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Isaacson, Irving oral history interview

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Interview with Irving Isaacson by Don Nicoll, Rob Chavira, and Stuart O'Brien

Summary Sheet and Transcript

Interviewee
Isaacson, Irving

Interviewer
Nicoll, Don
Chavira, Rob
O'Brien, Stuart

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Place
Lewiston, Maine

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Biographical Note

Irving Isaacson was born on August 7, 1915 in Auburn, Maine. His family was part of a small Jewish community within New Auburn. He attended public schools in Auburn and graduated from Bates College in 1936. While at Bates, his debate coach was Brooks Quimby and his debate partner was Edmund S. Muskie. World War II broke out after his graduation from Harvard Law School and he joined the Army. He was eventually transferred to the Office of Strategic Services (OSS), where he worked as a communications agent in the Eastern Zone of Germany following the end of the war. During this period, he met and later married Judith Magyar, an Auschwitz survivor who later became Dean of Students at Bates. Irving Isaacson is the author of *Memoirs of an Amateur Spy,* an account of his experiences in the OSS during and after the Second World War.

Scope and Content Note

The interview covers topics such as Isaacson's family history and politics; professors at Bates College; the Bates debate team; Harvard Law School; the OSS; meeting his wife; New

Auburn; anti-Semitism in Maine; bootlegging in Maine; Edmund Muskie; writing legal texts; Muskie and elections; Mt. Kilimanjaro; copper work; Frank Coffin as a sculptor; L.L. Bean; Brann & Isaacson; and interstate commerce.

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Transcript

Don Nicoll: It is Wednesday, the 24th of June and we are at 184 Lisbon Street[1] in Lewiston in the offices of Brann & Isaacson. Interviewers, Don Nicoll, Rob Chavira, and [Stuart] Tuck O'Brien, and we're interviewing Irving Isaacson. Irving, could you begin by giving us the date and place of your birth?

Irving Isaacson: Well, I am one of the few people that were born in Auburn, Maine, as opposed to Lewiston, Maine. This was August 7th, 1915, and there were, there was a little clinic up in New Auburn, up on top of Goff Hill, which did obstetrics work, as opposed to the hospitals in Lewiston. And for whatever reason I was born in Auburn, Maine, and have lived there off and

1 CORRECTION: the address is: 184 Main Street.

on continuously for a great many years, if you want to do the arithmetic. Okay, and I was born and brought up in Auburn as I said, and my father and mother[2] went to Bath in, right after I guess it was '16, 1916 or '17, they went to Bath, Maine and worked with my grandfather who had started a tonic bottling operation in Bath during the war, and by some strange reason managed to secure the allocation of sugar so he could make the stuff. And that only lasted a few years, until the end of the war. And the whole, everybody had children so that was the end of the bottling business so we came back to Auburn and eventually at some point we went to Berlin, New Hampshire and worked up there. My father worked up there, and in the middle '20s, 19-, middle '20s, my father decided to, that he wanted to become a lawyer of all things. You know, my father had never finished high school, never went to college and obviously never went to law school. But he managed to interest Louis Brann who was a former, who was one of the outstanding Democrats in that era. This is the '20s, and Louis was a lawyer and he had quite a political career, low level political career, mayor of Lewiston a few times. And so my father studied. But, as I say, Louis was on the political side of the law as opposed to the intensive practice of law. He was not a scholar by any means. And so my father studied in his office and managed to pass the bar and I think he was, he passed the bar in 1920, in the early '20s. The year is a little bit uncertain, but anyway he landed a partnership with Louis Brann in the late '20s and had an office down here on Lisbon Street. And then in 1932 -- and obviously a Democrat -- in 1932 when the Democratic sweep of, Franklin Roosevelt became president, Louis Brann was elected the first governor of Maine, Democratic governor of Maine, in probably a hundred, almost a hundred years.

And then the fortunes of the firm started to sprout and became, took wing and so forth with that political affiliation and of course Franklin thought very well of Louis Brann at that time, and through Louis and the good graces of Franklin Roosevelt, the firm became strongly involved in the reconstruction of the banks in 1932. All of the, there was a big bank shut-, holiday and all the banks throughout the country and north in Maine had to shut down and Louis was able to secure the appointment of my father as receiver of I don't know, twelve, fifteen Maine banks.

Well, my father knew absolutely nothing about banking, you know. He was lucky he had, to be able to have a checking account in a bank at that stage of the game, but he was, he had tremendous financial ability, financial sense of what should be or should not be in the financial world, and he did very well. He shut down a number of banks, reorganized a number of the

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2 Peter and Isaacson.

others, and did very well. Well, I say that was the, more or less the beginning of our firm's career at that point. And the firm Brann & Isaacson has been here ever since.

And my father always used to say that the worst thing he did at that time, he never should have taken money for fixing up those banks, what he should have done was taken it in stock instead. And he did in some cases, he bought their stock, and when he died in 1980 I liquidated some of those bank stocks very well.

Anyway, that was more or less the political side of the beginnings of the, of my interest in politics. Up, when I, as I lived here in Lewiston-Auburn, this is 1932, I went to Bates. This is during the Depression. At Bates College I think our tuition, I lived at home. We lived just around the college, and the tuition I think was something like two hundred and fifty dollars a year sort of thing. And I think, I was quite young when I went to college, I can't remember just how old, I could do the arithmetic but I think I was sixteen or something like that.

DN: So you had graduated from high school early.

II: I graduated from high school, from Lewiston High School, in 1932, that would make it what, seventeen I guess, yeah, seventeen. And went to Bates, fairly innocent so to speak with respect to politics and the world, that sort of thing. And Bates was quite a, had quite an impact on, both, on myself obviously. I came in contact with the academic world, I mean, the real academic world, and had some wonderful people there, professors, as did Ed Muskie of course. The government professor, Pa Gould, who was quite influential in directing our thoughts to what we should do after Bates ...

DN: What do you remember about Pa Gould's outlook?

II: Do you remember him at all?

DN: I just remember him vaguely.

II: Vaguely, well, he was quite a large individual with white, as I remember now, with white hair, a very discerning and rather a skeptical type. He taught government of course. And he was not a typical college professor, which is not, no reflection on him of course. But had much more of an interest in the world and in politics and in government and much more discerning about. . . . He wasn't quite willing to take the world as it was written about, or the way it was supposed to

be, and had a very good cutting edge to himself, so to speak. And he was quite influential in the way we thought. I did my thesis in government. I forget about what, but something obviously not too important to the world. But I did it in government. I majored in government and economics. And Bates in general more or less brought, I think both brought me and quite clearly Ed into the modern world. I say, and the reason I say that is that among other things, a couple of years ago, well, it was in '96, the Muskie celebration was it? Okay, '96, the, and I, and for a great many years, I was a trustee at the college and became emeritus when they figured I was getting too senile to pay attention after I was seventy. And in '96 they asked me to prepare a memorial of somebody of more than ordinary significant guise who has been a trustee at the college. They asked somebody who was familiar with him to write what they call a memorial minute, which is a short description of the individual and his influence, or the college influence on the individual. And I did that and I was going to bring it in and naturally forgot it but I'll try to dig it out. It was, I thought ...

DN: We have a copy of it, it's very well done.[3]

II: Have you got a copy of it? Okay, fine. But that expressed, I wish I had it because that expressed quite clearly how I, what my feeling was, what Bates College and especially Brooks Quimby did for Ed Muskie. Getting into the college area, both Ed and I were on the debating team and it was, you may not have heard of Professor Quimby and, he's there in the archives someplace, and he was in my mind, along with Pa Gould, was one of the really great, great professors at the college. His sole, complete life of course was debating and he came from Turner, Maine. He was a country boy and looked like it, tall, loose limbed sort of straggly kind of guy, and, but a very keen, sharp, incisive mind and ability for analysis and ability to teach people how to look at things, how to analyze things, how to present themselves, how to be articulate or to become, or to be articulate in a directed manner as opposed to spouting all over the place. And really, and of course did more to put Bates on the map in those days with debating. Debating was the equivalent of a good football team or the best football team which Bates never had, and started, I don't know if he started the international debating business but got Bates involved in national debating, which was a big ticket idea then. And, as I said, Bates was, the student body regarded debating in those days much in the same lights as a good football game. And not only that, but if you were on the debating team, you got to travel, see, you got to go around, you got to see places, which you did at the college expense, naturally, which you

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3 U.S. Government Printing Office. *Memorial Tributes Delivered in Congress*. Washington, D.C. : 1996. Pp. 57-8: Bates College Memorial Minute for Ed Muskie.

were not able to do unless you did belong to some kind of a team. And although Ed and I were never on international, they never did any international debates, we did a lot of traveling and debating within New England and in the northeast region. I was this high and Ed was this high[4], obviously, so we all, everybody called us Mutt and Jeff. I don't remember today which one of those is supposed to be Mutt. Anyway, we had a good time with debating and Ed of course was the type, was the obvious political type in college. I mean, he was involved in all the college activities and college offices and so forth. I was not that much. I was not that outgoing and involved in college affairs as much as Ed was. Now of course Ed was on campus. I wasn't and that made a kind of break. I lived off campus and although I was involved to a certain extent, I didn't have the same opportunities as somebody on campus.

DN: Did you work while you were in college?

II: No, no, you mean summers? No, I didn't, no, I didn't, except sporadically. But I didn't have a full time summer job, you might say. We went to, because the family had cottages and that sort of thing and I didn't work very, very consistently at that time.

DN: Before we get too far down the road, I wanted to ask about your mother, Irving.

II: Oh, yes, my mother died when my younger sister was born in 1926. She died of what they call puerperal fever, which was associated with childbirth and very, in those days, fairly prevalent. Today it doesn't exist, but that was before all the medications and antibiotics and so forth. And so that she got, she never was able to participate in the family's well being, see, that happened after that time.

DN: That was what year?

II: Nineteen twenty-six, when I was ten years old. Yeah, and my father and my mother were first cousins. We came from a group of, originally, the original immigrants here were seven sisters who came here. They all came from Europe. They were all brought over and came to this little small area of Lewiston-Auburn, and I won't say they interbred, but there was a, at one time the family was the biggest part of the Jewish population in New Auburn. New Auburn was the original center for the Jewish people coming into the area, because there were other people there so everybody flocked there. And for a great many years, until the middle or the late '20s, the

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4 Irving Isaacson gestures, indicating how short he was and how tall Ed was.

biggest population of Jewish people was in New Auburn. And my family, with all those characters involved, was a good part of it. Eventually ...

DN: Was Harris a ...?

II: Harris was a cousin, Harris Isaacson was a cousin. Two Isaacsons married, two Isaacson brothers married two, Halperin was the original family name, sisters. And as I say there was a great crowd of us at that time. We had a family reunion, which wasn't very frequent, there were hundreds of characters running around the place and that sort of thing. As I say, she died there before the, I think, before my father passed the bar, and so missed out on everything later on. Of course it had a tremendous impact on the whole family. We were actually brought up at my grandmother's at that point, on my father's side, and also my mother's side, too. Both grandmothers, grandparents took care of us at that point.

DN: There were you and your sister and ...?

II: I have two sisters. I have a sister Frances who is still alive and lives down in Falmouth, and my sister Shirley who is ten years younger lives in Israel. They moved there about fifteen, twenty years ago. Her husband retired as an agronomist and then practiced agronomy in Israel and they're still there in good health, and we visit. She comes here and we visit there. And that's the family side of it.

DN: In your youth, while you were still at college, your grandmothers were your ...

II: Yeah, no, that was, after, while I was in college we had our own establishment right next to the college. But before that time, between the time my mother died and the time that we moved to Lewiston, the grandmothers more or less took care of the family, both sides. I went to Auburn schools at that time and finally went to high school in Lewiston when we moved here.

DN: And now Dorris Isaacson is ...?

II: Dorris was my stepmother. You knew Dorris, yeah? Dorris, my father remarried in 1936. Dorris, what her other name, I can't, I've forgotten. You know, at this stage of the game, it's a little early for you guys, but at this stage of the game you lose names, see. That's not the right name for that, you lose names.

DN: They come and they go.

II: They come and they go, and sometimes you think, sooner, eventually you think of them anyway. But, a very common name, for common traits . . . anomy, A-N-O-M-Y, which is a common failing at this stage of the game. Quite normal. Doesn't bother me, it shouldn't bother anybody else. But anyway, yes, Westall, Dorris Westall obviously. She was a very able, very, very beautiful woman and a very able one. She was a correspondent for the Portland Press Herald I think, with the Portland papers at that time and my father met her and fell in love with her and she was fairly well known at the time. She had, the WPA, a little bit before you guys' time, but the WPA had this artists and writers project. I don't know if you remember that, I didn't pay much attention, but Dorris became the editor of a guide book for Maine called, what was the name ...

DN: It was called Maine something.

II: Maine, Guide Downeast, that was it. Maine, a Guide Downeast, which was the standard travel guide for Maine for a number of years and she was the editor of that as a part of the WPA project. She revised that in the '70s I think. But she also, the family bought, her father bought a summer place down at Popham Beach in Phippsburg and she became, Dorris became deeply involved in local affairs, mostly historical aspects of Phippsburg. And she wrote or edited again a book called Phippsburg. I can't remember the exact name now, but she wrote at least two, I think, books on Phippsburg's historical significance and extremely well done and anybody interested in that area would do well to read those books. Of course they're out of print now, but I have them. And a lot of fun. She was the head of the historical society in Phippsburg and eventually became head of the Maine something-or-other ...

DN: Was she the chair of the Maine Humanities Council?

II: Yeah, Maine Humanities Council, and she was also the head of the Maine, the overall organization which involves local historical societies in Maine. I can't remember the exact name, but she was head of that for a great many years, and say, quite an able person. She died in 19-, she died about ten years ago, after my father. She outlived my father and died about ten years ago I think. And that's the family.

DN: Pa Gould and Brooks Quimby were the two, were they the two biggest influences?

II: I would say so, but then we had another professor called Carroll, Greasy Carroll for whatever reason, who was economics professor who also was a very, very able person and influenced me somewhat in that area. I've always liked that aspect of government, history and economics and I read a lot of history. I enjoy reading history, that's my favorite area of literature.

DN: Was that your passion at the time in college?

II: Was that? No, no, that developed later years. In college I didn't have any great literary passions one way or the other. I read all the government stuff I had to read and read enough so that I wrote that thesis on it and graduated with some honor, and I don't really remember what they were, but they were something.

DN: Do you remember any intense, not, I'm not speaking of formal debates, but debates among your colleagues and friends and classmates on political issues?

II: No, basically my feeling is, my recollection is that the whole, we were not politically oriented in college particularly. And I don't remember any of the topics but the topics were not local, not necessarily local politics but even national politics particularly, and they had a tendency to be intellectual in nature and you would take sides on whether or not it was a good thing to worry about Japanese fishing rights or whatever it might be. I mean something as far off as that. But they weren't, as I recall it, not greatly, they didn't reflect the national political problems of the day particularly. They were an intellectual level above that, so to speak.

DN: This is intriguing to me. I'm not surprised but I'm intrigued because you grew up in a family where your father had gone into, studied law with an active politician, and he was obviously up to his ears in the economic, political - economic crisis of the period, and yet that was not something that grabbed your attention or the attention of your classmates.

II: No, those things didn't spill over. We, the college, the classmates, the students were not tremendously interested and excited about politics. At least that's my recollection of it, and we were much more, you know, we were interested and worried about what's going on within college atmosphere as opposed to what's happening outside. And this is during the depression years of course, and it had an impact on everybody. And money was tight, very tight in general so to speak. And even after 193-, even after Louis Brann's victory in 1932, there was not a great deal of local interest. You have to remember that a Democrat in Maine in 1932 or before that

time, was a, number one, a fairly rare species and number two, not quite human. They didn't get much respect from the rest of the state of Maine and they were mostly considered to be mill workers, French Catholics and priest ridden and all that sort of thing. And were not entitled a great deal of respect. And that same attitude continued for awhile, for quite some time after 1932, of course, until Ed got involved. And possibly as a result of that whole atmosphere, politics did not play a great part or interest in the college life.

DN: Now, had you gone to college intending to go into the practice of law?

II: Well, I don't know if I would say intending or not, it was always in the background. There was never much question that I would become a lawyer, see, but it was never really, my father said, look, one, two, three, four, you've got to go to law school. Go to college, get respectful marks, be nice to people and nice to your professors and that sort of thing and you'll go to law school and then you'll come back here. It was never that quite direct, but it was always fairly well understood that I would, and that was fine with me. And that's probably why I chose the track government and economics and that sort of thing, you know. And after I got through Bates I went to Harvard Law School, which was not necessarily that big a deal in those days. I had good grades and you could get into Harvard, and coming from a low pressure area like Maine I had a much better chance of getting into law school than somebody from the city and that sort of thing. So I went to law school and it was hard work, it was hard work. But I had some incredible professors. I was right at the end of an era in the Harvard Law School where all of the great names in the legal business were teaching there. There were people like Samuel Williston who was the absolutely outstanding person in the American world, the English world on contract law. [Calvin] Magruder, people like that who were at the, really the top, recognized as being the top scholars in their profession. And I was lucky enough just to get in at the tail end, ah . . . . Williston was seventy-five or something when I was there, and so it was really a great experience to be exposed to those kind of people and to read about them in the text books after you get out, that sort of thing, so ...

DN: Did you feel that way while you were there?

II: Yes, you did, you did, because everybody knew what the, I mean all the law school people knew what the caliber of the people were. And these were all, these people were all intellectually incredible and superior and showmen and, you know, had their individual teaching styles. And one guy was a, we called him Bullhorn, whatever that implies, but Samuel Williston as I remember was a very lovely person, very quiet, mild spoken, mild mannered and so forth

and just a wonderful person. Some of these other guys were real tough cookies, real, you know, they would cut you down, they delighted in cutting a guy down who thought he was somebody in class and that sort of thing. But not Williston, that was not his style. But, I say it was just my luck to be there at that time at the end of an era so to speak, end of the intellectual professional era, to have some of these people. And they were fun. And we all knew it, we all appreciated it at the time. So that was one of, only one of the few good things about law school. The rest of it was all just dirty work, which you had to get through.

DN: So you finished law school in ...

II: In '39. In '39 I came back here and started, or passed the bar '39, and started to go into practice. Well, I'd been practicing just a short time when the whole, well, September, this is when the invasion of Poland started, in September of '39the invasion of Poland started and obviously everybody realized there was a war going on and a war coming. And in early '40 I guess it was, I got restless, excited, they were talking about the draft and so forth, so I said the hell with it. I went and enlisted in the National Guard, local National Guard as a private and they were just about, this was in '40, in early 1940. Yeh, I think it was early 1940. And I enlisted in the National Guard as a private and the National Guard was federalized and I was sent down south for training and so forth. And there I was, a private, seventeen dollars a month, in the National Guard and waiting for the war to happen. And my, the family was good about it. They didn't, they weren't happy about it. My father wasn't, but the draft was coming eventually and they realized that I had, so you know, they were pretty decent about it. And then I had an Army career. I spent six years in the Army, four years in the infantry, two years in the OSS, the Office of Strategic Services in which I had an absolutely incredible wonderful time and did some good I think, and that was it. Met my wife.

RC: What's the OSS?

II: Oh, God. OSS is the Office of Strategic Services which was the intelligence service of the United States Army at the time, or the United States at the time, in the war. It was started by a guy named Donovan, William Donovan who was a lawyer in New York. And he started it. He was called Wild Bill Donovan. He was an absolute wild loose cannon. He had great ideas, but no method, no real interest in carrying them out. I mean, that's not quite true. He had no ability to carry them out. And it was the, I say, the intelligence service of the United States. I got into it in 1944. I was an infantry officer, I was a lieutenant, a communications officer in the regiment, infantry regiment, and when I started out I had, I was in charge of telephone communications,

radio communications, that sort of thing. I knew absolutely nothing about it when I started. They sent me to school. And one thing and another, you got to be a communications officer and I was sent. I don't know if this has any relevance, Don.

DN: Oh, yes, absolutely.

II: And I spent four years in the infantry doing everything the infantrymen do and don't like; walking, hiking, sweating, cursing and all the rest of it, no great speciality. And in June of '44, that was D-Day. I was sent to England as a replacement officer. They had a, they had these replacement depots in England, it was just big huge warehouses of personnel. You were replacements when somebody in a particular speciality got bumped off in Normandy, they'd send over to England and say okay send me another number 207 or 1741 or whatever your number happened to be, and you went over as replacement officer. And I was waiting there to go to Normandy, and this is the first part of June, right after the, right after D-Day, or maybe it was a little later, at the end of the month in July. And I, the camp adjutant notified me that I was to report to London to the OSS, just OSS. Nobody had the slightest idea what the OSS was, nobody, it was totally secret, super secret, all that kind of stuff.

And so I went down to London and I tried to get a pass to go to London. Impossible. And here I was in London. I went in there to their office, all rigged out as an infantry officer, and then there was this WAC in there and she looked at my orders, you had to have written orders, and couldn't figure out what to do with it, and she goes inside and comes back and says, well, can't quite straighten things out. Take a week off in London. That was absolutely unheard of, you know, take a week off. I says wonderful, came back. She said well you know, there's been a mix up, apparently you're the wrong guy, or something like that. And here are some names of officers, of people in our organization. I asked, what is it? She wouldn't tell me. Go now and see them. So I went around to a couple of them, they were all very interested and sympathetic and said, well, we'll think about it. And the last guy I went to see was a big fat English major and he listened, you know, quite interested apparently. And he finally said to me, "Do you mind jumping?" I said, "What do you mean?" I knew what he meant. He says, "Well, parachute jumping." I says, "Well, okay, all right." So there I was, I was in the OSS, and just like that. No reason, no rhyme to it and so forth.

DN: You don't know why you were ...?

II: No, pure mistake, pure accident, they were so screwed up they did make a, nobody knew, nobody cared really. And I was supposed to be in a MO, Morale Operations Unit. And our function . . . We had these little square printing presses about that big, that high . . . And we were supposed to take those printing presses and jump behind the German lines and print out propaganda cracks on those things, black, what they call black propaganda, as many lies as we could legitimately think of, and get them distributed to the German troops and the local people underground. And the German soldiers would see what was really going on in the world as we told them, they'd get mad, they'd shoot their officers and everybody'd go home, we'd win the war, that was the whole theory of it. You know, absolutely the most ridiculous thing you could imagine, but what the hell. Meanwhile, you're twenty-five years old, you're not really worried about stuff like that. What they were going to do was throw you out of an airplane someplace and you'd land and some get picked up and get shot or whatever happened to you. Nobody thought about that. And thank God ...

DN: Did you get training in jumping?

II: Oh yeah, sure, we had training and, well fortunately ...

RC: Did you speak German?

II: No, not really, no, I had a smattering of French, a smattering of German, not really. And we had a week's training in London on black propaganda and most of it was looking, it was this little foolish press, and looking at propaganda examples. And one that sticks in my mind, and I'll never, I won't forget that one, is one of the propaganda pictures was a, this is not for the record, was a picture of a German officer astride a female, both naked except for the, he had a jacket on so you'd know who he was, and underneath, and having a good time obviously, and underneath there was a caption, "Here's what your officer's doing up in the villa and look what you're doing down in the line." And that was supposed to get them all upset, I mean, that type of stuff. I spent a, we spent a week, one week doing that, then they sent us up to Scotland to do commando training and did three weeks of that with British, with the British. And then I went down to England, into Manchester and did jump training for a week, and then we were all set to be spies. That was the whole deal. Thank God by that time the Germans had run so damn far, they didn't, they had no place to dump us, so that didn't happen. Okay, that's enough, that's ...

DN: No, no, that's ...

II: In due course, in due course I, the OSS sent me . . . Right after the war ended, the day after the war ended, the OSS sent me to Germany to set up the first intelligence operation against the Russians. They sent me to Leipzig, the East German Zone. We were the first officers into that area. And actually my, another guy and myself, who worked with me, were the first. We then branched out into Poland. We were the first American officers traveling in uniform. And this is a week or two after the war ended, to go into Poland, East German, East Europe.

DN: In a Russian occupied zone.

II: Russian occupied zone, and we brought back the first basic information about that area. And for a year or year and a half after that I was a basic source of intelligence for that whole eastern area and started. This was long before the CIA, two years before the CIA, we were the leading source of intelligence in that whole area.

DN: How did you deal with the Russians?

II: Nicely, beautifully, beautifully. The guy with me spoke fluent Russian, see. I didn't speak any, and we would go, we would take, we would load up our jeep, we were outside in the non-Russian zone, load up our jeep for two weeks with all conceivable supplies. There was absolutely no communication between the two areas. Load up our supplies and we'd travel through. On the roads there were Russian road blocks every fifteen, twenty, thirty miles. They'd stop, and we found out that Russians had jeeps. Only colonels used them. So we'd go down, barrel ahead, blow the horn like mad, see, go down through, most of the time they'd pull up the bars, go, because who's going to stop a colonel. Other times they'd stop and we'd start bullshitting and handing out cigarettes and the guy with me was a great operator, and we'd go. That's the way we went.

RC: Were you wearing American uniforms?

II: Oh yes, American uniforms, American jeep, and we'd ...

RC: And they still let you through.

II: Oh, yeah, we had some papers, we had papers made up in Russian. After awhile we had the largest collection of phoney documents that anybody in the OSS had. And so we did that for a year and a half until Churchill, and the "iron curtain" started. Then they started to dislike us, so

we quit. But if we had broken down or if they found out what we were doing, we would have been in Siberia just like that. And we did that for a year and a half and had a great time doing it.

DN: How did you get the information back to ...?

II: Well, we, I had to memorize a lot of it and that sort of thing. I had to make notes in some of it which was, couldn't help it, and that sort of thing, and we were lucky nobody bothered us. If they had we'd still be there. But that was, say, that was the worthwhile part, what I was doing, the rest of it was a lot of foolishness, but a lot of fun, huge amount of fun.
DN: One more question and then I'm going to let Rob pick it up. When you met the fat British major in London, what was it about your career that interested him?

II: I haven't the slightest idea. I don't know in the slightest why I, you know, I had, I was a, I had communications background, Army communication background, might have had some bearing, and I guess I didn't sound too stupid or whatever, but I haven't the slightest idea why he, just, you know, one of those random things that can happen to anybody. I mean, these were some of the random acts that happened to people in the world which influence them. And the result of that, I met Judith, got married in Europe and so forth, and that's life.

RC: How did you meet your wife?

II: She, I was in Leipzig in Germany, in the eastern zone, getting . . . I was supposed to set up this communications network and hire a bunch of stupid Germans to send stuff out to us. You know, make reports to us. And I was there in a military government building and I see these three women a little bit distance off, and I went over to them and one of them looked like, something like a cousin of mine. I said what are you, what <u>are</u> you, in German. I was speaking very decent German at that time. And they said Hungarian Jews. I says, well, I never met any of that kind before and said a few things off we went. And about a week later I was looking for a camera in a little suburb of Leipzig, going down the street, and there were these three women walking down the street, one of which was my wife. Well, after that I didn't let go of her. She was quite a beautiful woman at that, beautiful girl, she was nineteen.

RC: From Hungary.

II: Hungary, yeah. They'd been departed and she went to Ausch- . . . She'd been departed from in Hungary in '44, went to Auschwitz and spent time there, but by the grace of God,

shipped to Germany to work in a labor camp, munitions factory, and spent a year there. And she'd been liberated about three weeks when I met her. It's again one of those things, that's life, you know . . . random, random.

RC: You said that New Auburn was a center for the Jewish population.

II: Yeah, New Auburn, that's, I don't know if you're familiar with Auburn, it, across the bridge, Little Androscoggin Bridge, that whole area down there.

RC: And you said that there were a lot of recent European immigrants.

II: Well, they weren't, no, this was after the big waves of immigration, this was in 19-, they had come there as a part of the original waves of immigration in '90s, '80s and '90s and early 1900s, but there was no more immigration during the period I was growing up.

RC: Were your parents immigrants?

II: No, my grandparents were immigrants. Lithuania, originally.

RC: What kind of, you say your father was associated with Brann who was an active politician, did he try to, you father, try to instill any political values on you at home?

II: No, no. Politics, there was, oh, very little, almost no politics at home as such. You know, we were all, of course at that time I was too young to vote obviously at that time, growing up like that, but we, you know, from what we knew, it wasn't, politics was a fairly active profession in the Lewiston-Auburn area among a lot of people, I mean, sort of very low level but it was quite popular. And we'd read in the papers, we knew the names, they were all mostly French Canadian origin, but within the home area, there was very little politics being discussed.

RC: New Auburn, was it, I guess as a community, was New Auburn conservative or liberal, looking back?

II: They were, a lot of Jewish people were Democrats. There was a fairly strong Socialist movement in, these people like my grandparents. My grandfather was a member of what they call the workers ring, or in German it's *Arbeitersring*, which was a socialist, leftist leaning organization in Europe and it came here also with the same inclinations. They had HMOs long

before anybody ever thought of it here, with prepaid medical plans and that sort of thing, quite a liberal, social minded group, my grandparents were. And, I didn't really appreciate that at the time but they were all, I realize that's what it was.

RC: Was New Auburn a wealthy area?

II: No, God forbid. Poor, just as poor, they were scrambling and scratching to make a living and doing all the low end. They were very entrepreneurial minded and worked like hell to make a living and, which they all did, and it still was. It was a low rent, low hard times area of Lewiston-Auburn, and they were absolutely obsessed with the idea of education, your kids going to school, college, that sort of thing, and soon as they were able to make enough money to support they moved out of the area. And now today, nobody, there are no Jewish families in that area at all. This happened in the '30s and '40s and so forth.

DN: Was there a synagogue in New Auburn?

II: Yeah, there was one, there was one, yeah. And there was a, it was a fairly close knit community. You knew everybody in the area. You knew them all and you knew all their problems and troubles and so forth, but they were poor, very poor. Except a few of them who managed to rise above it through some economic miracle. In fact, the one that brought the whole family here was a very, a fairly wealthy person at that time, you know, and he had made some money.

End of Side One
Side Two

II: ... classic example.

DN: Was (*Unintelligible word*) part of that group?

II: Oh, yeah, yeah. Typical example (*unintelligible phrase*).

RC: Was there a big anti-Semitic sentiment in Maine at that time?

II: No, no, I never, I don't recall any incident of anti-Semitism when I was growing up. Although, that's myself. But there is a cute story which I actually don't know proves anything.

Over in Lewiston where most of the French Canadian population lived, cousin Harris Isaacson I think, Don knows, he used to tell the story, when he was a kid there was a lot of French Canadian kids around and he used, and when he was a kid he'd have to run the gauntlet of these French Canadian streets and he'd run down the streets and kids would chase him. All the French Canadian kids would chase him, and they'd holler at him, "Christ killer, Christ killer." And Harris would holler back, "It wasn't me, it was Ikey Cohen down the street." That was Harris. You remember Harris.

DN: That sounds like Harris.

II: But I've never had any problems.

RC: Do you think it was an issue at all, looking back?

II: Pardon?
RC: Even though you yourself didn't experience it, do you think it was a big issue then, in the community?

II: No, no, I don't recall it making any great difference at all.

RC: What grammar school did you go to?

II: I went to, in Auburn I went to Webster Grammar and then in, and I moved, when we moved to Lewiston I went to, no, I went to Webster Grammar, then I went directly into high school. I guess I moved at ninth grade, that was in Auburn, Webster Grammar.

RC: Now, in both high school and grammar school, were those pretty diverse places? Like, what were they composed of, mostly Franco American?

II: Well, it depended on, you know, on the neighborhood, the location. Auburn was mostly, at that time, was mostly white, Waspish and so forth, and typical Yankee, the typical New England kind of environment.

RC: Were you really ac-, did you do a lot of extra curricula activities in high school?

II: Not a lot, fairly typical ones, the dramatic groups, debating, and I guess that was it. Dramatics, debating, and, not athletic. I wasn't very athletically inclined, I was mostly on the other side of the fence.

RC: You said even though it wasn't spoken directly, you were sort of sure you were going to be a lawyer. What other sort of aspirations did you have? Did you ever have a thought of doing something else? What else did you have in mind to be?

II: No, no, I never really got too excited by anything frankly, anything else. It wasn't a really burning issue, what am I going to do with my life from here on, the next hundred and ten years and all, it never got to be that.

RC: Where all did you apply? Did you just apply to Bates?

II: I think that, well, I think, yeah, I think so. Bates is next door, right around the corner.

RC: You didn't want to leave home?

II: Um, well, you see, this was Depression years and although we were starting, you know, my father was starting to make a decent living, we didn't, you know, we didn't have that kind of money to, probably, even at those reduced rates, to go, I probably could have, but that didn't really bother me, I wasn't very, that excited about it. It's quite different, today's kids, nobody would even think of staying around the house these days, staying around their ...

DN: It might be worth noting here, I'm assuming that during the late '20s and through 1932 the Brann & Isaacson law practice wasn't terribly prosperous.

II: No, it wasn't, as far as I know. They were doing very run of the mill kind of things on the low end of the economic scale. They were not representing businesses. They were representing the individual, individual clients, bootleggers, that was a great business, bootlegging was a great op-, there was a great business for lawyers in bootleggers in those days, this is during the Depression. And there were quite a few local bootleggers coming into town and get picked up and lawyers would represent them, you know, it was a good deal. But it was generally a very low level kind of practice, the offices were very sparse and meager, that sort of thing, and people made a living but not much more in those days.

SO: Bootlegging whiskey?

II: Not lawyers, no, the lawyers ...

SO: No, bootleggers.

II: No, no, I'm not talking about them, I'm talking about the office, I'm talking about the office ...

SO: Yeah, I know, you said bootleggers, though, bootlegging what?

II: Whiskey, what else was there to bootleg? In those days drugs were not a problem and it was all coming down from Canada, see. And there were a number of local bootleggers whom everybody knew and admired and so forth.

RC: In retrospect, looking back, how do you think the Depression influenced your political beliefs that you held?

II: How did what?

RC: I said, looking back, how do you think growing up in the Depression influenced your political beliefs later on?

II: Well, I don't think that there was that much conscious thought or discussion about it. We were Democrat, I mean, obviously we were a Democratic family because my father and Louis Brann were Democrats, and that shaped the course, you know, for what I've been. I've never been, never as yet, been a Republican, registered Republican, although sometimes I think like one. But that essentially was the dominating influence in the political aspects of my life was that, you know, we were Democrats, traditionally so. And Jewish people were traditionally Democrats for the most part.

RC: When you came to Bates, did you start getting involved in like debate and so forth right away?

II: I don't recall. I think I did. I think I did. I'd been on the debating team at the high school and I think I did, and Brooks had the records and either I applied or he poked me out or something. It's my recollection I did right away, right during my freshman year.

RC: How did college change you? From, just personality-wise, just getting there with all those people?

II: Oh, I was a little snotty nothing, and college made me a tremendous paid operator. No, it didn't really change me a great deal. It broadened my outlook on life and gave me some valuable background and technical training. Debating I thought . . . I think the main impact on myself probably was through debating which gave you the ability to talk, to be articulate, to formulate your ideas and that sort of thing, and that's a great training for anybody, not necessarily for lawyers, but great training for anybody. The ability to be able to talk on your feet, to think, to influence people and so forth, be able to convince people that what you say is worth listening to is a great talent, a great asset. And that's my main, I think that's the main thing I got from Bates, other than the degree.

RC: I'm curious about something. How were gender relations different in college back then?

II: Genders were the same then. I'm not sure I follow you.

RC: Women in terms of, well, there definitely weren't coed dorms and such back then.

II: No, there were not. It took awhile for my wife to get there. My wife was Dean of Students at Bates for quite some time. She's the one that did all that sort of thing. But when I, when she, when I was there you had to, there was a prevailing . . . Well, they operated the place like a nunnery, with a few less restrictions. But they were very conscientious of the moral tone of their female students. They thought they were *in loco parentis* basically.

SO: What was the breakup? Was it fifty-fifty? Today Bates has fifty-fifty. What was it then?

II: I don't remember, I don't remember what the actual numbers were, but I think it was pretty close at that time, yeah. My recollection is seeing a lot of females around.

RC: Did you, you debated with Muskie and you were on some organizations with him also in college. I'm curious, did you get to know him on a personal level at all or were your discussions always based ...?

II: Oh, yeah, oh yeah, I knew Ed. We were friends.

RC: Did he have, was he different in a political way, like an organizational way, and a personal way. Like, did he have two different personalities in that sense?

II: No, that, Ed never really, not until a great deal later when he got to be somebody. No, he was a very natural kind of guy. No, there was no difference. I mean, debating, I mean our relationship as a debate partner was simply a technical aspect of doing a job basically. And that didn't particularly change his mentality or personality.

RC: Did you socialize in the same peer circles?

II: No, not really. I was a different category, because I was a townie, see, and so we didn't have the same social life that the kids on campus did.

DN: A lot's been made of the fact that Ed was very shy as a young boy. Would you, did you regard him as being shy when you saw him at college?

II: I don't really remember that aspect of him. We didn't socialize that much, see, because of this gulf between the . . . . There were a number of kids, who were also townies, and I associated mostly with those guys rather than the on-campus guys because I knew them better, grew up with some of them, so there was that kind of a tendency. So from that standpoint, yeah, we lost out some as far as the social, never married my college girlfriend and that sort of thing, thank God. And so from that standpoint, yeah, it was a definite difference, although it didn't really hurt, so to speak.

RC: Was the difference just the fact that you were from the local area, or was there something that characterized the difference between the two groups?

II: No, neither of us smelled very bad, I don't think, but, no, there was no major difference between them. No, there was no real sharp distinction other than on that point, but that was enough to divide the social activities.

RC: You say you were friends, though. What kind of conversations did you have when you weren't actually debating or doing something like that? Would you have lunch and stuff like that?

II: Same as everybody else. I haven't the slightest recollection. We were not abnormal in that respect.

SO: When you were, when you did hang out socially with peers, what were the activities? Would you play a lot of cards, would you ...?

II: Yeah, we were playing cards, there was a ping pong down in the, down in Chase Hall, there was skiing and outdoor activities, that kind of thing. Fairly standard, typical college things. Yeah, we were involved in all those kind of things, do Chase Hall dances and so forth.

RC: Towards the end of college you were sure you were going to go to law school. Did you have any idea, what were Ed's ideas about what he was going to do, do you have any ideas, did you ever speak ...?

II: Well, he wanted to go to law school, too, and we talked about that. He wanted to go to law school. He didn't have any money, you know, particularly, and needed help to go to law school. He had to get a scholarship.

RC: Once you went to law school, you mentioned Quimby and some others at Bates that were really influential teachers. Were there any teachers like that at Harvard that were just as influential as some of the teachers at Bates?

II: No, the, no, the professors at Harvard didn't influence your intention, your outlook on life, so to speak, or what you were going to do. They were purely technicians. They were simply instruments by which you acquired enough knowledge to pass a bar exam, pass the bar. And you know they, there was no social intercourse between the professors and the students, none. Some may have, but as far as I know there was almost none.

RC: So there was just a wall there.

II: Oh, yeah, these guys were much too rarified to associate with anything like us.

RC: Before you joined the Army, what were your ideas about the war? How did you feel about the war that was ensuing?

II: The war, you mean? Well, as I said, when I got back here and practiced for awhile, I decided the war was coming. Everybody knew the war was coming, so, okay, so I joined the war. Enlisted, yeah. And like everybody else, you know, the Germans were beasts and so forth and so on, and all that kind of stuff, and we had to save the world. Although nobody really worried about saving the world, everybody was really more interested in saving your own ass, so to speak. About getting in the Army; I could have gone, I could have applied probably for a direct commission in the judge advocate's office as a lawyer. I probably could have gotten a direct commission as second lieutenant. But then I would have been involved in court-martials and all kinds of garbage, legal garbage, and didn't want to do it. I wanted something else and I wanted to have some more fun, whatever. So off I went into the infantry, which was no fun.

RC: When did you begin to write legal text?

II: Oh, yeah, well that was, Ed called me up one day, must have been 1952, I forget exactly. I should have made a note of it, but Ed called me up. He called me and he said, "How would you like to be a judge?" I says, "Good idea, fine, what do you think?" He says, "Okay, there's an opening in the Auburn municipal court." You used to have municipal courts in those days, and that's great, good idea, and so I became a judge over there.

Now, those days it was a part time job, it's not like it is now, it was a part time job and they started court at ten-thirty in the morning and got through noontime, whatever. And so I went over and I said, "Look, Joe, we just, we're not going to do things that way, I got limits. We're going to start court at eight-thirty in the morning and we're going to go for an hour, an hour and a half, whatever it takes, then I'll go back and earn a living." That bothered people but they got used to the idea after awhile. And the thing, after I got into it and started, you know, into doing the judging business, it was very apparent that the police officers were abysmal. Ignorant, arrogant, disregarding people's rights, all that sort of thing. Anyway, it was just absolutely useless. Most of them, a lot of them had never gone through high school and that sort of thing, if they had they were scholars, they got through high school.

So I got mad and I wrote a text, *Manual for Arresting Officers*, that was it. At first a little tiny thing about thirty pages and the county printed it and handed it around and pretty soon the county said, "Well, take it back. We don't want to do it." So then I got serious and I put together a text book, I wrote it, had it printed, I self published it and so forth, and put together a mailing list of all the police departments and judges and juries, districts in the country, and got Hood's Mailing down here to mail out every month a mailing list of a couple thousand names and started to sell books. Sold a lot of books. Pretty soon, we were selling a lot of books, so I started writing other books, all variations of the same, how to do this. I can write fairly well and I write easily, clearly, and there were no police text books in those days, which a police officer could read. They were for lawyers and judges. When I wrote them, the way I wrote them, I wrote them so an ordinary cop could read it, understand it and apply it. And they were very popular. I sold them all over this country, and I sold them in Canada. I wrote a, what became called *Manual for the Conservation Officer*, all revolving on the same theme. And over the years I sold probably a hundred thousand books. Yeah. And we had a great operation going, we, I got, I designed the books, printed them, published them, wrote all the literature, the sales pieces. And my shipping staff consisted of my kids, my daughter and the boys. We had a place down, a playroom down in the basement and had books there and orders would come in the mail. We'd open them up, look at them, process them, ship them out, and we were in business. We had a great time. And those books were very, very popular.

RC: Has your opinion of cops gotten any better?

II: I don't have that much to do with them these days, so I'm not sure. Not a great, I don't know how greatly improved but I still may have. See, when I was writing there was no, there was absolutely no literature available to them on legal aspects. Since that time there's all kinds of stuff. And if I had been smart, a lot smarter, I would have continued and brought it out and gone into videos and tapes and all that kind of stuff and . . . But it got to be work after awhile, it wasn't fun, it got to be work so okay, so I quit. But the books sent all my kids to college and into graduate school, and besides being a lot of fun.

DN: Did any of them become publishers?

II: The kids? No.

RC: In the archives at Bates, I saw a letter from you to Muskie suggesting some legislature and I'm curious, what sort of, when he became governor, what sort of relationship did you have?

II: Well, yeah, that was interesting. When Ed was elected, of course, there wasn't any infrastructure so to speak, any Democratic infrastructure that was available to help him when, you know, after he became governor. And there was a bunch of us and there was myself, Frank Coffin, I think Shep [Lee] was involved, who else was in that group, I can't remember?

DN: Well, Tom helped some, Tom Delahanty.

II: Yeah, Tom Delahanty was involved. And so here he was governor and he had to have a legislative program going on, and Ed had no particular background with that sort of thing. He'd been in the old enforcement office, government enforcement down in Portland.

DN: OPS?

II: OPS, yeah, he'd been doing that but he didn't have any particular legislation. So he decided he needed some help so he asked a bunch of us to, informally, to think through some things and some topics and we all said "yes". And we had a great time rewiring the state of Maine, so to speak, putting out proposals for legislation that Ed thought we needed. And I did, I can't remember what was in that letter now, but I had some thoughts on the economic development. That was one of the areas of where he showed interest, economic development. And I think we put together the original, or the antecedents, the historical antecedents of what is now named FAME, Finance Authority of Maine. After a number of evolutions it got to be here. We put that together and I had some other ideas which I thought were significant, which other people didn't appreciate, that sort of thing, but a fair amount of it was used.

I had a great idea of how to make the local municipalities independent of taxes. I said, "All you guys got to do in towns is to go in and put together a thousand acres of tax acquired timber holdings, and you take care of that you won't have to worry too much about money." And that's what, some of them have done that, but we couldn't get anybody to do that as an organized program, although it's marketing you could have done for nothing. And a thousand acres today is worth money. That type of thing. But we'd go to Augusta and sit around and holler and yawk each other, have fun, finally come out with a little something. It was, that part of it ...

RC: Before the '54 election, did you think he'd win?

II: Nobody thought he'd win. Up to a point, up to a given point. He was a Catholic, you know, and at that time the impact of Louis Brann's victory in 1932 had worn off essentially. And there was still a great deal of, I wouldn't say anti-Catholic feeling, I don't know if it was that pronounced or that overt, but there was a feeling among all of us that that could be a very problematic area. And there weren't that many registered Democrats around, I remember. Still, it was always small. And a lot of people felt that his chances of winning were not minimal but questionable. And . . . But, you know, Ed being what he is, he's quite a character and with a lot of good personality he was able to get around. And Don was totally involved of course, much more so than I was. I was only on the fringes. I was working, Don was working for Muskie. I was working for a living. But, Don, you know, it was questionable. That was my, at the time, that was my reaction, that a victory would be real questionable.

RC: You said that you proposed a lot of legislative stuff and it was taken pretty seriously by Muskie.

II: Oh, I wouldn't say "a lot", I mean we all sat around a table and presented things which we thought were significant, which would, you know, which would give him a legislative program. Some of the things we talked about were finally drafted, a lot of things we talked about were not.

RC: How would you, looking back now, was there something that Muskie brought to Maine politics that hadn't been brought to it before? How would you characterize that?

II: Well, he brought a Democratic face to it, which hadn't been done for quite some time. And, well, he brought a feeling of, I think he brought a feeling of competence. People had faith in him and he brought a feeling of competence to them and a feeling that he cared about people and their concerns, and wanted to do what was good for the State of Maine and good for the people, and I think that was very important. He sort of radiated an aura of competence and concern everybody reacted to. Was that a fair statement, Don?

DN: Yes, very. Very fair, very perceptive.

SO: You talked about how he brought a Democratic face to Maine politics. Can you just talk a little bit about the differences between Republican and Democratic parties at that time, the early '50s?

II: Well it depends on where you stand, see. If you look at it from a Republican aspect, Democrats were a sub-species of the population. If you looked at it from the Democratic standpoint, they were an oppressed minority. And it took quite awhile for the two sides to get close, so to speak, in their viewpoints.

RC: What was different about the Democratic philosophy, Democratic platform?

II: Well, I think it was mostly traditional. There wasn't any great amount of wealth in the Democratic party. I mean, in the people who voted Democrat, the big bulk of Democrats were working people and it was relatively unusual for anybody who had any money to be a Democrat, that sort of thing. And you had to be sort of a mutant, you had to be a mutant Republican to become a Democrat so to speak. And as a result of the make up of the parties, their ambitions or their political aspirations were that much different, you know. And when you're in a, if you're a member of a group who has to earn a living by the sweat of your brow, you think about things that are helping you, you know, benefits, that sort of thing. If you're a business man and prospering by the sweat of somebody else's brow, then you study up with things that'll make you more prosperous, generally. That's the way the world works.

SO: How do you think Muskie swayed all the Republicans?

II: Well, I think probably by the force of his character, probably. And the fact that he was a, I can't, who did he run against?

DN: Burt Cross the first time.

II: Oh, yeah, Burt Cross, yeah right. Yeah, and I don't remember so much about Burt, but Burt Cross was not a tremendous character, nice guy and all that sort of thing, but not a tremendous character. He didn't have that much charisma and he came up, as I remember it, and that's not very well, didn't come across with kind of a message you might say that Ed had. It was basically what he was as opposed to what Burt Cross was.

RC: Did you stay in contact with him after he went to the Senate?

II: Ed? Just in a general way, social way. Every once in awhile he'd come by and we'd talk, but nothing great. No.

RC: Well, that's pretty much all of my questions, but I'll ask, I have a few more, but they're more light questions. How did it happen that you actually climbed Mt. Kilimanjaro?

II: That's a good political question. Well, I've always been fairly active and I've been involved with Bean's a long time, and Leon Gorman who runs Bean's, this is what, must have been seven years ago, I can't remember, was a very outdoors, active, physically active kind of guy and always interested in climbing. So he, so we put together this group of six, eight people who were, and there's an outfit on the west coast that organizes these deals, you know, these climbing deals, and asked me if I wanted to go. And I said, "Yeah, sure." And so, other good people I knew were going, and so I worked my ass off literally for about three months beforehand to get in shape, which I finally did.

And then we got over there and then I got the bug, the African bug, and I knocked out completely. And this was three or four days before we were supposed to climb. And the problem was that if you stayed, well, my, ah . . . A little bit of background: the group was going to climb Kilimanjaro which is about twenty, the highest peak there about twenty odd thousand feet, they were going to climb it two ways, they were going to climb it from the back way and spend three days climbing, hard work, camping out and so on, real hard climbing, and get to the top, and then come down on the other side on what they call the tourist route. A lot of people climb Kilimanjaro, hundreds, probably thousands climb, but they go this way, up in three stages and they stop at hostels on the way up and cabins and so forth, finally get to the top if you're lucky. And so, but our crowd was going to do it the hard way.

So anyway, the leader, the guy who was organizing the deal, he talked like it, and the problem is if you got up to this point, you couldn't go back so if I got up there and was in bad shape, they'd have to lug me. So I didn't think that was fair and obviously the guy who run the deal didn't think it was right, so he says, okay, we'll go up and you go up this way on the easier route, meet us up there, up at the highest point you can go, and we'll meet you there. I said, okay, so that's what we did. So I got up to, they were up, they got up and got to the peak, climbed it, and I went up on the other side and got to about fifteen thousand and then I'm on the way down. I never did get to the peak, which I'll regret the rest of my life.

RC: How did you become involved in metal craftsmanship? Just a hobby?

II: Oh, yeah, I'd say it's a vocation, it's my vocation anyway. It was my vocation, or my avocation, so to speak. Well, I've always been, I've always liked tools, always liked shops and

always done a lot of that kind of stuff, and when we got a fireplace and I wanted to get a log carrier, you know, these log carriers? And I couldn't find a good one, they don't make a good one. There weren't any. So I had an old pair of blacksmith tongs downstairs, I went and looked at that and I used that a little bit, and I said, I think I can do that. So I went and designed a pair of blacksmith, ah, fireplace tongs which worked on the principles of the blacksmith tongs. But much bigger open jaws and much longer handles, and it worked. It took me awhile. I poked around and finally got to it, and then after that I was hooked. I started doing metal work and I did a lot of it.

RC: What other kinds of stuff did you make?

II: I, all kinds of things. Candelabra, I mean candle holders. I, just a side note, I branched from blacksmithing into coppersmithing, which I actually like more, much more freedom to design. I have a good eye. I have a good eye for design and I've designed and made all kinds of ceiling fixtures, electrical light fixtures, standing lamps, table lamps, fishing utensils, cabinet furniture.

SO: Do you have a forge?

II: A big forge, big forge, big shop, big forge, big tools, lots of tools, a lot of things. I've got a shop that I don't deserve by any means. And I say, I have a good eye and I work mostly with copper nowadays which is a very beautiful metal, and they're nice things.

DN: You and Frank, different arenas.

II: Oh, yeah, Frank is a very, Frank Coffin, very able sculptor, extremely, I say, professional. Have you seen his things?

DN: Oh, yeah.

II: I think he's professional, a great sculptor. We had a, about five or six years ago, we had an exhibit here, art exhibit. Frank Coffin brought his stuff and I brought my stuff, and the curator over at the college came over and hung all those things, we had a big exhibit, had a lot of fun, big party, couple other people.

SO: Over at the college?

II: No, here, right here in this office. We had a great party, a lot of fun.

DN: Matter of fact, Bates ought to have an exhibit at the Olin Art Center.

II: Well, that's what we got, uh, we got after Helen Papaioanou, you know Helen?

DN: No.

II: She's a trustee over there, and we got after Helen just recently, also another guy, another fellow who, another trustee in woodworking. And we got after her and said, "Look, Helen we want you to promote an exhibit, a trustees or alumni exhibit," whatever, at the Olin Center and Frank of course is involved and I'm involved; Burton Harris will be involved. He's an excellent wood worker. And we'll put on an exhibit, a local hand-raised exhibit, so to speak. And so we'll harass her some more, as a part of summer, but I think it will be fun, yeah. And some of those things, Frank's things actually, I think, are good enough to look at.

DN: I have one other area I wanted to pursue and that is, you have been associated with politicians off and on over the years, starting with your father, but is my impression, Irving, that politics has never been a passion for you?

II: Not really, no, not really. You know, I've been content to be associated with people who were in politics and to observe them and certainly observe how they changed over their life time and that sort of thing. But I've never really been interested in running for office or anything like that. I doubt whether I would have been successful at it. But, no, I've not been . . . . Let me tell you a cute story about Ed though before, I don't know, I may have told you this story, I'm not sure. Anyway, cute story about Ed. This is during later on, can't remember whether he was a senator or whether he was the secretary or not. Anyway, Ed was going to talk at Bates and so he called up, said, look I gotta talk at Bates, can I stay with you tonight? I said, sure, come on over. So he came over and spent the evening and we got to talking. And I like books, I read a lot. I like historical stuff, and I was telling Ed about some books and I said, written by a Polish author called, in English it's pronounced Sienkiewicz[5], in Polish "Sin-ka-vitch". He wrote Quo Vadis. These are things that you never would have heard of but in the '90s they were incredibly popular. And he also wrote as a part of his career a series of books based on medieval history of Poland and about the trials and troubles of the early, this is in the '13's and '14 hundreds, a whole series

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5 Henryk Sienkiewicz, 1846-1916.

of books, they go on forever, but they're great lovely books, I loved them, and I had a whole set of them by this Polish author Sienkiewicz. I got talking about them and he got all excited. He said, "Oh, God, I used to read those books when I was a kid." And I brought them out. These are all out of print nowadays; they're not available. And [I] brought them out. He got all excited about it and I could see his eye gleaming, and I could see him, he was expecting me to say, "Look, Ed, why don't you take them." You know, as a nice gesture. I thought, well I'll be damned if I'm going to give him my books.

But that's only half a story. But he was so excited about the books. And they'd been published by Little, Brown in Boston, the publishers. So showing off, of course Ed had all the clout in the world if he wanted to use it. So he goes back to, I don't know, Senate or Secretary, and he has his secretary call up Little, Brown, puts on Senator Muskie, who says, "I'm interested in your books you published by Sienkiewicz. Oh, I guess probably talks to the top guy, and he gets all excited, "Oh, of course, we've got a mint set down in the vault that we've been keeping for fifty years just waiting for you, Ed." So he gets a complete brand new set of these Polish historical stories from Little, Brown. Which is fine with me, but I wasn't going to give him mine. Anyway, that's the story.

DN: Tell us, how did you come to represent LL Bean?

II: Oh, bean. Well, that's a, this was in the late '60s. Leon Gorman and I were on an advisory board for the local bank, Depositors Trust Company. It was sort of a, this latest group they put together, business people who they thought were doing too good in the banking business and had really nothing to do. Really, no, no offense ...

DN: This is when Depositors was a local bank?

II: It was a local bank, but Leon and I were both on the board. We talked quite a bit and I got to know him fairly well. And then his grandfather died. LL died in '67 and the IRS went after Bean's, because the old man, who lived in Florida nine months out of the year. Comes up here just in summertime, was drawing a big salary, which in those days a very substantial salary, and he was ninety-two, and the IRS said, "How in God's name can you, ninety-two years old, living nine months out of the year in Florida, draw that salary out of a business?" You're supposed to get, draw a salary which, a reasonable salary for what you're doing." So, okay, and they were about to assess Bean for a big chunk of money and so Leon said to me, "What do you think?" "Well, I don't think they're right." So he says, "Well, you want to fight with them?" I said,

"Sure, I'll fight with them." So I did and I put together a case for them which demonstrated the old guy, ninety-two years old, Florida and all withstanding, he was running the business. And he was. The old guy was doing it. And Leon was involved in the store at the time. I think. I forget in what capacity but anyhow, and almost in effect, Leon would call the old man up and say, "Gramp, we've been selling grey socks all the time, I'd like to sell white ones, what do you think?" I mean, something like that, and the old man would say yes, no, or maybe. Well anyway, he was actually. The rule is you don't have to be physically present as long as you're actually in control of doing it. So, by God, we got the IRS to back off and they cut it out entirely and didn't make the assessment. So that of course made everybody happy and there I was.

DN: There you were.

II: Been there ever since.
RC: When did you take over Brann & Isaacson?

II: Oh, when my father died. My father died in 1980. He had not, he had congestive heart trouble, had not been very active for a few years, or a couple years before that time. He was eighty-five when he died, and I had been, you know, I'd been doing most of the work at that time, before that time. He was here, he came into the office, but he wasn't very active and, for some time before.

RC: How, has the office grown since ...?

II: Oh yeah, we were three people then, and now, three lawyers, and now about a dozen lawyers.

RC: Three when? When were you three?

II: Back then when my father died. And we're a dozen lawyers now.

RC: Late '70s, early '80s.

II: Yeah, he died in 1980, and he had developed, nothing to do with anything here, but we have what you might call a national practice. We do relatively little in the State of Maine. We have clients in the State of Maine, but we don't, most of our work is in the, a lot of our work is in the mail order field, mail order tax field, and we are probably the outstanding, literally the

outstanding legal firm in the country in this aspect of it. My partner George Isaacson, who is a distant cousin, represents the Direct Marketing Association, which is a national organization of mail order houses in tax work and he is at the peak of all the excitement about taxes, sales taxes. Every state in the country wants to grab the mail order houses for sale taxes, and there's a big combined state movement to do it. And George represents the, we represent the other side of the fence.

DN: Interstate commerce?

II: Interstate commerce, yeah, interstate commerce. And we do a lot of work in that field and now we're becoming quite strong in the taxation of cyberspace. And that's a brand new field and some of our people here are very knowledgeable in that area and we're beginning to do that.

SO: As far as the kind of e-mail order? As mail order over the Internet type of stuff? And book stores and things like that?

II: The states try to tax the Internet sales and that's a whole wide open world. Who knows what rule to apply and so on and so on, so we've been in the forefront of that, that area, also representing some other clients and so on. So the practice has changed quite a bit. We've always represented business interests so to speak. And we did a lot of labor work back, well we still do, for management, that sort of thing. It's not really a local . . . We don't do any domestic relations work or criminal work or that kind of, personal injury. Purely business oriented.

DN: So, Lt. Isaacson is returning to his communications roots.

II: Captain.

DN: Captain.

II: Actually, they made me a major eventually.

DN: You were a major finally?

Well, thank you very much, Irving, this was great. Lots of insights.

II: I don't know how much actual (*unintelligible word*) you got out of the deal but you may have gotten a few scraps here and there which may be usable.

DN: Lots of insights and some specific ...

II: Maybe a few scraps of information.

DN: Thank you.

End of Interview
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