Perry Atrium?

**BH:** Yes, yes.

**NC:** What did you think of that?

**BH:** Well, we have a small stake in that, and we're really pleased about it. We think it's great.

**NC:** Oh, that's great. And it's quite a building.

**BH:** Yes.

**NC:** So, after you finished teaching at -

**BH:** Bryant Pond.

**NC:** Bryant Pond, what did you do after? You went to Harvard.

**BH:** I went to, I got married, went to Katherine Gibbs, went to Harvard, and then, when Dick got his Ph.D. we moved to Baltimore. And we've been southerners all these years.

**NC:** You still live in Baltimore.

**BH:** Yes, yes.

**NC:** In the city?

**BH:** Just over the city line, in Carlson. A very nice city, it really is. When we went there I figured we'd be there for five years, and we'd go back to New England. And the opportunities came, we liked, we stayed, it's a nice city. And we've been very, very fortunate; we've been able to do a lot of traveling. Like, I used to complain that he was moving around too much, and I had assiduously avoided all science and math all my life. And then one day I woke up and, "Well, you stupid idiot, you love science." It's taken you all over the world.

**NC:** All these years.

**BH:** Which it has.

**NC:** Now, when you were on campus, we talked a little about Brooks Quimby and the debate team, and he was certainly a politically conscious man on campus. But I was wondering if you can tell me about what was the political atmosphere, in terms of the student body, in your time at

Bates?

**BH:** I would say it was probably mostly Republican. Obviously there was an awareness; the war was pending. I'm ashamed to say that we probably didn't take it as seriously at the time as we might have, you know. It was always, "It won't happen, it won't happen, it can't happen, we're the U.S.A." And then it did happen. And I pretty much got through, I started to say through graduation, but no, my Bates husband was drafted before I graduated and -

**NC:** This was in 1940?

**BH:** Forty-one.

**NC:** Forty-one.

**BH:** Yeah, he was one of the early draft members. And, you know, one by one you'd hear of this one going, and that one going. And then, of course, the first couple of years I was out and I was the class secretary, I would get letters and I would post the addresses. One of the nicest compliments I've ever had was from a classmate who had lost her beau in the war. And my letter came with the address of another classmate, who had only been here one year, and strictly on a whim she wrote to his camp address, and the next time he came home on leave he looked her up and they got married. And so, and she said I was responsible for this, so I'm very happy about that. And it was a great way in my own way of keeping people in contact with classmates, and I was very proud of that role.

**NC:** I'm sure. So, when you graduated, it was just at the time when the influence of international politics were beginning to affect even communities like, as small as Bates.

**BH:** Yes, indeed.

**NC:** And within just four years everything had changed considerably. Now, you were at Harvard, as you said, when, in '46 I think you said, they went back to that, the college program. There must have been a great number of men coming back who wanted to get back to college.

**BH:** Yes.

**NC:** How, did you see things change because of that?

**BH:** I think it's the most wonderful thing that ever happened in U.S. history. I think it changed the whole, our whole life, the opportunities for education. And so many of these people didn't have a prayer of ever going to college. They would come back to their same mundane type of job, and it just opened up a whole new life for them. And that was one of the jobs I had at Harvard. My boss was dean of returning students, and we also saw new people coming in.

**NC:** From the G.I. Bill.

**BH:** Yeah. And I used to have to take their records and figure out how many points they

needed to graduate, and count in their U.S.O.P.E courses, that was, they were special courses offered by the government. And I think the most fulfilling thing was the day I figured out that somebody didn't have to come back. Not only that, he'd get a *suma*, and I couldn't believe it. I kept thinking, "Oh, I've made a mistake, I've made a mistake," and went over and over and over, and sure enough, he did.

**NC:** He had already graduated.

**BH:** He had already graduated. But, I looked at these papers constantly, and I knew these guys. I could tell you their names and their address, and then I'd meet them on the street and they didn't know who I was. You know, they were real to me because I had their application blanks and I'd recognize the picture. And I'd walk down the street, and they wouldn't even speak. Ungrateful wretches.

**NC:** That must have changed the entire atmosphere of campuses nation-wide, I would think.

**BH:** Absolutely, it was wonderful, absolutely wonderful. And a place like Harvard, which perfectly normal people attend, but they get lousy publicity, you know, everybody's either a greasy-grind or comes from a very, very wealthy family. And they're all gentlemen C's and so forth, and they comprise such a small percentage of the total population, of a Harvard, Yale and Princeton. But then, with this influx of people doing their own laundry and cutting their own hair and so forth, it made quite a difference.

**NC:** Great. Now, you had the good fortune to get to see Bates change for so many years, both academically and socially: the sixties, the seventies, and where it is now. Can you tell me what striking changes you've seen that contrast to the experience you had when you were here?

**BH:** Well, I think probably Bates has grown a great deal academically. I don't know the exact figures, but I'm sure the salaries are better. I think they probably attract, although I think we had very good staff, very good loyal staff, but I think we probably have a staff that is more divergent in their views. I think perhaps back in my time they were more conservative. I think it's good to have a mix. I hear things from people that don't like some things, but I think you've got to have a mix. Socially, it's hard for somebody to accept all the changes. I thought I was terribly liberal, but when push came to shove, I wasn't sure I cared so much about coed dorms. We had a daughter attending Bates just about that time, and -

**NC:** What year would that have -?

**BH:** Oh, she graduated in '73. And the whole tenor of the social scene, I didn't, I kept saying, "Well, I'm glad I'm not going to college now." I loved it, the old fashioned business of Chase Hall dances and so forth and so on, and the real dating. This business of a bunch of girls going over to a men's dorm because there's a party in so-and-so's room, and you don't know whether they're going to go with a bunch of girls and go home with somebody else or... I don't know, it's just, it didn't appeal. But that's the tenor of the times. I mean, I was judging her group by my group, and if anybody had tried to force that on us back in the late thirties, we wouldn't have cared for it. Whereas I don't think she would have cared for the kind of life I had, either.

**NC:** Right. I've got a name here, John Donovan.

**BH:** Yes?

**NC:** I was wondering if you could tell me a little bit about him.

**BH:** Well, he's a great guy, and we were so pleased to hear, when he went to Bowdoin, or maybe it was before, apparently Johnnie Donovan and Frank Coffin and Ed Muskie must have gotten together at some point, at least that's the story we have, and decided it was about time they had a two party system. And so they talked Frank into running for office. And I think John went down eventually to the aide to secretary of labor, maybe? And I think he helped Ed on some of his campaigns.

**NC:** In the fifties?

**BH:** Hm-hmm. And, like that. No, I knew him well; very popular, a nice guy. And I thought it was great, regardless of what party, I thought it was great that they would step in and try to put a little fire.

**NC:** Create a discussion.

**BH:** Absolutely, create a discussion. And we tried so hard to get information about this. We had a friend working for the Associated Press, and whenever there'd be an election up here we'd always try to get Bill to use the AP phones to find out what was going on in Maine.

**NC:** Now, you aren't living in Maine when Senator Muskie and Frank Coffin and Don Nicoll were making a run.

**BH:** No.

**NC:** But like you said, you were trying to get information about it.

**BH:** Yes.

**NC:** When you, when Senator Muskie began in the sixties to get a more national-level image, how closely were you able to follow that, in terms of the connections you had?

**BH:** Well, short of reading the paper and looking at the news and so forth. And we did follow it, because if you recall, no, you probably don't, but at the time Muskie was running for vice president a fellow you may have heard of from Maryland was running for vice president, too. Spiro Agnew. And Spiro had gotten his start by being head of the PTA at one of our local schools, and then he was our county executive. Then he ran for governor, and then Mr. Nixon, oh, he made some remark about your home is your castle or something (*unintelligible phrase*).

**RH:** (*Unintelligible phrase*).

**BH:** Yeah, well anyway, we didn't think too highly of Spiro, and then when *Time* magazine came out with a little squib comparing Muskie and Agnew, and saying they both went to second-rate colleges, oh, we were so angry. And we thought, well, maybe Bates isn't that well known, but surely Cornell, which is where he went to law school. And at that time Agnew had gone to the, was it University of Baltimore, which was not accredited at that time. And I really, I was wild, just -

**NC:** That's quite a comparison to make.

**BH:** It was quite a comparison. And then, of course, when the business came up about somebody criticizing Mrs. Muskie, I just took that to heart, very much.

**NC:** In '72, Jane.

**BH:** So we began following Muskie's campaign.

**NC:** In '72 it very quickly went from Muskie being the lead candidate for the nomination of the Democratic Party to the exact opposite. And you just, you brought up what happened with William Loeb in Manchester. I have to switch the tape really quick, but I want to get back to this.

**BH:** Okay, all right.

*End of Side A*  
*Side B*

**NC:** This is Nick Christie resuming the interview with Mrs. Hall. We were talking about the '72 campaign, and the progression that Muskie went through. And I was wondering if you could give me your personal recollection of how that campaign went.

**BH:** Well, was it '72 when we were in Europe? No, that was later.

**RH:** That was just a little later.

**BH:** I was thinking about the Saturday night massacre.

**RH:** That was '73 I think.

**BH:** And we were in Europe then, having left three children on this side of the river and we decided that Nixon had gone mad. We were terribly upset. Seventy-two specifically . . . .

**NC:** Well, it doesn't have to be '72, it could just be your general feeling of what happened to Muskie's career at that time.

**BH:** I just couldn't figure it out. I thought that he was going to make it, I really did. I just had

such, everything I'd heard about him, and naturally I, down in Baltimore, I'd be more interested in him than most of the people I know. And it's this, this kid from Rumford, Maine, Polish background, and all he had done to pull himself up. And he just seemed to be such a bright, alert, a new infusion into politics. He seemed to have a lot of integrity, and we just, I sort of converted him into a Mainiac, and so we began being very interested in reading any news we could get, and thought that he would be very good.

**NC:** His influence on the environment.

**BH:** Yes, yes.

**NC:** It's so significant, especially in Maine.

**BH:** Yes.

**NC:** I just did an interview up in Rumford actually, and I heard a lot of interesting things about how the river, and even the air, but particularly the river around the paper mill has changed significantly.

**BH:** Yeah, absolutely, yeah. Well, I worry that it's reversing. We came up when Muskie and President Carter were here, and that was -

**RH:** For the dedication of this building.

**BH:** Yeah, for the dedication of this building, and I remember coming up through Connecticut and all the lights are out, all the gas stations are closed, and we don't have to pay the tolls. And that's the hurricane. And we arrived, oh, at some ghastly hour, over here in a motel, and they'd lost track of us. But they did put us up and we slept for about four hours and then came tearing over here. And I think it was one of Bates' finest hours. Apparently the campus was a mess, and they got the kids up, or rather the kids got up themselves, and came out and cleaned this place up. And by the time we came over it was pristine, it was wonderful.

**NC:** For the dedication of the Muskie Archives.

**BH:** Yes, yes, that was very exciting, we were very proud. The other thing that made me very proud about Bates was the year of Kent State. Our daughter was here, and she was a freshman and, you know, you don't always see eye to eye. And we were in Florida, and we got a notice from our babysitter that Ann had called to say, don't believe everything you read in the papers. "Gee, what does she mean, I mean, number one, you don't get any news from up here in the Baltimore papers, and certainly we wouldn't be getting them down in Boca Raton. And so, of course, we got on the phone, and she began to relay point by point what had happened.

**NC:** At Kent State?

**BH:** No, here.



**NC:** Here.

**BH:** And that the, I was just associating the time element, and the fact that the kids were all going on strike. Bowdoin had come up to advise them how to do their strike and Bates kids had told Bowdoin to get lost, apparently. And she decided, this freshman, that striking really wasn't going to accomplish, staying home from class wasn't going to accomplish anything, and she was one of the few freshmen who went to class. And then that, Hedley Reynolds had a truck driver's license and drove the truck, and the kids went out with brooms and stuff to clean up the streets. Because of the Vietnam War some of the services had been cut, and that they had addressed cards, stamped, and given them out, saying, "Please write your congressman how you feel about the war." But what was very impressive to me was, well, there were two things. Number one, the fact that Bates rescinded their dining room charges for a day or so to help pay for the postage, I thought that was really nifty. And number two, having been on the board and the alumni association and so forth, I used to get letters from the president telling what had happened, and usually they were a little different from the students' perspective. His letter was exactly the same as her letter, and this floored and pleased us, that our college freshman was thoughtful and had observed and the college president had given the kids their just due on how they maintained themselves.

But I think the thing that made me hot was, here buildings were being burned and Wisconsin was having a terrible time, and kids were, you know, spraying paint all over chapel doors and stuff. And the *Lewiston Sun* published an article saying, "And as usual, Bates is a hotbed of apathy." And at that point, they should have been down on the ground saying, "Thank God, we've got an institution in our town that doesn't want to commit mayhem and rip us apart, that these kids are really giving some serious thought and expressing themselves in a constructive way." What was wrong with that paper?

**NC:** That's very odd.

**BH:** And then they wonder about town and gown differences.

**NC:** From what I've heard, Dean Carignan and Dean Isaacson had a lot to do with trying to find a balance between responsibility to the school and the rights of the students. I'm sure President Reynolds did as well.

**BH:** Well, I thought that was one of Bates' finest hours, I really was very proud of them. I didn't get to meet Dean Isaacson. I would have liked to because I read her book and didn't put two and two together, and then all of a sudden saw her picture on television and thought, "I recognize her." And then remembered that I had seen her up here. And then the year I got a nice award, my family came up to surprise me, and Judith Isaacson was speaking, and we were going to go to her seminar. But here our kids had come all the way up, and we couldn't very well say, "Get lost kids."

**NC:** Right. What award were you getting?

**RH:** Distinguished Alumni Service award.

**BH:** Yeah, but she, she just sounded like a terrific person. A classmate of mine, I guess I wrote in, on a class letter saying, “If you haven’t read it run to the nearest bookstore and buy her book.” And a classmate of mine, Billy Weaver, apparently is a neighbor of hers over in Auburn, and he showed her my comment, and she wrote me the nicest letter. And the only negative comment I had to make was, “Why doesn’t she write another book immediately? I’d like to find out what happened when she got to this country, and how she happened to, you know, go to Bowdoin, and do all these things, and become a dean and so forth.” And she wrote back the nicest letter and said, “And when I write that next book, you’ll get one of the first copies.” But I haven’t gotten it, so I assume she hasn’t written it.

**NC:** I just read a fascinating interview with her they did for the archives.

**BH:** Oh, really?

**RH:** Oh, I’ll bet.

**NC:** She went through what happened when she got here and -

**RH:** Oh really, oh that’s what I’d like to hear.

**NC:** It is quite a fascinating story, and she is an inspirational woman.

**BH:** Absolutely.

**RH:** Oh, I’m sure, every bit of it.

**NC:** And with a family, and doing all these very, very intense projects.

**BH:** We were sitting in a Chinese restaurant waiting for carry out food when we heard her being interviewed. And you know, I kept listening to this story thinking, “Why does her name sound so familiar.” And when they finished and we found out who she was, why, we went tearing over to the Harvard book store and got the book, and gotten several since then. Remarkable story.

**NC:** So, I guess I’d want to ask if you have anything else you want to, you’d like to talk about in terms of Bates, or anything at all.

**BH:** Should I tell him the story about the chapel strike?

**NC:** Absolutely.

**RH:** Yes, of course, of course, and the follow up, when you were on the board.

**BH:** Oh yeah. Well, this is not anti religion, but my roommate junior year and I decided that compulsory chapel was for the birds, and it was an infringement on our freedom to pick and

choose, and the fact that we could only have eighteen cuts a semester. And of course, with a name like Abbott I'm always stuck in the corner (*unintelligible phrase*). And so, we organized a chapel strike, and, which was a pretty dumb thing to do because, number one, if my father found out I would have been yanked out of college and I probably would have been horsewhipped. Believe me, Bates came first with him. And my roommate, who was on a full scholarship and was slated to be women's editor of the *Student*, that would not have gone over too great. Also, I was a proctor, and that's kind of a no-no.

But anyway, we organized it and we spread the word around, and the day of the chapel strike dawned, and I don't know if it was in spite of or what happened: the chapel has never been so crowded. Ned and I are hanging out the window and screaming, "scab, scab, scab," and it was a bust, it was an absolute bust. And why something bad didn't happen to us I don't know. As I say, it was not anti-religion, a strike as such, because chapel, compulsory chapel, is usually, you know, reading or singing or something. Well, about twenty years later I was on my way up to be president of the alumni association, I was on the board or something. We had a meeting in Boston, and one of the things on the agenda was discussion of abolishing compulsory chapel. And I was the only one who voted against abolishing it.

**NC:** Are you serious? Wow.

**BH:** I had decided during those twenty years that actually it hadn't been bad. It probably hadn't hurt me at all, and it might be helpful. It was a nice time; you could either reflect or, you know, be with your friends or something. It was just -

**RH:** Do your nails.

**BH:** It was such a terrible time of day, because we had seven-forty classes, you know, really dreadful. You'd go to seven-forty class and then you had chapel eight-forty, and then resume your classes at nine. It was just a terrible (*unintelligible phrase*). But all of a sudden, when they decided they wanted to abolish it, which they did, I was very sad, and I didn't think they should. After what I'd gone through.

**NC:** After all that.

**BH:** And one more reminiscence that you might be interested in. I was telling outside about this: we were going to Japan back in '72, and Dick was invited to do something with the Japanese External Trade Organization. And bad career move, because at that time he was on, he was president of two very large organizations, in addition to earning a salary with a company. And his company also had taken on a licensee in Japan.

**RH:** A joint venture.

**BH:** So I knew he was going to be very, very busy because these other organizations wanted him to represent them at the same time, and on top of everything else good old Bates came through. Go see our wonderful man, Hirosawa has . . . .

**RH:** Hirasawa.

**BH:** Kiroosawa -

**RH:** Hirasawa, Kazushige.

**BH:** Kazushige [Hirasawa; class of 1936]. And I said, “No, no, no, my husband’s very busy and I cannot get him involved in anything else, count me out.” I was not very pleasant. But just before we left, I looked in a desk drawer, and I found some very tacky paper place mats of the chapel and so forth wrapped, I kid you not, in cellophane, which was sort of yellowed and cracked. And I put them in my suitcase. So we got to Japan, and he’s busy, busy, busy, programmed like mad. And finally I thought, “Well, you know, this was kind of mean, at least I can call this guy and say ‘hello from Lewiston.’” So I called, he wasn’t there, he was in Saporu opening up the Japanese Olympics, he was head of the Japanese Olympic committee. Ho-ho, and then it turns out he’s editor of the Japan *Times*, which was the largest English daily in Japan. He also was head of some big economic group; he has a broadcast once a week. Somebody kiddingly referred to him as the Walter Cronkite of Japan.

Well, and so the secretary took my name and in a few days he called. He was so sorry to miss me, “Could we have dinner together?” “No.” “Could we have cocktails together?” “No, I’m terribly sorry, but my husband’s very busy,” and so forth. “Well, I really want to see you, may I come over just for a few minutes? I promise not to take too much time. Can I come over just for a few minutes at five o’clock?” So I reluctantly agreed that he could come over. Well, that afternoon some Japanese lady of quite some note, she was a concert pianist, her husband was a very well known food scientist, she had squired me around. And when she heard that I was going to see Hirasawa Kazushige she said, “I’d like to stay just to see him.” So she hid behind the palm trees in the lobby as he came in. Well, this nice man comes in with a package, bows, he hands me a gift, it’s a very nice little -

**RH:** Cloisonne.

**BH:** Cloisonne dish representing his, celebrating his birthday, the year of the horse, it’s a beautiful little piece. So I bring out these crummy looking things and he, oh, you would have thought that I’d given him the Statue of Liberty. And he was so pleasant, we had a lovely conversation, and he talked to Dick about being interned, poor soul, he was interned at the Greenbrier Hotel, shagging golf balls over the hotel during the war. And we had a wonderful conversation, and he said, made us promise that the next time we came back that we would see him and he could really have a nice “Bates Club of Tokyo” meeting. Well, unfortunately, the next time we came back, he had gone upstairs. But then, just as we’re leaving, he kiddingly, he looked around and there was no, nobody had a camera. He had a big Bates banner, he wanted to pose in front of the Bates banner. Well, we couldn’t do that, and Dick’s watching his watch because they’re about to pick him up. Then he brings out his guest book, would I sign his guest book. And I (*unintelligible phrase*), sign his guest book. And I opened it, rather he opened it up to a page that half of it was written on, and I was to write on the bottom of it, and I saw, “Dear K, had a wonderful time, see you soon, Ed Muskie.” And I have to follow that up with my name. So I thought that would be a fitting closure.

**NC:** That's great.

**BH:** He was so nice. Wrote a lovely letter. You would have thought we'd given him something, all I could think about is these awful paper place mats. So we were shocked today to find his room, and find one sofa and two refrigerators in it. I thought that there was nice furniture, or a few Japanese hangings or something.

**NC:** I don't know anything about that.

**BH:** A perfectly ugly looking room.

**NC:** Yeah, it's just a lounge pretty much.

**RH:** Not even well furnished at all.

**BH:** An empty lounge.

**NC:** An empty lounge. Well, I guess I've already asked you if you have anything else you'd like to say about Bates, about your experience at Bates and what it's been like.

**BH:** It was a good experience. I'm very proud to have gone, my father was right, I made some wonderful friends, and I had some great professors. I notice that Paul Sweet is one of your people, and he was one of my favorites, and there were so many I can't begin to name them all. But the friends I made at Bates are the friends that, I may not see them, but they're still my closest friends. And it was a great experience. I hope that those who are here now will feel the same way in sixty years.

**NC:** I think that's a great way to close this interview.

**BH:** Good.

**NC:** Thank you very much, we appreciate it.

*End of Interview*  
*moh290.int*