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Koons, Donaldson oral history interview

Andrea L'Hommedieu

Interview with Donaldson Koons by Andrea L'Hommedieu

Summary Sheet and Transcript

Interviewee
Koons, Donaldson

Interviewer
L'Hommedieu, Andrea

Date
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Place
Sidney, Maine

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Biographical Note

Donaldson Koons was born in Korea on August 23, 1917 to Presbyterian missionary parents. He moved to the United States at the age of 17 and enrolled at the College of Wooster, in Ohio. He got his masters and Ph.D. in Geology at Columbia before enlisting in the military in 1943. Upon his return to the States he taught at Columbia and West Virginia University. He moved to Colby College in 1947, where he stayed until his retirement. He was appointed to the Maine Water Improvement Commission by Ken Curtis in 1967, and has been active in Maine environmental protection issues.

Scope and Content Note

Interview includes discussions of: growing up in Korea; Japanese occupation of Korea; sugar beet project; economic and environmental implications of sugar beets; cleaning Maine rivers; sewage treatment program; political implications of the Prestile Stream; New England Conference on Air Pollution in 1969; environmental problems of Maine; nuclear power as an alternative; political problems with nuclear power; Maine Yankee's location; Maine Yankee debate; testifying before a Senate committee; relationship with the Gray family in Waterville; Ken Curtis as governor; Republican Party in Maine; and income tax legislation.

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Andrea L'Hommedieu: This is an interview with Donaldson Koons, retired professor of geology at Colby College at his home in Sidney, Maine, on December the 11th, the year 2002, and this is Andrea L'Hommedieu. Could you begin by saying your full name and spelling it?

Donaldson Koons: Full name is Donaldson, D-O-N-A-L-D-S-O-N, Koons, K-O-O-N-S.

AL: And where and when were you born?

DK: Well, I was born in Korea on the 23rd of August in 1917. My parents were with the Presbyterian Mission Board; my father ran a boys school, a middle school, of about five hundred students, Korean students, for a period of thirty odd years until the war started in 1941, when he and my mother were interned and my father was in prison for a period of time and had some difficulty. And then both of them were exchanged in June of 1942, along with the exchange of diplomatic personnel from Japan, Korea and some from China, parts of China, and the corresponding diplomatic personnel, Japanese personnel in the United States. So the exchange was completed in August of 1942.

AL: And then they came back to the United States?

DK: They went back to the United States, and my father then was head of the Korean branch of the Office of War Information, until the time of his death. As a matter of fact, in 1947.

AL: So how, okay, I forgot when you said you were born, so how many years were you in Korea?

DK: I was there until I was seventeen, when I came to the States to go to college.

AL: So you did all your growing up in Korea.

DK: We had a couple of short visits in the U.S., we'd take furloughs, periodic furloughs. So I was in the United States when I was five years old, and again when I was nine. No, more than nine, excuse me, I was closer to, I was twelve.

AL: What were your experiences like in Korea? What was it, how was it?

DK: Well, it was interesting because of course there were two things involved: one, we were foreigners in another country instead of being natives, and second thing was that Korea was occupied by the Japanese. It had been annexed in 1910, and it was the primary continental foothold of the Japanese prior to the beginning of the war in 1941. And the Japanese government, it varied somewhat depending upon what the situation was within Japan itself.

There was, for a period of time when I was young, conflict between a relatively liberal approach and a very conservative approach in the government. And during the time of the liberal dominance in the Japanese government, the governor general and the government, Japanese government officers, in Korea were on the whole fairly reasonable. In the early thirties, they lost that argument and the Japanese, the military and the conservative, very conservative Japanese took over the operation of the government, there was a good many assassinations and so on, and from then on the government was a very repressive government. Things changed in Korea and also in Japan, and of course that was about the time that I left so that I heard about them from my parents, but I didn't experience most of it.

AL: And so you came to the United States, and where did you attend college?

DK: I went to college at the College of Wooster in Ohio. And then from there I went to Columbia University and did graduate work at Columbia, and then worked towards a Ph.D. and completed the Ph.D. work and taught for a while at Carleton College in Minnesota. And then went into the service in 1943 and went over to China and came back, when the war ended of course, came back to the States. And taught briefly at Columbia University, West Virginia University, and then came up to Colby in 1947 and have been there since, since then.

AL: So you had a long tenure at Colby.

DK: Yes, a long time.

AL: And you taught geology?

DK: Taught geology, I was head of the department there for thirty-five years, so it was a long, long period of time there.

AL: And how did you get interested in environmental issues?

DK: Well, geologists, most geologists are well aware of environmental problems because they're dealing with, I mean they're living and working in nature so that they're aware of these things. And I got, had worked in Arizona in the Grand Canyon area, along the Colorado River, and got involved first of all I suppose in any large way with the question of construction of dams along the Colorado. And I think that my involvement there may have been one of the reasons that Governor [Kenneth] Curtis thought I might be interested in serving on what was then the Water Improvement Commission in 1967, when he asked me if I'd join that. And I think that, that's the background on it.

AL: If I, tell me if I'm jumping, well which came first, the New England Conference on Air Pollution, or the Sugar Beet Project?

DK: Well, New England Conference on Air Pollution was in 1969, January of 1969, and the sugar beet thing had come up before that, or, well not very far apart as a matter of fact. They, I don't remember exact dates on that. Don Nicoll would know when the idea of introducing sugar beets into Aroostook county as an alternative crop for farmers there, just when that came up, it was. . . And whether it was introduced first of all by Ed Muskie or whether Freddy Vahlsing went to Ed, Freddy was more of an entrepreneur and he may have seen a possible opportunity. I don't know what the history was. Ken Curtis would know what the history was on that, because he was also directly involved. He was interested in anything like that that would be an additional source of income for places like Aroostook County, which even then was beginning to suffer from competition in the potato business.

AL: So what did you think of the idea?

DK: Well, the idea was, there are several aspects to it. One is that, to produce sugar commercially in, with sugar beets, really requires a federal subsidy. In other words, it's not a cash operation. There are a lot of sugar beets grown in various parts of the United States, but they're really underwritten by the government because they're looking for, you know, the subsidy on sugar. Beets would grow in northern Maine where a lot of crops wouldn't, and so it was a reasonable thing to do. In other words, it wasn't entirely a boondoggle because beets would grow, and if the government's policy was one that would subsidize and support the sugar beet industry, why then farmers would grow it.

Well, I, my experience, and it was very limited, with the farmers was that they were potato farmers and not too many of them were interested in growing beets, at least at that time. But it was a cash crop, and Vahlsing got money, I don't know just what the source was, but he got money for a refinery for the sugar beets and had a little thing up there going with a number of farmers producing the crop which would keep his sugar beet refinery going. And it, it was another source. I think everybody recognized that it was kind of an artificial one, but as long as the United States was committed to that, well, it would go. And so Muskie supported it, and Ken Curtis supported the operation as well.

Now, the, one of the things that was odd about it was that that was just at the time that the state began to take seriously the question of water quality. The, I don't remember the date of passage

of the first statute, but it would have been in the middle sixties, probably somewhere around '65, and that initiated the study of water quality throughout the state on all the primary streams and the tributaries, certainly the major tributaries. And that was conducted by the Water Improvement Commission set up by the legislature, and the person largely responsible for the operation of that study program was the man who had been hired as the chief engineer of the Water Improvement Commission, Rayburn MacDonald.

And if there's ever a statue built in Augusta it ought to go to MacDonald. Nobody knows his name even, he was a quiet man, but he was the one who, with a very small staff, Dick Swayzie, Henry Mann, two or three or four other people, studied the streams in the state, all through the state, found out what their various characteristics were, dissolved oxygen, the demand, the discharges that were going into the streams and the demand that these had for the consumption of oxygen within the streams, various other contaminants, though the oxygen one was one of the major ones, but there were other contaminants of course going in as well.

And the tendency had been to attach all of the blame to industry, which isn't entirely fair, because all the municipal waste was going untreated into the streams as well. And the difference was that the total oxygen demand from industrial waste, because of the volume, was larger than the oxygen demand for sewage waste, municipal waste, in the streams, so that the industries got the attention.

But in fact we had more trouble as things went on trying to get the towns to do what they ought to do, because once the industries decided they were going to do it they did a pretty good job. And it was in their interest to do it quickly instead of spreading the cost out, so that when they decided that they were going to do it, they generally did a good job.

And the towns couldn't agree, you had a situation with Waterville and Winslow, for instance, or Augusta on two sides of the river, and Bangor and Brewer, and the towns on the other side of the river on each side couldn't agree that the other one wasn't getting an advantage of some kind, and so they would argue, no, they weren't going to go with them on a joint system or anything like that. It was a difficulty that went on for quite a while. And the statutes had no way in which the commission could require a joint operation. All it could do was to encourage it. And right up until the last, for instance, with Waterville and Winslow, I wasn't sure whether they would go together or Winslow would finally pull out at the last minute. They did go together, but neither one trusted the other one entirely. And it was rather interesting that the towns, Lewiston-Auburn, Waterville-Winslow, Bangor-Brewer, gave us somewhat more trouble as things went on than the major industries did. But the major industries got the credit for being bad, and they really got some credit they didn't deserve.

But that, I got off the subject there some, but the development of the sugar beet industry up there at Easton was taking place at just about the same time that the classification survey by Rayburn MacDonald was being completed and published. And there was a problem in that area, and I think that neither Ed Muskie nor Ken Curtis at the beginning got the right information. And Muskie went to the legislature, he was in Washington at the time, of course he'd been governor before that, he was down in Washington at the time and he went to the legislature and said that the stream into which the discharge was coming from the sugar mill ought to be classified as

Class D, which is a total loss. I mean Class D means that there's nothing you can do with it, that the dissolved oxygen level goes down to zero, and so on. And not very many people were happy with that, and his reason for saying it was that that appeared to be necessary for the economic operation of the sugar beet mill.

Now, I went up and looked at the place. I wasn't an engineer on this at all, but I was chairman of the commission and I was curious about this and I went up and studied the thing for a while and found out that in fact the, Vahlsing had bought a potato plant, processing plant, along with the set up of the sugar beets refinery and was running that, and that in fact it was the discharge from the potato plant, not the discharge from the sugar refinery, that was the source of a large amount of pollution. And I don't think that, at least at the beginning, that either Ed or Ken understood that. I think they had been misled by Vahlsing that it was the sugar thing. He didn't want to put in a treatment plant for an old potato processing plant, and I think he squirmed around it a little bit.

Ed got a lot of bad publicity out of that, and people in the state spoke up against it because they were just beginning to move in the direction of cleaning up the streams, and here comes the former governor and says you ought to make this one a D instead of a C or a B. And what really, it was pretty badly polluted, the oxygen level was just about zero during the summer and it had a reputation of having been a trout stream. A lot of streams had the reputation then of having been trout streams, you know, even though they probably hadn't seen a trout for quite a long time.

But anyway, what really made a noise out of it was that the Canadians. I think a man named [Harrison] McCain was the one who brought things to a head. The Canadians said they were going to dam the Prestile Stream because it was so polluted they didn't want it flowing into New Brunswick. And that certainly got a lot of publicity, and that was hard on Muskie and hard on Curtis.

Actually, the commission went to work and the discharge from the sugar beet factory was not a serious one, it got treated fairly well. The problem was the potato plant, and I think that, my recollection is that the potato plant finally just closed and that was it. But they, the potato processing mills up there in Aroostook county were a real problem because they had a high starch discharge, and the biochemical oxygen amend was very high for those discharges, and they made a mess of things, there's no doubt about it. But they could be cleaned, and they were cleaned as a matter of fact in a relatively short time.

AL: My question is, what was your perception of Ed Muskie, because he was so well known for cleaning up the water and the air? So it seems like, it's just the opposite of the publicity he got on the Prestile Stream, how did people take that together?

DK: I think most people looked at it and saw it as a political problem; that Muskie was hoping for a source of additional income. And balancing one thing against the other had decided the Prestile Stream, which really isn't very big, could be sacrificed for the sugar, the value that the farmers would get from the sugar production. And I think that people recognized that that had been weighed by Muskie and that it was a compromise, the kind that a politician has to make from time to time. And people made jokes about it and sort of said, hunh, you know, but my

feeling was that people thought, well, this is politics and this is the way business has to be done sometimes. And I don't think that Ed really suffered from it. And also as I say I think he was misled on it and wasn't aware that the problem wasn't really what Vahlsing said the problem was. And people did make jokes about it and so on, but at the same time his general position, particularly on national issues, was so powerful that people recognized that sometimes there's a price you have to pay, and that was the way I looked at it. I never wrote him a hot letter or anything about it. I understood what the story was.

AL: Do you have recollections of the New England Conference on Air Pollution in '69?

DK: Some, not as good as I would like. The conference was organized and started by a grant made by one of the trustees at Colby, who lived in California as a matter of fact. He was part of the family that owns the *Los Angeles Times*, and activity in California at that time was just really getting underway and California was ahead of the rest of the United States because of the terrible quality of their air in the Los Angeles basin especially. And it had caught his attention, and I think that the *Los Angeles Times*, he was publisher of the *Los Angeles Times*, or his family was, and I think that they had taken a position and that he came. . . [Otis] Chandler was his name, he was born up in Albion and came from the area and was a trustee at Colby, and I think that he felt that Maine ought to be doing something about this. And so he made a grant of, what for that time was a significant amount, I think it was twenty-five thousand, for the college to put on a conference, the New England Conference.

And we asked Ed to serve as honorary chairman, and he did. I did the general organizing and we hired a fellow to do the legwork on it, and we were an early group in the air quality thing, and we had, it was a good group, it got a lot of good people. I can't remember all of their names now but they were leaders in the air quality analysis organization business. And we had a conference that ran for three days. We paid, we could take the grant and pay their expenses you see, so we got some good people up here.

And there was a lot of good ideas that came out, it was one of the first formal recognitions of the fact that a substantial part of Maine's air quality problem originated elsewhere, that is that an air shed was not like a water shed, that is you didn't have a divide along the headwaters of the, like the one on the headwaters of the Kennebec, for instance, in which water ran that way and water ran this way. The air comes all the way across, it crosses the divides and so on.

And that was one of the important recognitions by the conference, and of course it's something that we're still arguing about, to get somebody in the middle west to do something to take care of us and they don't want to do it. At that time also the copper smelter, enormous copper smelter up at Sudbury in Canada, was producing a tremendous amount of sulphur dioxide. In fact, a single smelter up there at the, well it was copper and nickel, the single smelter that they were running was producing approximately one percent of all of the sulphur dioxide in the world, and that came right across here. And we recognized that, and identified a lot of the sources, but then the problem became not a chemical problem but a political problem, no longer, I mean it's not a scientific problem anymore.

Everybody knows what to do about it, but the question is whether you could get the political will

to do it in different places, and the answer is you have problems. We still have problems today, see, and it's thirty-two years later, you know, that's a third of a century and we still have those problems.

AL: Where do you think we're going with it at this point? Are we still going forward or are we starting to go backwards?

DK: Oh, we'll go forward, we'll be patient on it and we'll lose a little bit sometimes and then we'll gain some. I do think that the view of a substantial part of the population that nuclear power is too hazardous to accept is wrong. Nuclear power is a source of some hazard, yes, but with care the danger from it is really very, very small, and it does not produce any carbon dioxide, there's no carbon residue at all. And we could replace a bunch of rather inefficient coal and oil plants with nuclear plants and improve our situation. But the public has decided that they're not going to have nuclear plants and there doesn't seem to be any way you can argue that, at least not at the present time. And I think it's a blunder.

They took down, closed down Maine Yankee, and replaced it with two or three fairly clean plants, well they're pretty clean but they're gas burning and they have CO_2 discharge, and it really wasn't necessary because Maine Yankee was producing a lot of good clean power.

AL: Do you think it's because the public is scared that if there was a disaster it would be so immediate and so (*unintelligible word*)?

DK: Well, of course, the public is still scared to death, and some people who should know better find it convenient to continue to scare them, about the word nuclear. In fact, just as an example, you know a commonly used medical procedure now is MRI, Magnetic Resonance [Imagery]. MRI got started in the chemical labs as nuclear magnetic resonance, NMR, because that's what it is, that's a direct short description of what's involved in it. And people wouldn't use it, wouldn't accept it, because of the word nuclear, so they changed the name from NMR to MRI, dropped the word nuclear. And now everybody goes and has an MRI scan, you know, people don't think anything about it at all. But they were scared literally to death of it when it had the nuclear in it.

And so you use the word nuclear energy and people say, geez, got another, got a bomb here, sitting here ready to go off. Well you don't. It's true that Chernobyl had a bad accident, but Chernobyl had a built-in accident, the way the plant was designed it was going to have an accident. So that the response to it is not rational at all

Now, that doesn't mean that I think, for instance, and our, the commission's history with Maine Yankee was kind of interesting, because Maine Yankee should not have been built where it was. It created a problem immediately because of the high temperature of the water that's discharged, the amount of cooling water that had to be handled, and we had problems with that. Well, it happened they located it where they did because the old Mason plant, which was coal operated, the Mason plant at Wiscasset already tied directly into the main network, power network, and so they put the nuclear plant down there to use the same connection directly into the main network. And it was inexpensive to install it. But from the point of view of the location of the plant, it

was a mistake, but the decision had already been made, and we had a hard time getting the, getting Maine Yankee to re-do the cooling system in order to preserve the fishery and so on in Montsweag Bay, where their discharge was. And we did it, but it was a bad location. They selected the location not for its effectiveness as a nuclear site, but for its efficiency for getting the power into the grid, see. And then found themselves with a problem that was more difficult than they had expected.

But otherwise, if I were in the business, and I'm not, I would put nuclear plants up in the unorganized towns. And all right, you pay a little bit more for your power lines and so on, but you get away from the problems, you don't have the problems of population and any question of small discharges and that kind of thing that scares Wiscasset. Well, Wiscasset hated to see the plant go and start having to pay taxes again, which was another side of it. But that's an aside.

Now, Muskie of course supported Maine Yankee when it was first proposed and he carried on the hearings in 1967, voluminous reports on that, justifying the construction of Maine Yankee. But I don't think he realized that it would have been better to have sited it somewhere else. But at any rate, that's what happened.

We, we're strange, you know, we accept without any question at all a transportation system, that is the private car, transportation which kills forty thousand people a year and injures, what, five times as many, and we don't argue about that at all. We just say, well, that's the way things are and I want my car because I can get there from here. We don't argue about it. And we never had an accident anywhere, except for deliberate explosions in Japan, that cost forty thousand lives, and yet we accept it.

And not only that, but the major source of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere is automotive transportation. That's by far the largest single source, is automobiles. And, well, we're going to use them anyways. And we get awfully worried about things that simply are not worth worrying about, and accept things that we ought to be scared to death by. I mean, if somebody sat down and said I'm going to design a transportation system which will have a discharge that is very hard on the atmospheric quality and which is inherently dangerous and will kill about forty thousand people a year, people would say you are not going to do that, absolutely not, you know. But they didn't get that chance, it grew slowly, and now you've got it and we're stuck with it and we can't think of any way to get along without it. So, as I say, people are odd about that.

See, we haven't had a single radiation death in the United States connected with power. We've had laboratory accidents, few, but some laboratory accidents, but we haven't had a single death connected with nuclear power.

AL: I've never thought about it that way, that's very interesting.

DK: But if you use the word nuclear, it scares the hell out of people because each time you use, why, they see a bomb going off in Hiroshima, and there you are. But that's an aside, Muskie didn't have anything to do with it.

AL: At some point you testified before the Senate committee.

DK: That's right, it was when Muskie was working on the Clean Water Act, and I went down there in 1970 I think it was, I testified. And I went down at Muskie's specific information because I was chairman of the commission here and he was kind of proud of Maine's commission and what it was doing, we were building facilities quickly and so on, and so he asked me to come down and testify. And I have to say that I probably didn't do a very good job. Don Nicoll would know better than I do, because he was involved with Ed at the time, and I was a political neophyte and I didn't really know that there were different things involved in testifying in front of the, a senatorial committee. You could use it either for answering questions, or you could use it for making a speech. And I answered questions rather than making a speech and I could have said a whole lot more about the way things were going in Maine. Because we were doing a good job, and we were among the best in the U.S. at the time.

And it's kind of interesting, I, Muskie didn't have any direct influence in this, in these operations, I mean he wasn't on the phone to us saying how about getting at this or doing that, or what about this, and that kind of thing. But his reputation was such that a lot of people in Maine felt, well we've got to live up to that, we've got to give him the support and show him, show the rest of the country that things can be done even under difficult circumstances. And I think that in general we took a lot of pride in the fact that Muskie was a leader in this, and that, but we were able to go, run along with it, you see what I mean. And of course that's one of the things a good leader's supposed to do, and I think he certainly did it with Maine because it's hard now to realize what the atmosphere was in this state in 1969, 1970. It became very important, now, Muskie was gone, he was in Washington at that time, but it became very important that we do a number of things.

For instance, the, what had been the Water Improvement Commission became the Water and Air Environmental Improvement Commission, and then we shorted the name to Environmental Improvement Commission because it was just too long. But at the time that that was active, that's the time that I was on the thing, and there were a lot of other people, too, I mean I didn't do it myself by any means, had a good bunch of people on the commission. But anyway, the commission was working on different things.

We proposed and the legislature adopted without any significant argument the air quality standards, the oil conveyance statute came, that didn't come from the commission, that came from. . . Harry Richardson, as a matter of fact, proposed that, and it was drafted by Frank Chapman, and several of us helped in the production of that, and that was adopted by the legislature again effectively without opposition, nobody was really opposing it, and as soon as it was adopted and we began to apply it the thirteen major oil companies took us to court. We knew they would, they had said they would and we knew they would, and the legislature immediately appropriated a hundred thousand bucks, and at that time a hundred thousand was a lot of money, for the defense of that and we went down to Washington and hired Covington & Burling, which was a big outfit, and we won the case.

And that was, there was no question about it, and we were building treatment plants, the state had passed, I think it was in 1967, might have been 1968, I don't remember exactly, had passed a bond issue for construction of municipal sewage treatment facilities, fifty million dollars. And

again, thirty-five years ago fifty million dollars was a lot of money. It would have been worth, the equivalent now with inflation, that would have been close to ten times that. And that was a very large bond issue and it was passed without difficulty. And so we had a lot of money to use for construction of municipal facilities. And it was rather interesting -

End of Side A
Side B

AL: We are now on Side B.

DK: Okay, the bond issue was to pay a part of the cost. The federal government would pay fifty percent, I think, I forget the exact amounts, but the federal government would pay fifty percent, the state would pay forty percent, and the balance, and I may be wrong on these figures now, probably am, the balance would be paid by the municipalities, you see. Well, we passed our bond issue and were ready to go to work, and the federal government wasn't ready to part with the money. So we were in kind of an odd situation because we wanted to build things, but we had that fifty percent we were supposed to get from the feds, and we didn't have it.

So, I don't remember who suggested this, I think it was probably Curtis, but anyway, Curtis and I exchanged memos in which we in effect said, "You're proposing that it's all right to advance money from the state's bond issue for the federal portion of this, and will be reimbursed by the federal government at a later time." We didn't say, "We hope." But anyway, we did that so that we had no statutory authorization to advance the federal share, but we did, and the result was that we got underway on construction of plants because we would advance some of that fifty million as part of the federal share. And we were on a limb, and nobody cut it off, so we got away with it. But for a while we, each of us had signed in effect for fifty million bucks, and neither of us could do anything about it.

But one of the things that happened there was that we were ahead of the federal program because of that, because we advanced federal money on the thing we were ahead of the federal program, and we got a lot of our work done before the deadline. And before Muskie's 1972 statute came out, by 1972 we were well along on construction of our municipal facilities, and also the industrial facilities.

Now the, we didn't advance any money for the industrial facilities, of course, that was their cost, but we did have some joint facilities. For instance, the Oakland treatment system was a joint project between Oakland and Cascade Woolen Mills, they contributed, we built a single system, they contributed to the construction of that system and contributed their waste to it, and they did the same thing later in other places so we had joint municipal and industrial facilities. And the system worked well, we didn't have problems.

As I say, the, generally the industrial people, when they began to work, did a good job because they had sources of money, they had engineers, they had chemists as part of their regular staff, and they knew what it was they were dealing with. They weren't from the outside looking in, they were on the inside looking out, so once they had committed to the construction generally did very good jobs. And we were pleased to have them cooperate with a municipal facility

because they provided some of the technical assistance that the towns needed, and the towns in some cases would have had a hard time paying for it, so it worked out well.

But we were ahead of the federal schedule on this, and by 19-, oh, by 1973, most of our major construction had been taken care of, by that time. And, you see, when Scott [Paper] built the plant at Hinckley, their pulp mill, you may have noticed that they built it half a mile from the river. They discharged into the river, but only after treatment. The old plant was downtown here in Winslow and it was built on the banks of the river, for good reason because that's where they discharged. And the whole thing had changed by the time Scott built that plant, which they started construction on, I think, in '73 and finished in '76. And it was back from the river, so things had changed quite a lot.

AL: I have a couple specific questions about your testifying before the Senate, and you can just tell me if you don't remember. But I'm wondering, prior to your going was there anyone from Muskie's office that contacted you to tell you what to expect? Or what their office was looking for out of the testimony?

DK: I don't recall that there was, no.

AL: And was there anyone on Senator Muskie's staff that you dealt with directly when you got there?

DK: Only with, well, possibly with Don Nicoll and with Senator Muskie, yeah. That would have been it. It was pretty informal.

AL: Okay, was there any sort of reaction or talk after your testimony where you got a feeling of how -?

DK: I don't recall that there was. I think that, as I say, I approached it the wrong way probably because I waited for them to ask me questions instead of telling them what the program was, and what we were doing in Maine that other places could have been doing, and I didn't emphasize that. I wasn't a good witness.

AL: What other areas did you have contact with Senator Muskie that I'm not thinking of to ask? Or any memories you have, or impressions of him?

DK: Nothing specific, I'm sorry to say. We knew his wife's family, the Grays, we knew them, they're Waterville people and we'd known them for a while. And we knew her, [Jane Muskie] and we'd known Muskie while he was here in Waterville before he went down to Augusta.

AL: Oh, you knew him, you knew of him or you had met him?

DK: Oh, we knew him, yeah. As a matter of fact, I forget just what the circumstances were, but my wife borrowed his skis, he had a pair of skis and his skis were really something, I mean, you know, Muskie was a tall man and the skis were long anyway, and my wife's about five foot two, and she used Muskie's skis to go out here and try to ski in the snow and it was not a very

successful operation.

AL: These were cross-country skis?

DK: Yeah, yeah, they were really quite old and, with the leather straps and that kind of thing, and they weren't good for Betty, no. But he was happy to have her use them. I don't know whether he ever used them, actually, so.

AL: And you knew Jane and her family, her sisters?

DK: Yeah, and her brother, must be her brother, yeah, who's with the Red Cross Blood Supply now. What's his name? I don't know. But he's one of the administrators in the Red Cross blood program in the state, and has been for quite a while. But otherwise I, we saw the Muskies from time to time, you know, at Christmas parties and things like that, but we weren't particularly close.

AL: So you knew him when he was in the state legislature.

DK: And when he was mayor of Waterville.

AL: Well so, he actually didn't win that race.

DK: Oh, he didn't?

AL: No, but he did run, you're right.

DK: He ran, yes.

AL: He ran, but he lost to Mr. Squire.

DK: You're right, yes, yes you're right, he didn't make it.

AL: But he was in the legislature.

DK: He was, then he was in the legislature, yeah.

AL: So you knew him when he ran for governor.

DK: Yeah.

AL: Did you have, so you, what were you thinking, that I think he's going to be the next governor? Or what were your impressions when you heard he was running, because he was a Democrat and it was such a Republican state?

DK: I think there was a question, my main question was whether he had any chance of being elected, you know. And he was, and he was a good governor. To tell you the truth, I think in

some respects Ken Curtis was a better governor. Muskie was looking somewhere else, and Ken was, when he was governor he was more interested in the state. I think, Ken, I would say was, just as an aside, was one of our very good governors.

AL: You worked closely with him over they years, didn't you?

DK: Yeah, and it's interesting, I'm a Republican. But we got along very well, and I thought Ken was a remarkable person in many ways. He wasn't a great speechmaker and so on, but he was a wonderful man at working with people. You remember that he had a legislature that was Republican, and the executive council that was Republican, and he worked with them, he disagreed with them from time to time, but I remember, I forget just what the occasion was, but I had to go into his office to see him one afternoon and, rather late in the afternoon, and he and Harry Richardson, who was the House majority leader, a Republican, at the time, we sitting in there. They had just, the income tax bill had just passed and they were arguing whether that should be called the "Richardson Income Tax Bill", which is what Ken thought, or it should be called the "Curtis Income Tax Bill", which Richardson thought. And it was passed because Republicans like Richardson had worked for it, and people like Joe Sewall who was president of the senate had worked for it, and he worked closely with both parties.

And when he asked me if I'd be commissioner of the Department of Conservation, I had lunch at the Blaine House with him, and the other people at lunch were Joe Sewall and Curtis Hutchins, who was not a legislator but was active in Republican politics and the Associated Industries of Maine, and Harvey Johnson who was a sort of lobbyist and so on. Republican, those were the people we had lunch with. And he worked very well with a Republican legislature, so he got things through.

Well, look at his environmental program that went through. The enlargement of the EIC, the air quality standard, the oil conveyance statute, the land use regulation commission, the site selection law, all of those went through with his support, and also with Republican support because they wouldn't have gone. In fact, one of those, I think, I forget now, it was either the oil bill or the site selection bill, passed the house with one negative vote, and that fellow said that he'd voted against it because he didn't anything should be unanimous, and it was one negative vote in the house. That was all. And that was the atmosphere in which Curtis found himself, but he took advantage of it and made it work. And we haven't had anything like that since then. Of course you have, I have to say that was before John Martin was in the legislature, or some of it, and Martin was a very hard working legislator but very combative.

AL: He was controversial, would you say?

DK: Oh, he was controversial, yeah, he was. And he, a lot of the difficulties that we still have down there are because Martin was such a quarrelsome person, and he didn't have to be. I mean, it was, it was interesting because Curtis worked with many of the same people and they worked together, and Curtis got the programs he wanted, he did very well with it. I think he was an outstanding governor.

AL: Is there anything else that I haven't asked you that you'd like to add before we end, about

Ed Muskie or any subjects that you were involved in?

DK: Well, of course the, I was involved in a lot of things for a period of time and I found it very interesting, but you don't want a history of me. The main thing was that there was a period of time when several things came together: Muskie came in here, the general public opinion, which Muskie recognized, came in, Ken Curtis came in. And the result was that, and there were a number of people, Jim Briggs was in the legislature for instance and he was a powerful influence on this, the early Natural Resources Council, when it was first formed, was a powerful influence in the state, even though a small one, but nevertheless a powerful one.

I think it's deteriorated since then because it's got in the business of being against things, and it wasn't originally, it was against things but also it was there to help as well. And now it's mostly negative, don't do that, don't do this, and that seems to me for a regulatory agency. Well it's not a regulatory agency but it tries to be one, but it seems to me that a regulatory agency's job is not to tell people you can't do this, but to show them how they can do it, which is a very different thing. And NRC for a while had that approach. Now their approach is, you can't do it, don't do it, you mustn't do this, and really should be in a position of saying, well, you can do this, here's how you can do such and such, you can do this here, instead of saying, cut it out. I think it's a negative approach and I don't think it gets you anywhere in the long run.

AL: Did you know Bob Patterson?

DK: Yes, he was a very good man, he was one of the early National Resources Council people.

AL: What was he like?

DK: Very smart, very intelligent, very thoughtful, and interested in listening to what people had to say on each side of a question and then reach a conclusion from it. He was a fine man, he was a good one.

AL: And I think I interrupted your thought by asking you that.

DK: Well, no, it's, today we're in a situation where things are adversarial, always adversarial, and they don't need to be. It bothers me, for instance, to hear, you hear so much in recent commercials for candidates that, “I'm going to fight for this, I'm going to fight for that” and so on. And that's what each one claims is, “I'll fight for good rates for prescription drugs, I'll fight for this, I'll fight for that.” I don't want fights, fights are adversarial and I had some fights when I was in government, too, but fights are adversarial and what I want is cooperation. In some cases compromise, you have to compromise, you have two different points of view and one holds one view and one holds another one and you've got to reach a compromise in something. What I want is a candidate who will work for something, not fight for it. I mean, there are a few things you have to fight for, yes, once in a while, but most things are things you have to work for.

Don't fight, because you've got to work together on these things, and that's the skill that somebody like Ken Curtis had and the result was he got programs through that, if somebody put a list of those on paper and said I want to pass these, with a Democratic governor and a

Republican legislature, you'd say, forget it, you're not going to get these things through. He got them all through. And he did it by, I don't remember him ever raising his voice in a discussion with people, and things went well with it. So I, but this isn't about Curtis.

AL: Well, it's important to talk about him as well.

DK: Well, he was a good man, he was a very good man, and I enjoyed the time I spent with him, I learned a lot. And I was pleased to work with him.

AL: Great, thank you very much.

DK: You're very welcome.

End of Interview