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Interview with Jacqueline (Boucher) Letendre by Jeremy Robitaille

Summary Sheet and Transcript

Interviewee

Letendre, Jacqueline (Boucher)

Interviewer

Robitaille, Jeremy

Date

June 25, 2001

Place

Lewiston, Maine

ID Number

MOH 294

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Biographical Note

Jacqueline (Boucher) Letendre was born October 21, 1923 in Lewiston, Maine. Her father, Jean Charles Boucher, was originally from Quebec Province, Canada and immigrated at age 5 in April 1900. He was a general contractor, and mayor of Lewiston from 1943 to 1944, and a contemporary of Ed Muskie. He also served in the Maine house and senate. Her mother was a homemaker and also involved in social and political functions. Letendre had 10 siblings and was the second eldest. She attended Lewiston High School and graduated from Bates College in 1956 after working for 11 years. She attended Bryn Mawr graduate school and then transferred to Simmons. After her father died, she moved back to Maine. She worked for both St. Mary's Hospital and the State of Maine.

Scope and Content Note

Interview includes discussions of: Richelieu Club; Jean Charles Boucher and his career; Lewiston City Charter in 1939; Lewiston mayoral election between Pa Gould and Jean Charles Boucher; WAFU French radio station; Franco-American influence in Lewiston in 1920s, 1930s and 1940s; Great Depression in Lewiston; and Bates College 1952 to 1956.

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Transcript

Jeremy Robitaille: We are here at the home of Jacqueline Boucher Letendre at 6 Tucker Street in Lewiston, Maine. The date is June 25th, 2001, 1:30 PM approximately. And we're interviewing Jackie Letendre and interviewing is Jeremy Robitaille. All right, for the record would you please state and spell your full name?

Jacqueline Letendre: Okay, both my first and last name?

JR: Yes please.

JL: Okay. My first name is Jacqueline which is J-A-C-Q-U-E-L-I-N-E, and my last name is Letendre, which I do not Anglicize. It's L-E-T-E-N-D-R-E.

JR: Thank you very much.

JL: I do not believe in mispronouncing your own name deliberately, it goes against my beliefs.

JR: Yeah, I try to keep my name the same way. Okay, now when is your date and place of birth?

JL: Oh, now you're getting personal.

JR: I'm sorry.

JL: No, no, that's all right. I was born here in Lewiston, and so was my mother by the way, and my dad was only five years old when he moved here from Canada. I was born on October 21st, 1923.

JR: And what were your parents' names (*unintelligible phrase*)?

JL: My father was Jean Charles Boucher, B-O-U-C-H-E-R, and my mother was Carmel Grenier Boucher.

JR: And could you spell her -?

JL: Her maiden name? G-R-E-N-I-E-R.

JR: Ah, thank you very much. And so you say your mother was born in Lewiston?

JL: Yes, she was.

JR: And what part of Canada did your father did come from?

JL: Province of Quebec, county of Kamouraska about eighty miles from Quebec.

JR: Okay, and he came here when he was five, so approximately what year was that when he came?

JL: He came here in 1900. My father was born in [18]94 but obviously he hadn't had his birth paper. He came here in April 1900. My grandmother had become widowed and she still had several young children. Obviously my father was only five. And there was one younger brother who I would assume was three, so she had young children. She had also grown children, which did help, and they had friends over here in Lewiston.

JR: Oh, okay, and so they came to be with those friends?

JL: Family, and also so that the older children would be able to, you know, would help earn a living. There was more employment here.

JR: Okay, and so did they end up working in the mills?

JL: Not to my knowledge. I know I had one uncle who started a small candy store, general store, sort of, in the corner of Lincoln and Cedar, actually. And the others, of course one of them, well, they had to be, later went into the service. Yes, and the others, I don't remember.

His sisters stayed with us, like two, two girls, two sisters, stayed with us which was then a cultural thing. Unmarried ladies stayed with a married brother; they did not take an apartment on their own. However, and people's opinion. So one of these aunts always lived with us since 1920. My lord, she died I think in '67 or '68 and always lived with us.

JR: Wow, okay.

JL: She was employed. She was really an expert seamstress, which she had learned from the nuns in Canada.

JR: Okay, and how many siblings did you have?

JL: I had ten siblings, I'm the second oldest, nine of us lived. Two twins died almost at birth, they were premature. Never left the hospital. And another little boy was four months old, died of meningitis. The others, the eight of us still are living. No, the oldest girl, my one older sibling died five years ago. The rest of us, and several of us are still in this area.

JR: Really? Okay. And what did your parents do?

JL: My father was a general contractor, besides being in politics, all of his life that I can remember. He built every house on this street, just about every house on Bradford Street that you see, then Pearly Street, oh, and what's, Stuart Street. This was sort of his little domain. And he was still working in '65 when he died very suddenly. In fact, he was taking his crew to work that morning and didn't, he died at six in the morning of a, obviously a fatal heart attack. You see, there's still all this land across the street he owned. I now own it, but that he was going to build properties. He was in the process, this was the last street. In fact, the two houses on this street, the two end houses were not quite completed yet. Yeah, the crew finished this, they were almost done. And he also built filling stations, a lot of them throughout the state. Well, maybe a fifty-mile radius of this area. And he built Sacred Heart Church in Auburn. That was his pride and joy, to build a church.

JR: How about your mother, what did she do?

JL: Oh, my mother had eight children, my mother was very busy, she was employed full time and overtime.

JR: I imagine. Did she get, at all get involved in the community at all?

JL: Yes, because my father besides being a poli--, was very, very much of a family man. And it was very important to him that his wife take part in just about all the functions. She not only attended social functions, which would be easy enough. But oh, at least once a week went up to the legislature with him and sat in on the sessions, and became quite knowledgeable really as to the workings of state government.

JR: Okay, do you remember any story that she might have told about her days up there, like any issues that she really felt ardent about maybe?

JL: I don't seem to recall any.

JR: Okay, let's kind of talk about your father a little bit. Well can you tell me what post did he

serve under, like what positions did he hold?

JL: Well, first he started, he was Alderman I think for four years, or was it six, here in the city. Then he ran for the house, and was in the house something like four years, and then in the senate where he served like for twenty-two years. He was still in office when he died, and was planning to run again this [that] June, although he was obviously getting older, sixty-five, had been hard working. Because he was also involved in I think every civic organization in the city, felt very strongly things. Felt very strongly about his ethnicity, being a Franco-American and trying to bring up the educational, social, business status. Also intellectual: arts, sciences of his group. And forever, you know, *yes*, we can do better. So he was really, in fact he founded some of the societies in this area.

JR: Like what?

JL: He had been involved since, well a co-founder, he was the first president of the Richelieu Club. I would say, this was, obviously there are other groups of Richelieu in other cities so that was not his own idea, but he was the first president. The Credit Union at Holy Family, he did not start, but he was the president and was very, the very first president, was very involved for a number of years. Father [Jean Marc] Mongeon had been the initial, instigator's not the right word, it carries a bad connotation. But promoter, the soul if you will, behind the whole thing. But, there were others, too, religious organizations he was heavily-

He also, when he was younger I can remember he liked to do theater, what have you, was in plays.

JR: Really?

JL: Oh yeah, then I'd make him rehearse his role while I played whoever on the script needed to be so he could learn his lines. He'd say, "Come on, Jackie, let's do this." I was delighted to do it.

JR: Great. Didn't he also serve as Mayor of Lewiston?

JL: Yes, he was mayor in '43 and '44, he served for two years.

JR: Okay, was that before he ran for the House?

JL: No. He was already in the Senate at the time.

JR: Oh, okay. So did he serve both as Lewiston Mayor and in the Senate?

JL: Yes, yes.

JR: Oh, concurrently, okay. I didn't know that.

JL: Which is obviously possible to do both.

JR: Right, right, okay. Now, do you remember any stories that he may have had about his time, like for example, first as Lewiston Mayor and also in the Maine House and State Senate?

JL: (*Unintelligible phrase*), probably if one of my siblings, you know, stimulated my mind, said oh yeah, I remember that, that things like that. One of the things I remember, it's not a (*unintelligible phrase*) directly to this, but we were strictly forbidden if we answered the phone to talk to any reporter, you know. You know, because they would try sort of to pump you to learn And I think one of my big thrills was knowing what tomorrow's headlines would be sometimes because of political meetings taking place in the parlor of our house. And sometimes things I wasn't supposed to know and hear, was supposed to be in bed but I'd be sitting on the top step, you know, the bedrooms were on the second floor, and listening because I was just so fascinated.

JR: Do you remember some of the people who came over? Like some of the other people he worked with, for some of those meetings?

JL: This was at that point that was mostly local politics, you know. There would be, I don't know all the local politicians at the time, who I all knew by names. Louis Jalbert for one, "Mr. Democrat" they used to call. Oh, Louis I knew on a personal basis, I knew very well, yeah. But some of the others were more, you know, "hello" stuff. But Louis I knew well. Phil (*name*), Louis Phillip Gagne, both of these gentlemen later became mayor, at different times obviously. Those, these people I knew very well, because I belonged to some cultural Franco-American groups with some of these people. They were active, they were all very active so I got to know them personally.

The others And later on, you know, when he was not in local politics, like Jim Longley, commissioner for support, and Robert Couturier, younger, so you know, just money to support them, this would help them, you could mention that. Some of the others right now I don't know.

I also remember, which is not, well, it does involve politics, people coming to my father for help. We were like a social agency. Honestly, you know, I mean they're, "So I need that, I don't have this." And my father would every time, nobody was turned down. He would try to really, really help them. Do, you know, make calls, try to get them, you know, to the help they needed whether it was milk for the baby or. I can remember one snowstorm this woman was going to deliver and said my driveway is so blocked, the city says they can't do it. And, you know, so, but, and I, you know, her husband said she needs to get there. My father got a city plow out there. And, you know, things that were on a more personal basis. And I became a social worker and some days he'd be dead tired after a day of work, he says, "Jackie, can you handle this one."

JR: Great. How would you describe his relationship with Louis Jalbert?

JL: Friendly. They had their disagreements, that's for sure. Because both were very strong willed and very strong characters and, you know. But on the whole they cooperated and you could pretty much get Louis to help and not to be such a hothead sometimes. And so, you know, sort of calm down. He was also very involved. Louis had an older brother, Fern, who was

handicapped by polio but, you know, did get a very, very sharp mind, very fair minded, and a more evenly tempered person. Who also, but he was really an influence in pol-, you know, was not in the forefront of politics, not at all, but was really a very instrumental person in, you know, forging city politics.

JR: And so, he served with Jalbert for a while then in the house.

JL: Pardon me?

JR: He served with Jalbert for a while then in the House and Senate.

JL: I don't know if they were both in the House at the same time. I am not sure. But certainly my father was in the Senate so they could cooperate between what the Senate and the House was doing.

JR: Did you have a sense of, sort of, I'd say, like in the late forties and early fifties, of how it was that he was. Because he was a Democrat, but he was, you know, one of the few Democrats at the time (*unintelligible phrase*).

JL: At one point he was the only Democrat in the Senate. He was the whole minority party. And he'd been there a long time then, and he was well liked, and he did some, get some bills through. Obviously calls for a lot of cooperation from the others because naturally being the only one there. But, you know, no world-shaking thing no doubt but, you know, he did get some bills through. And then up to a point he, I'm sure, there was this little joke going around that when Senator Boucher wants a caucus of the Democratic Party he just goes into a corner and . . .

JR: Or a phone booth, right?

JL: And has his little conference and then he can come back.

JR: Yeah, I've heard that one a lot, "a caucus in a phone booth." Yeah, definitely.

JL: Yes, yes.

JR: Do you know if he was at all involved with the new, the Lewiston city charter in 1939?

JL: Oh yes indeed he was.

JR: Tell me about that.

JL: That was hot and furious. I can't, I was young at the time and I don't really know all the issues involved, but yes, he was very much, he was a very active proponent of the charter. And I think maybe this is when he decided to run in '43, you know, working on all this and what have you. And after the charter went through it was, you know, now I want to do something in this new government. He brought back, I don't know the year, brought back home rule to Lewiston.

This is one of the rules, and that had to go through the legislature.

JR: What's the term?

JL: Home rule they called it. If I remember, this is vague and I may not have my facts all straight. I think the police department had gotten into a lot of hot water so the over- all direction I guess was under the state. And it wanted home rule back, this is where it belongs and "we've cleaned up our act and we want to run our own ship," or that part of it. And that was successful.

JR: Okay, and your father was involved in that.

JL: He spearheaded that movement; he felt very pleased with that. I remember his running against, (*unintelligible phrase*), the first time I think he ran for mayor, one of his opponents was Professor [Pa] Gould at Bates College. Oh, that raised quite a controversy in the city, too. "Bates College isn't going to tell us how to run this city." It was two very underlying currents, it belongs to the Francos, you know, and *no way*. But it took, Gould had enough influence that there was a run off election. Well, I think there was several other candidates so the vote got so split up.

JR: Okay, you're talking about the primary.

JL: Yes, that was the primary, yes, so then there was a run off between Gould and with my dad, and that my father won hands down. With the others out of the picture, other people. But there was a lot, especially at that time the French paper was in existence, *Le Messenger*, and was very, very influential and of course they supported him, whole heartedly, so that was really, you know, quite a thing at that time.

JR: Okay. Let's see, how was, what influence, like, did your father have with the social clubs in town? Did he campaign there a lot, or, do you have a sense of -?

JL: Oh, sure he did; that would be part of the politics. Yes, that would be part. He belonged to many clubs, not only the social ones, he belonged to the Elks, the Lions, some other -

JR: Rotary?

JL: I don't know if he was a member of the Rotary, not that I recall, which is not to say that he was not. He also belonged to (*unintelligible word*), insurance groups. One from Massachusetts, Association Canada-American, I don't know whether you're familiar with it or not. He was one of the vice presidents and would attend meetings sometimes in Manchester which is the headquarters of the organization, and sometimes they were in Boston, in groups, and groups in Quebec, meetings in Quebec, Montreal, this sort of thing.

JR: Okay. And, you kind of spoke to this a little bit, but perhaps we can elaborate a little bit more. At that time and specifically with your father, what was his relationship with Bates College? I guess it was probably like that of, probably a little antagonistic maybe, or -?

JL: I really do not know. I'm sure it was, I don't suppose anybody's truly neutral, but what he showed was pretty neutral. It's not politically smart anyway to make enemies unless, you know, to shoot off your mouth. And, but, well as you know, no, you don't know, you're too young, but at that time Bates was not part of Lewiston so to speak. It was that place over there behind the hedges, you know. It did not, it just didn't belong. You went ahead and did your own thing, and those people in the ivory tower well, they, they can stay in their ivory tower, you know. We can run the city without them. They just, Bates College just didn't belong. It was not part of the city. But my father would never have been so foolhardy as to not indicate any negative.

And when I went to Bates it was okay by him. I was, well I went as a later student anyway, I worked eleven years before I went to college. I was paying my own way. It was more like, "Why do you want to do that for, stop working and, you know, all the hard working you did and stop for four years." "Ah, because I want to, you know." "Okay," you know, he was all right. Although it was funny because, let's see, I went to school and another brother, my brother Jean Charles, Jr., went to school and who else. My father says, "What's all this, I had four children working and now they're all back in school, in their twenties they're all back in school. I don't know what's happening to this family." But it was fine by him, he'd, no, never, never did he discourage us. Actually he said that very proud. Not that he would give you a lot of pats and say, that was not the style then anyway. And you know, say good work, well done. But he'd brag about us to everybody else in town, which we heard from the others, your father's so proud of you, or your father told me, you know, you made the principal's, not the principal's list, the dean's list, you know, things like this and say oh, well...

JR: How about, like did you have a sense of how politically involved St. Mary's Hospital was in those days, if at all? Like maybe in relation to Bates and maybe seen as -?

JL: Not in relation to Bates, but my father, what I remember, if the nuns needed something or some grant or some funds from the legislature, my father was the one they would approach, and have him, you know, put it through. And generally it was successful. Grants for, I can't think of any specific things right now, but I do remember they knew him very well because he was very, he was a very religious man, very devoted to his faith and he (*unintelligible word*), "Oh, I'll do that, sure I'll do that for the good nuns."

JR: Okay. Did you have a sense of, in his public service, specifically of like ethnic tensions, either in Lewiston politics or up in the Maine Legislature?

JL: I don't know about, yes, there was always that undercurrent. Well, of course this went way back when he was just a little kid going to St. Peter's School because they, in a sense they, the French Canadians coming in displaced the Irish. Each ethnic group always generally displaces another. In fact even the Indians were displaced big time long ago, yes. And so, you know. The Irish kids who went to school like St. Patrick's, St. Joseph's right nearby, after school they used to throw rocks at the French kids, you know. Just like, go back.

So, you know, he had no, there was this, no love for the Irish as a group really, you know. Oh, the Irish, here comes trouble, it was more like. I am not aware that he disliked anybody personally. Some of the people at the *Sun-Journal* he wasn't overly friendly with, and didn't like

too much because of course the *Journal* was always very Republican. To this day it is, very biased, so you know, you're not going to encourage these Frenchmen these "frogs" some people would say, to climb this ladder. There was, I understand why my brother, which this is obviously hearsay, that Muskie was a bit that way, got to get rid of that frog.

JR: Really?

JL: You know, he was too overly influential.

JR: Referring to your father.

JL: Yes, yes.

JR: Wow.

JL: Now, somebody had to repeat this to my brother, he wouldn't have heard Muskie, this had to be like a smaller, more intimate group obviously. You're not going to, you know, hang yourself politically by making statements like this about someone who's popular.

JR: Yeah, yeah. Exactly.

JL: And quite well known. Of course my father had his enemies, too, you know, who does he think he is...He did, oh, there's that Frenchman, he too, he thinks he's better than we are. Others saw him more as someone who would help them, which he did, you know. Well, he can help him, or we'll ask him. You would have been amazed to which, at the number of people who would call up just before an election and ask him how to vote.

JR: Really.

JL: That never ceased to amaze me, although at the time I was very young; even before I could vote myself, because the voting age was twenty-one. Yes, the biggest thing to being brought up in a political family, the most important thing I did on my twenty-first birthday was to go register to vote. That's the one thing I remember. You know.

JR: And so did this sort of ethnic tension like ever really manifest itself, like later on in the legislature that you know of or that you've heard? Or -?

JL: Undercurrents were there. There always seemed to be a struggle, that's just a feeling I get, that I am the underdog, I have to work a little bit harder to get it up there, to make my point of view heard, you know. To be counted, to be as important as the next person, you know. There was this feeling, and it was not unique to my father of course, it was unique to the Franco-Americans, well not even that, but it was part of the Franco-American as a whole. You could see it reading the French newspaper, you know. We are every good as they say, come on, let's join forces here and let's show them, let's show them. Let's show the *Sun-Journal*, of course the rivalry between the newspapers, let's show the *Sun-Journal* that they're not, they think they're the ones running the city. Un-unh, they're not really. You know, always looking to go who's really

the power behind it all. And there was also the, very much the opinion, let's not just be figureheads here. It's okay, you know, let's not be unduly influenced. And not by Bates College either, because they think they have more answers than we do, you know. We're the people living this, this is our town.

JR: Okay. Did your father have much to do with the, I think it was WAFU? Faust Couture's radio station? The French speaking -

JL: Faust Couture? Yes.

JR: Right, right. Did he, did your father have many dealings with him, like perhaps campaigning on the radio, or -?

JL: I know he campaigned, I know he campaigned on the radio, yeah. He certainly supported anything that was, just about anything that was French he supported, yeah. Yes, and he knew, he knew a lot of the reporters, like Louis Phillip Gagne who, well, then again, they were again, they were friends. At times political enemies when both of them ran for mayor, obviously they were not going to, they were show the differences between the two obviously, you know. But on the whole, no, they knew each other well, very well, and of course Louis Phillip was much more influential in many ways than Mr. Couture, in the French paper. Mr. Couture obviously had the funds to publish the paper, which Mr. Gagne wouldn't have had. But he was more influential.

JR: Okay. I'd like to kind of, you know, through growing up, all right, sort of, partly through, you know, being part of a political family but also just from living in Lewiston, what can you, what sort of sense can you give me of like what Lew-, like growing up, what Lewiston and Auburn was like socially, economically, and politically? If you take, you know, each part as -

JL: Okay, growing up, well I was brought up right around the corner here. And you know, we were very much, you stayed, you were Franco-American, Catholic, you stayed in your own little, it was not known as Little Canada because, too, we were, well you had to realize that when I was born in '23 or, you know, we moved there in '29 I think. I was, well I was five, '28, '29, and this was, you were living out of town. It was all fields, none of this existed. It was all fields, we were out of town, starting from East Avenue really you were really, I was brought up in the "country", would you believe? And there were no, so we were not really with all French people as most other Franco- Americans were because we had Yankee neighbors in front of us, on the side of us, Mr. Stewart lived right there, they had one child, and the other two people across they had no children. And here we were, my parents, my father built that house when he only had four children, you know. We were already naturally from that point of view a large family.

No, we kept, we didn't keep to ourselves really because there was the church, church-school which was one building just up on the hill from us. And this was, growing up this was my world. And there were other kids not very far up the hill. This Bourque's Market is now, that's been there, not that building because he started it, Mr. Bourque started it in a part of his own home, which he turned into a store. It was, you know, a one-room store with a little bit of everything, and the penny candy, that was the best part of course. Who cares about the groceries when you have penny candy. And everybody had gardens except us, so we always got plenty of

fresh, but, yeah, there were other kids.

But these were in, because you had as I say, there was just one neighbor, they were, let's see, they were Yankee and they were Protestant, so that they weren't, we were not taught to dislike them, certainly not, but we, they were different. We were not different, they were different of course. So, you know, sort of leave them alone, be good, don't be rude, don't inter-, I mean don't interfere, don't go into their place, you know. Be nice, be polite. So we always got along well with the neighbors. In fact from the Perry's my father bought all this land, (*interruption*), we had huge lawns because we had no neighbors, and now this is all built up. And I remember across my house on the corner, where that little business is now, we used to go pick strawberries over there as a child.

JR: Really.

JL: As a child, sure. My mom would give us each, like a little cup and keep us busy. We were just across the street. There was no traffic problem as a child, you didn't go around, so no problem with the children. As I remember we, I think we always had a car. And so, you know, we would go out, we would, well my world extended beyond school, and church, and home, and a few families, French families who had ventured out, who were also living in the country, so I had friends and school friends, and never got downtown really. I didn't get downtown probably as such. Didn't belong to the YWCA, that was seen as just about anti-Catholic.

JR: Really?

JL: So you did not belong. And a few of us, not me, who dared or what have you were consi-, you know, that was, "You were putting your soul in peril." You know, because it was not Catholic, it was Christian. But that wasn't good enough because religion was defined very narrowly in those days. So, you know, you did not do that, you did not belong to the Y, right away that put you in a sense outside the fold. You had ventured a bit too much, and certainly the people of other religions, we respected them, but you kept a safe distance; you stayed with your own in other words. You stayed with your own and life was good. The nuns, the school, yeah, my mother, yeah, manage your outdoors activities. My father as I said was very much a family man. Sundays, sometimes Saturdays, were always outing days in summer. "Come on everybody, let's pile up in the car and go."

Mr. Letendre: Is the machine on?

JR: Yes, I can turn it off for a second.

Mr. Letendre: Really, just for a second.

JR: Sure thing.

JL: For my adolescence I didn't want to go down there, thank you.

Mr. Letendre: I just thought-

JL: They lived in downtown in tenements, he was a city boy.

Mr. Letendre: Would you believe when we got married I moved out here, I thought I was moving into the country. This is back in '74, but I -

JL: First time he had -

Mr. Letendre: But I thought I was living in the country.

JL: First time he heard frogs croak outdoors it was like, 'what's this, what's this strange noise?'

JR: Okay, how about economically or politically, Lewiston, from your, just from growing up, like what kind of sense you had -

JL: Well, remember I was born at the end of the Depression.

JR: This is true, right.

JL: Poor, everybody. But, didn't mind it, everybody was poor, you know. You had a whole penny for candy? Wow, you were lucky. Every noon I'd get a penny from my dad, I'd stop at Bourque's on the way to school and buy my piece of candy, happy as what have you. But everybody was, in fact a lot of the kids didn't have a penny. So, you know, I was, oh yeah, we were always, too, because we lived in a bigger house, a better house. My father was a contractor, and, you know, so oh yeah, we were considered wealthy.

"Oh, you don't know what it is to be poor." I thought, I wear hand-me-downs just like you do, even if you were the older, your family, we had an aunt who was an excellent seamstress, she could take adult's clothes and make pretty little dresses and what have you. We were always well-dressed. There again, because we had a seamstress in the family.

And, you know, but I never had a bike. To this day I don't know how to ride a bike. And when I learned in my twenties, I still have the marks here on my knees. In fact the doctor says, "Why don't you learn to ride a car instead." Good advice. So, yeah, I never had a bike. But, there again, the cultural, we had music lessons. All of us had piano lessons, yup, my mother insisted that we were going to have some... Plenty of books, music lessons, what have you. The boys would fight too, it was an age when there was very much discrimination between boys and girls. But we didn't mind that, so did everybody else. If you're no different you're not going to mind it.

JR: This is true, yeah.

JL: My brothers were allowed to drive dad's car. They all must have had appointments. Dad said, "If you think I'm also going, like five girls who want to share the car, three boys is enough." I didn't learn how to drive a car until I can pay the lessons myself, and I didn't have a car until I could buy one. Which was, I was in my thirties then, my early thirties. Because of

course, the money I'd earned the ten years I worked I used to go to Bates.

JR: Okay, did, your aunt was the, was a seamstress, right? Did she by any chance belong to like a seamstress's union, or a textile worker's union? No?

JL: No. And I can remember, not distinctly, but when they first started taking income tax out of her pay the end of the world had come. It was almost not worth blah-blah-blah, all she had left was change, you know, and on and on. This hard earned money she couldn't even have it and hold it, you know. So that was a hard adjustment for her I remember. She worked for years and years and years at Peck's, and then she worked at Ward's, then at Murphy's, the better dress store. She was good, she was very good. In fact, some of the wealthy, especially Jewish lady, in the community, my father always got along very well with the Jewish people, thereby (*unintelligible word*) was one of his favorite people. So anyway, yeah, and people would ask for her and tip her, so she made better wages in a sense, because they wanted a little French seamstress. Oh, she really spoke English with an accent, but she knew English.

JR: That's great. Did your father have much dealings with like unions, labor unions, like with the mills or anything like that that you know of?

JL: Not that I recall. Not that I recall. If he did it certainly was not a biggy, nothing that I'm really aware of.

JR: Okay, what sense do you have, or did you have, of how Franco-Americans and like the Franco-American heritage and culture like influence the city over the years? Like, you were definitely the majority by the time you were growing up, right?

JL: Yes, but politically we were not a majority for a very long time. And it was so, well, by fighting, trying to better yourself, running for office, encouraging other people in the area, getting more your, your lawyers, your doctors, which many of them were Franco-American, involved, at least to support people in the banking business by then. I remember Mr. Poliquin for one, others, Mr. Dutil, were, you know, were improving themselves, going up the social ladder. And then also just trying to make inroads into politics... And sense an awakening if you will, the citizenry of the community, the Franco-Americans, to be more aware politically, get to the polls and vote, we'll take you, you know, we'll transport you, but get there and vote. And remember, I can remember, which is not a very pretty expression. Vote, you know, it's, "Vote Democrat if you have to, hold your nose and vote." You know, vote like this, Democrat because it was, overwhelmingly Franco-Americans were Democrats. They still are, yeah, they still are. So they, (*unintelligible phrase*), Mayor Wiseman, I never knew where his name came from, which obviously is not a French name, he was very French.

JR: Yeah, yeah, that's right. I think he was the first Franco-American mayor.

JL: Was he? I'd, see, I'd forgotten that. But he was, you know. And of course, and an extremely well-known man of course, and very influential on others. And I'm sure the influence and through to their social group was, you know, a good place to meet a lot of people. Because French people love clubs and, or whether they were the (*unintelligible word*) or the snowshoe

club, I couldn't think of the word for a minute. You know, and growing up, as I say I was, I really was not outside my own culture because, but see my first two years of high school, St. Peter's was a two-year course for girls, which they called *cours superieur*, which means post-grammar school, for two years. And this is where I was, my father was not about to expose his sweet fragile little girls, sarcastically I'm saying, to the public schools with the different slants in religion you were going to hear about. We were, I was thirteen, far too young to be influenced by these, I had to be better anchored into my own. So I went to Lewiston High in my junior year, junior and senior, so I, you know, that was okay. But I was quiet and I was shy. Hey, or the first time in my life I was out of my element, if you will. So that was a brand new experience. It was okay, but I didn't join groups really, I didn't join clubs, it was more like I got to learn my way around here and not make too many *faux pas* so I'll just be another dumb Frenchman.

JR: I'm not sure if this was true when you were there, but didn't, I think at least in the 1940s didn't Lewiston High School ban French speaking in the school? I don't know, I may have, it may be misinformation.

JL: I'm not aware of it, oh, how I remember the French teacher who looked down on us. Oh, she comes from a French, not only she, others, but especially in a small, grammar French class, which I didn't want to take but which I had to because there were not enough other electives. I had had ten years of French. This was going to be a waste of my time. Which it was, but she made us feel as if, ah, we only knew inferior French. Well, I beg your pardon, Miss Galahan. I mean, we learned proper French, correct French. We are not, (*unintelligible phrase*), I, when people say to this day I get, see a red flag when people say, oh, but you don't speak Parisian French. And my answer that comes, I think I said it to one person because I really get angry, I said, "No, do you speak London English?" Hey, it's just as fair. No, now I very nicely generally bite my tongue and say, "No, we speak French like the people in Quebec do." Though I think sometimes we speak it a little worse because we mix a lot of English into it.

JR: Okay, and did you kind of have a sense of how, like sort of the changing influence of like Franco-American heritage on like, say, like your generation as opposed to your father's generation and the generation after you in town?

JL: Oh yes, because we became naturally more part of the main stream, and therefore you're losing, yeah, sadly enough the generation after mine, they do not speak French as much, some of them not at all. And then what would be like one of my grandnieces and grandnephews now, or what would be like grandchildren, do not speak it at all. They know some expressions; they understand it to some degree, but *un petit peu*, yes. Yes, we still speak French. Whereas, yeah, in my home growing up, we were not allowed really to speak English that much. Not that it was a hard and fast rule where you'd be punished if you spoke English, but my father would soon say, "What's happening here, don't we speak French in this house any more?" You know, straighten up, speak your own language.

And, you know, it's a little bit hard for me though to understand still being the underdog that the French still feel around here very definitely. And, you know, because my father was such a fervent and, you know, promoted French and the whole culture so much that it was always be

proud of what you are, you know. So I've always learned to be immensely proud, so when people would say, did you feel a lot of prejudice? Myself, no, no, I did not. Because I was always very proud of what I am and if you didn't like it it was, you were wrong, you know, and it wasn't me. I was like, so sorry, you know. Excuse me for being French? No, I was always very proud of it. When I first met my husband, before we married, he, you know, he pronounced his name Letendre (*Anglicized*). I says, you can pronounce it the way you want to, it's your name. But I'm not going to, you know. And I got married in French. It was funny, I told him, I says, "I'm getting married in French, but you know, what you do is up to you." You know, I say, hey, you know, it's like all the important points in my life have been in French, this is what I am, and this is what I want to remain and no matter. And afterwards, it certainly was, and I worked in Boston, what have you. It was French, you know, and if anything French came up or they needed someone to, "Oh, Jackie will do that for us," you know. I knew my French flat. I was instrumental in starting the -

End of Side A

Side B

JR: You were saying?

JL: Okay, and even in the late sixties, St. Mary's, would you believe I did social work, most of my work at St. Mary's was done in French. I hadn't used that much French because I had worked for, obviously, English speaking agencies, since this is the common language in the area, the whole United States as far as I know. Although some place I'm not sure anymore.

And, but French, I spoke French, I would say certainly three quarters of the time on my job. Because of course here sick people tend to be older people. Or some of them, too, were the younger people, the young mothers coming from Quebec, or from French Canada I should say, mostly Quebec, who were much more comfortable in French. The minute they would hear a French name they would, first question they would ask me, you know, "Do you speak French?" And I said, "*bien sur*." And then, ah, it'll be so much easier. Not always will it be so much easier; she'll understand me better, she was brought up the same way, she has the same religion, she has the same values, the same ethics. Fine, I'm much more comfortable. And it was obvious.

And it was easier for me to do my work than the girls or other personnel, or even Mrs. Morrisette, Dr. Morrisette's wife was not French, you know. She says, "How do you get to the people so fast that they seem to confide in you." "It says, it's just that we have a common culture, and that makes a big difference." Nothing you can do about that really, you can't change that. It's never been a handicap to me, never, no matter where I've been. Whereas I hear it around me, in fact I went to a meeting not too long ago on Franco-Americanisms and the others say what they felt, they'd say, I never experienced that really. And I think it had a lot to do with the family you're brought in, you're brought up in. If you're made to be proud of what you are, then you are. I think.

JR: Growing up, did you have a sense of a kind of tension between Lewiston and Auburn?

Like what sort of -?

JL: Rivalry.

JR: Yeah.

JL: Yes, there were. But it was, to many it was like fun rivalry. EL was, I mean LHS was better than Edward Little, *obviously*, well naturally. And you always had to beat them, and if you didn't it was, but wait until next time. We're on top, you know, huh, so you happened to win that, it's no biggie. No, we'll show you next time. You know, but to me it was, at least to me it was a friendly rivalry. No bitterness, no, you know, I'll get you, or no viciousness to it.

JR: Did it manifest itself politically at all, say maybe with your father (*unintelligible phrase*)?

JL: Not that I am aware of. Although Lewiston and Auburn were two definitely distinct communities and not, there was not L and A together which is being promoted very much nowadays. Which is probably, at least economically would be for the benefit of both. But, no, that was, you know, Auburn's on the other side of the river, we're on this side, let's each mind our own business, and we'll be fine.

JR: Okay, and so you said after high school you worked for quite a time before -

JL: No, after high school, yes, yes, I was thinking college. So yes, I worked eleven years, yes.

JR: Okay, what did you do?**JL:** I was a secretary for the State of Maine, and I was assigned, I took a state test. When you got out of high school, what do you do? You get a job. I had taken, I hadn't taken college courses because being the second oldest of eight, although our family was better off than a lot of them, we still were not wealthy and I have six younger brothers and sisters, the thing was when you're through high school you go to work. My skills were typing and shorthand and bookkeeping, which I did not like. I did very well in bookkeeping but I did not enjoy it. So I took the state test for typist and clerk and stenographer and passed it, was assigned to Health and Welfare.

I had no idea what social work was, didn't even know what the word meant except be a social person. What do social workers do? I don't know. But I was assigned and fell in love with it really, and because there again I was one of the few if not the only at the time, no, maybe there was another, young eighteen year old in there who spoke French fluently. The social workers would take me out in the field with them because sometimes they did not understand their clients. So I would interpret. That's really when I became to know, too, what loneliness, real poverty, which I had never experienced, is like. These sad old people. I vowed to myself that would never happen to me. You know, no way, I was going to start saving from my first penny, which I did.

You know, so, and pretty soon I was taking over the interviews, I would ask the social workers, can I write the report for you, you know. Of course, they let me. Of course they would review it, but first, so I was really, so they kept saying by the questions I would ask, "Jackie, you should

go to college.” Ah, I was busy, I was earning money, I was dating, I was having a good time, life was good. It's okay, you know, I believed in it, but it's okay. But then, God, I had gotten all the promotions I could without going to Augusta, taking a job in Augusta which was offered to me, as secretary of the head of the department, Pauline Smith, who was a Bates grad by the way. And, you know, but no, I didn't want to go to Augusta, commute or live up there, nah. I had all my friends here, my organizations, my musical groups, what have you. So I decided why don't you go to college.

I called up Bates, I had no background for it. And they said, if you pass, this was June, I remember, if you pass the college entrance exam you can come this fall because you do not need a dorm room, which I didn't want either. Forget it. I didn't have the money, I wouldn't have had the money anyway. I had saved money but remember, I started working at fifteen dollars a week. Although expenses were very low, you do not save a whole lot of money. But, you know, so fine, I passed the college entrance exam, hardest thing I ever done in my life, by the way, because I had no, after eleven years and I had no background for it, you know. I didn't have, I was excused from math because I had never had math at, I had had arithmetic, but not math. Although they made me take it, and they said, “We don't expect you to pass it, that's okay, but take it.” Thank God for French and English. They had French, because that's how, actually that's how I passed the college entrance, because I always was very good in languages. And anyway, so I went in September with fear and trepidation, stopped working one Friday and the next Monday I was in bobby sox and skirts and sweater and went to school. Went for four years, decided I really still didn't know how to do social work. I could sense the need but I didn't know how to help people really, the questions to ask, how to get into it.

So then I applied to several colleges for a scholarship. Then I didn't have the money; I still had a little bit but not a whole lot. I applied to colleges for a scholarship. One of them was Bryn Mawr, I got a scholarship from Bryn Mawr, much to my surprise, I was shocked. And I thought, oh dear, you know, here's a hick little girl going to Bryn Mawr, so I went to Bryn Mawr. Did very well, came out on top of the class, I didn't realize how well Bates had taught me. Some of the stuff in the books they were making us, well, learned that at Bates, you know, like that extra thing, it looks as if I'd done a lot of research and writing, which was not wrong because I already possessed that knowledge. It's just a matter of getting it on paper, because I had learned it at Bates.

But transferred to Boston because I didn't really like the Philadelphia area, and I wanted to be in Boston where I, where in the back of my mind I planned to stay and work anyway. So that would give me an in with other agencies, so my second year was at Simmons, I got my master's from Simmons.

And I did stay in Boston and did international adoption with Boston's Children Services. I loved that, I adored it, it was fun. Not only working with people from other countries, French came in very handy on that, but I had a lot of Chinese clients. Then I needed an interpreter. Got very fond of the Chinese, got very, got along very well with people because I like other cultures. Went to their movies, ate in their homes, really trying to get some, to get... Then my father died very suddenly at this business, which during the summer, and during the school year back in college I used to help him with the secretarial part of it. And a little bit more, pricing things for

him, calling up different places. So, yeah, so the business was going to be closed up. I had a younger brother, but he was too young, working on it, but he was still, still was not knowledgeable enough about the business. And then, too, my mother couldn't have been left alone. Not so much physically. My father had always very protected her, she didn't drive, she didn't know how to handle a checkbook, she, there was still two teenage kids in the house, which scared her to death not to have dad there. So I came home.

JR: And about what year was that?

JL: Oh, it was 1960, my father died in 1960, March '60. That was 1960. So I came home and then again went to work with the state. I also worked for what is now Child and Family Services, which was then called the Catholic Bureau. Started social service department at St. Mary's along with Mrs. Morissette. So the whole thing's been fun, went from one thing to another, then finally came back to this state and worked in child substitute care until I retired in '84. Been a long time already.

JR: If we could backtrack a bit to your time at Bates, when you, so you attended probably -

JL: Fifty-two to fifty-six.

JR: Fifty-two to fifty-six. And at the time you were attending, were there a lot of local students at that time? People from around the area who were going, or, do you know?

JL: Between both boys and girls? Oh, fifteen maybe.

JR: Fifteen?

JL: Yeah, they were now, I'm trying, well, no, not if you put the whole four years together maybe. We had what they called the town girl's room, I was a townie, the town girl's room. The boys, I don't know if they had a special, which was a couple of rooms with lockers and, you know, you could leave your things and also sit and do some studying there if you wanted to, or a place to meet and so you'd be out of the cold between classes or what have you. Gee, well we may be like twenty girls. In my own class, '56, maybe we were six or eight. If you multiply that by four, and of course the more advanced, there's always about, four times eight, thirty-two that would make it maybe twenty-five, because you have your dropouts. It was twenty-five, twenty-eight, yeah. This was on a quota system anyway.

JR: Really?

JL: Always, well I shouldn't say always has been, I don't know if they are. Well, they don't, you know, so many from hometown, so many from Maine. I guess also from what I hear a certain percentage of Jewish people, so many, called them foreigners. You know what I mean, from other countries, from other countries. Yeah, there was sort of, because they were trying, and so many of the ratio of boys to girls also was a factor, yeah. Yeah, so it was trying to get a balanced student population. What they do now I do not know. How they work that I do not know.

JR: Right, yeah, I'm not sure either.

JL: But at the time in the fifties that's the way it was being done.

JR: Okay, and at Bates, what like professors and subjects were influential to you?

JL: Oh, sociology, psychology. Of course I took tons of those. I took French courses for the sheer pleasure of it, and for the literature, for the literature part of it on which I was, you know, somewhat lacking. Besides, as I say, it was something I could sit back and relax and enjoy from the other courses, which you always feel you have, they give you too much to do. I didn't join that many groups. I joined Chorale, I've always been into chorale work and into music. But the other, transportation's a problem, rehearsals at night. It was getting unsafe really to walk. I only live a mile from the college, as you know. So, you know, it was unsafe at times, so I wasn't in the Chorale very long.

I really, I was working part time also, because I was interested in picking up a little of the money, I was very, of course I worked summers, you know, I was very, I certainly didn't want to run out of money. I wouldn't have asked my folks for money for the world. I was much too proud to do that. You want money, you earn it.

JR: And so, were you involved in the community while you were at Bates?

JL: Well, I still had my church, my friends. Yeah, I joined chorales, I was involved in chorales, mostly church chorales. No, also the (*name*) which was a French cultural group, again with a chorale but also social activities. And then the mixed chorale at St. Peter's. Yeah, I'll say you could, you could meet boys, you know. Definitely important.

I mean my, of course my classmates were all younger than I. Well, not all, but nine tenths if not better than nine tenths really. We were just a handful of older students, although they were there. That's where I met Ben [Letendre]. He is eight years younger than I am. And so, yeah, I met him at school but we didn't marry until '74, many, many, many years later. I always tell people when they ask me, how come, I say, "Well, I don't make hasty decisions." Like, it takes me sixteen years to make one. Well, that's a very important one.

JR: Okay, how were, by the time you had gotten to Bates, how were like the relations between Bates and Lewiston? Had they gotten better from when, you know, from your, yeah, they were still pretty strained?

JL: Yeah, I was, you see, I'd been in the working world for all these long, been, met and became friends with a lot of people in the office and the agency, social workers. Just about, I don't think any of them spoke French, come to think of it. And as I had really been exposed to other groups, of course I was the eighteen year old, a lot of them it's as if I had been their teenage daughter. I always say they really helped to bring me up, or to socialize me would be better. Because socialization I get at home and in my own culture was very much ethnic related. So, you know, they helped me to blossom if you will, to reach out. They were very good, they were

very, very helpful. They liked me. I was a shy little French girl, you know, and they want to Americanize I suppose, maybe, from their point of view. I don't know. But anyways, so that was very helpful. And of course, as I say, going to Bates I always could call it the biggest favor I ever did myself in my whole life.

It completely turned my life around of course, you know. It opened doors, it opened my mind to so many things that I didn't even know were there. You know, it was like, *wow*, you know, this is like as I finally, I'd already begun to come out of my *limited* world, which was very nice, I thought, well I'd still do it, but then, you know, it's not enough, let's face it. And to actually work that Bates really completed it, yeah. And of course after Bates then I went to the Philadelphia area, which I really do not like.

JR: No, you didn't. Tell me about why.

JL: The city of brotherly love? I never, well because, you see, you go to school, let me explain. You go to school three days and you work in an agency two days. It's that getting your practical experience. And I found it very unfriendly. Not the people at work, that was great. But people in stores, any of the service areas really, it was like, what do you want? You don't know your size? What's wrong with you? Excuse me. You know. You know, waitresses, or people I came into to. One nice one said, "What will you have dear?" I says, "You're not from around here." She says, "No." I says, "Where are you from?" She says, "Boston." I said, "Ah, I thought so." Everybody dears everybody else in Boston. But it sounded good. Yeah, so then the second year, this is one reason, too, I transferred to, I didn't like the climate either. I didn't like the pace of the city. I remember being in subways. Of course, commuting from Bryn Mawr, which is only eleven miles away and it was really a fast shuttle into, but going, then we went down into the subway and everybody's racing in both directions underground really, with their briefcases and everybody seems to be so preoccupied and so rush, rush, rush. And all I kept thinking was coming back from Maine, the fresh air, the ocean, what have you, and I thought, "This is living?" What's wrong with these people? This is not life; this is not living. Thinking I want no part of it. Then finally coming out of the tunnel and having to take the elevator, so there you go. And I get to work after an hour, an hour and a half feeling as if I've done my day's work. Not having really started, you know. And then the same way, same thing on the way back and I thought, no thank you. This is not living, this is not what I want, this is not what I choose.

Boston, of course Boston had always been the one big city nearer to here. We used to go to Boston when dad went on a business trip. If it was not a working day, or I had the day off, go with dad. Could shop in the mall, the big city, the big buildings, what have you, I always loved Boston. I loved living in Boston. So I went, as I say, I transferred, got my degree from Simmons, that was a school year obviously, and then took a job with the Boston Children's Services which I dearly loved. I was there really only two years when my father died, but that's okay. I came home out of choice.

JR: In that two years did you involve yourself pretty much in like, in community, in the community down in Boston, or was it pretty much just working?

JL: No, working. And of course I inveigled my sister to leave home and come and stay, which

my parents didn't appreciate. Heaven, she was thirty-four years old, it's about time she broke loose. I kept thinking, your parents won't live forever, my dear. You know, and she'd always been in Lewiston and I thought you got to get out of this safe little nest here because it's not going to be safe forever. And she loved, you know, like living with me; we shared an apartment right in the middle of town. Boy, for two single girls it was great. I, you know, I wouldn't have, you know, the, oh the plays, the operas, the shopping district. She worked for a lawyer, as a secretary for a lawyer, which she liked very much. I was working in the social agency. Hey, life was good. I bought a car and, you know, so we could, most weekends we'd come home to Maine. But, you know, life was definitely good. She lived on Beacon Hill with, after I left, I came back home, she stayed in Boston. Told her, I says, "You're a fool if you come back." She really didn't want to anyway, so she moved in with a social worker. They got along, lived on Beacon Hill, it's very nice. And then she married.

JR: Married down in Boston?

JL: It was a fellow we had met. One summer when I was in college, two or three summers in fact, friends of mine bought a hotel in Old Orchard, the Beach Hous-, the Beach, no, no, no, no, no. Just because I want to say it, I worked there. They're next to Joseph's By the Sea. Ah, all of a sudden it escapes me. But anyway, I, yeah, so I worked there as a desk clerk. There again, and then I worked at the Brunswick as a desk clerk there, again French and English, knowing French they were having, they had so many, I could not only, I could talk it with the, I could read it, I could write it. You know, so if they needed a letter written in French I could do it, no problem, especially at the Brunswick. The other one they knew French as well as I do, you know, so, but that was, yeah, so I could get a job like this in Old Orchard. And being a desk clerk was not hard. I would have waited on table, I say, because I never had I guess. You know, so, you know, it was good.

JR: Okay. This is kind of going to your time at Bates. It's kind of, just sort of like the politics in Maine in the time, like, did you really have a sense, like, specifically being at Bates since Muskie was from Bates, but like the impact of him winning the governorship in 1954? Like, do you remember like, do you remember any part of the campaign, like any sort of, the newspapers or TV or anything like that?

JL: No, I don't. And I don't remember his, I don't, it seems to me between '54 and, '52 and '56, I don't remember his ever coming to Bates to speak or, I'm not saying he didn't, I'm just not aware that he did. I'm just not aware that he did.

JR: Okay.

JL: Not even, you know, in government class or something. But, or in any government courses that I took, which I did, if he did. I remember taking some of my friends from Bates, filling up the car, asking my dad, they would like to see either English majors or one of them wanting to go into journalism, bringing them for a day. I says a day that you, they're having good committee hearings and you think will be a particularly interesting day, could we go up to Augusta with you, which meant one, two, I could bring three friends obviously to Augusta, and spend the day with you. He says, sure, which we did. That they enjoyed, that they enjoyed.

And I remember, too, Mr. Lemieux, I don't know, he was a reporter for the *Sun-Journal*, (*unintelligible phrase*).

JR: Oh, Lal Lemieux?

JL: Yes, Lal Lemieux, yeah, oh I knew him well, I knew him well. Of course my dad, too, my dad and he were fast friends.

JR: Really.

JL: Yes.

JR: Tell me about that a little bit.

JL: Yeah, well no, that, when he was, he was funny once. They had asked him in government class to come in and talk. I don't remember what particularly, what particular focus it was going to say, and I remember in class saying, just as we filed into class, I said, "Hi, Mr. Lemieux, how are you today?" or something. Of course he recognized me, he knew me, and he said, he sort of said, well, I had better watch my step during this lecture because I know every word I say will go back to a certain senator tonight.

JR: That's great.

JL: Of course I just smiled. And some of the professors, because they knew who I was, like there was Professor, I can't think of his name, who was a dear, he was, yeah, Donovan, he later ran for congress.

JR: John Donovan?

JL: Yes.

JR: Okay, tell me about him.

JL: He was, well he was one of my professors. I liked him dearly, too, he was very good, very smart.

JR: And he later ran?

JL: Huh?

JR: He later ran?

JL: He later ran for congress, didn't make it. But, of course he loved Bates and went to Bowdoin.

JR: Oh, okay, right.

Mr. Letendre: Talking about Dr. Donovan. I had him as an instructor at Bates, a government class and he said at the time, he told our class, he said, "I'm a registered Republican, however, I'm really a Democrat at heart, but I register as a Republican because I don't want to throw away my vote in the primaries." At that time the Republicans, the Democrats didn't have anyone running.

JR: Yeah, that was a common sentiment at the time.

JL: I think probably, I distinctly get the feeling, prejudiced or not, that all of Bates, loosely said, were Republicans. Bates was definitely a Republican college. He probably would not, but it was, and closer to the *Sun-Journal*. Well, you see, they were the other part of the city.

JR: Alright, Okay, and did you know Frank Coffin at all? Did you know of him?

JL: Frank Coffin, I knew of him.

JR: What can you tell me about him?

JL: I really do not know him. I know very little. I remember my father saying things like, there's a *smart* young man, or a brilliant young man, you know, had positive feelings towards him. But anything in particular, no, I don't. Was in politics, too, at the same time because I have pictures of, to my parents or my mother, at a tea, I was going through some old material last night, you know, at a tea with Mrs. [Ruth Morey] Coffin, both he and Frank and his mother was attending that coffee, too. That was a coffee I think for Mrs. [Jane] Muskie.

JR: And what was, that was just kind of like a gathering?

JL: Oh, honoring her for, I think it was just, he was leaving office I believe, it was his last day, or one of the last days as governor or something, and they had given this tea and they presented her with a silver tray and something else. That was just a, the women's group doing that. So my father obviously was not in that picture, nor Mr. Muskie. That was the women's part of it, the legislator's, yeah, the wives.

JR: Okay, well while, this is, you know, probably towards the end of your father's career, do you know if he had, like have you heard of any run-ins or any dealings he had with Muskie while Muskie was governor? Like when he was in the Senate?

JL: My brother gave me an earful, which I only half listened to because I was surprised. And I found it sort of, I don't want to hear this, we were at a party for a five year old, a birthday party. But it was that hot, hot Saturday, couple Saturdays ago, whatever, I don't want to hear this, I'm here to enjoy myself, spare me, you don't want to do it. Why don't you just say no? You know, that sort of feeling besides I guess other ones, so overtly, I do not think so. But the backstabbing behind, that goes on in small groups, what have you, I guess so. But any run-ins that they had, I don't think so. Not that I am aware of, I should say.

JR: Right, right, okay. All right.

JL: Because, too, well, remember the years, '56, that fall, '57, '58, '59, the first part of 1960 I was not home. I was in school in Bryn Mawr, then Boston, and then I stayed in Boston to work. So I was not home, so I wouldn't have been as aware.

JR: Right. How about after your father's death and you'd come back to Lewiston, like did you start to get more, or at least more, get more back into politics as far as just paying attention to it, or no?

JL: Interestingly enough, none of my brothers and sisters- we followed it, but to say that any, none of us became politically involved in politics. I've, sometimes I've said, I wonder why? But dropped it at that, never stopped to analyze it, saying well maybe it's because of this or that. I can only remember it as being *intriguing*, you know.

JR: And you never had any run ins, like even with like the Maine legislature, like with your job with the social work? No? Okay.

JL: No.

JR: Alright. How about like, say, with like the presidential election of 1968?

JL: Refresh my memory.

JR: That's when Muskie ran as vice president with Hubert Humphrey and they lost to Nixon. Just kind of, if you, like have any impressions of that?

JL: Personally, no.

JR: No.

JL: No, no, see, the last thing I really remember about Muskie is, let's see, my father had been, oh, he was, by the way, when my father died, this is what Muskie's office sent to my mother, and he inscribed this. If you hold it in the right angle you can read it.

JR: Oh, okay, I see, it's -

JL: It's hard, I can read it, it's hard.

JR: Yeah, to Mrs. Jean Charles Boucher, as a work of deep respect, the memory of my special friend, Jean Charles, yeah, Ed Muskie. And -

JL: Oh, I think he wrote the name in back, yeah, Williams, I do not know Williams.

JR: (*Name*) Williams.

JL: Lowe, that's not Lowe, that's Boucher, Muskie, Haskell, yeah, Haskell -

JR: Okay, there's Haskell and Zozette Ozefo?

JL: Yeah, this is, yeah.

JR: Yeah, it's Muskie, that's your dad.

JL: This is my dad, yeah, there's my dad up there, too. Yeah, that's my dad, and this says it's Williams and Lowe?

JR: Williams and Lowe?

JL: The name Williams I remember hearing, Lowe I do not. I remember the face. I've seen that man. And this is other locations. Must be signing of bills. This had to do with Lewiston obviously because there's too many Lewiston people in here. There's Representative Boisvert, there's my father, there's Mr. Legare, there's Judge [Ferdinand] Despins, family Despins was very influential in local, so, it has to do, obviously it must have had to do with Lewiston, because there's too many of them involved in here. This is Muskie, obviously. There's my dad. They're always in the same place about, aren't they? See more of that picture. Whoever that was I do not, oh, this is Mr. [Phillip] St. Pierre from Lewiston.

I think I have material somewhere else that would, and it was not taken all at the same time because here he's wearing a tie, here he's wearing a bow tie. Yeah, this is not the same tie. These were different occasions, because you know sometimes, you know, they flash several pictures. Obviously this was a political picture; it was taken in Lewiston, in Auburn. No, remember Lewiston here, which was very popular (*unintelligible whispering*).

JR: Oh, no, I don't actually. But -

JL: That was probably before your time.

JR: Before my time. Yeah, U.S. Senate, oh yes.

JL: I don't know as you, I don't see for your files, or for their files, the Muskie files, there must be files, these are duplicates. I don't, I do not need them.

JR: Really, yeah, I mean if you, yeah, we'd definitely love that if you want to give those, that would be great, yeah.

JL: No, I was going to compile a, I still plan to, of my dad, I was looking at it last night, I have it all, I've done a lot of work on it but not enough, I have it divided by decades, the thirties, the forties, and the fifties, and I have tons of articles. Some of them don't have dates, some of them do.

JR: Yeah, oh yeah, that would be great, to get them all together. All right. And, yeah, like

what you said, like yeah, your brother has a lot of ill will towards Muskie.

JL: Yes. He felt he'd got even with him, and I thought, I don't want to hear that either, that sounds like dirty politics to me, I'm not interested in dirty politics. You know, that's my way characterizing it, but he felt, no, he felt he was very unfair, he hindered my father in his political career. I don't know that that's true. My father I don't think had any aspirations to being governor. Even if he had, if you, uh, he was Canadian born and you cannot be, or at the time, I don't know whether that's been changed. Or so I was told, I don't know this, you know. So that he could not be and, you know, so I don't know. I don't, and I felt like saying, but how could he have, and I was not asking my brothers any question because I did not want to get it, it was at a party, I did not want to get involved, and besides, like, please, this, to me that belongs in the past, it belongs in prior to 1960 I would say because my father died in March '60. Yeah. The funeral, Muskie was at my father's funeral. He was in Congress then, yeah. And so was the governor. Also were a lot of people who were there for political purposes, to be seen, more so, you know. Except for your friends and relatives you never know who's there because they care for, because it's the politically right thing to do, yeah, it's good for me. Frank Coffin was there. And people, things that I don't remember because of course it had been such a sudden death, I was so grief stricken I don't remember. I was rereading that yesterday. And I said, "Oh, was he that interesting." I don't remember it.

JR: What do you think your father's legacy was, for Lewiston and for Maine?

JL: For Lewiston and for Maine. That's a toughy. Well, I'm sure, he did a lot for Lewiston, he was very, very influential in the new charter, without him it might have not passed, or not passed then let's say. You know, he certainly helped the Francos a lot. I am amazed sometimes at the people who will say, obviously older people of my generation and older, who'll say of course I remember your dad. Gotten so it's been, what, 1960, oh, about forty years, so it's not all that often that I will say, you know, maybe you knew my dad, or maybe your father knew my dad, depending on the age of the person I'm talking with because I figure it's getting to be too long. But it's amazing how people will still ask me, you know, "Was Jean Charles Boucher your dad," and I'll say, "Yes, he was." Or they'll say, was he related to you, and I'll say he sure was. You know, so, excuse me (*telephone interruption*). I'd forgotten he's returned. I knew he went out, he had errands to run. Like I say, he did a lot for the French people. I think with many of them he made out, made them to be prouder of what they are, or at least proud. You are not second class. You know, you are up there and you can better yourself, just try. He was very active too with parishes, church organizations, Franco- American, all Franco-Americans to, you know, we can do better, yes we can do this, we can do that, you know. With, like with the credit union, yes, save your money or invest it in here, you are helping others as well as yourself. The day before he died he had been at a meeting on Franco-Americanism in Boston, with Judge Despins who was also very, very active. He was a sweetheart of a man, very nice. So, his legacy I guess is, they're not tangible things, you know. So it's hard to tell.

JR: Oh yeah, I would certainly think that he probably definitely had something to do with the resurgence of the Democratic Party in Maine, which, you know, which would eventually come about with Muskie being governor, but your father being there for so long and being a prominent Democrat.

JL: Yes, indeed, because then, yeah, because the Democrats were not, even in Lewiston it was a long time before the Democratic Party, but they sent people to, or people ran to go to Augusta in the House or senate and made it. Yeah, it was generally all people of English or Irish descent, yeah. So except for that I don't really, I can't be, but yes, the resurgence of, yes, he did. How he became a Democrat I don't, never asked him that.

JR: Okay, and I guess, you know, besides your brother who probably wouldn't want to do an interview.

JL: No! Definitely not!

JR: Do you know of anyone else, either, well probably less likely it would be a contemporary of your father, but you know

JL: Wouldn't be a contemporary of my father because (*unintelligible word*) -

JR: Right, but of, you know, children of contemporaries of your father, or you know, people from Bates who might, you know, might be able to give us some more information either about your father or about Muskie that you can think of?

JL: My father would be a hundred and seven years old this Saturday, so forget, yeah, June 30th was his birthday, so forget his contemporaries.

JR: Yeah, definitely.

JL: Younger people. Not that I can think of right now. I can always call you if I do, but I don't know if there are still, I'm sure some of the older folks, but how much they would know, or how much they would know about Muskie, these people that I would know would take somebody who was, well probably better educated and with a broader view as opposed to, you know, just local, you know, something local. I was thinking of, you know, this politics and this, the local politics. I can't think of any. Those, the people I knew were his contemporaries. Well, of course they're gone. If my father were to be, they were a hundred and seven, but I can't think of anybody even in their eighties who would do it, you know, who would have been a young politician. I don't think Robert Couturier would yield that much.

JR: Yeah, I don't know, I don't know if he's been interviewed or not. I think he, yeah, he should be.

JL: He may have been. He was mayor of the city, went to Bates, and was, he was very young at the time and certainly knew some of these folks. He certainly knew some of these folks. Possibly, possibly. Because, too, Muskie himself would be how old, I don't know. He graduated from Bates in '36 I think.

JR: Yeah, so he's, he would have been eighty-five, eighty-six. He would have been in his mid-eighties I think if he were still alive. But, okay. And, does your brother live around here,

anyway, is he from Lewiston?

JL: Yes, but I won't give you his address and, I value my life.

JR: Understood, understood, all right, yeah.

JL: He'll say, how -

JR: I mean, it's unfortunate because we would definitely like to get -

JL: (*Unintelligible phrase*), I was talking to you personally and you violated it.

JR: Yeah, okay. Yeah, I mean, because it is unfortunate because we definitely would like to that perspective, but if he's -

JL: He would, politically he would have a much, much, much broader, could tell you, because he was here in fact on some pictures I, you know, I saw my brother who was with my dad. He followed it, he did not become, he did become involved in politics but not running, just always there either supporting or discussing or helping one of the people, decision makers, but behind the scenes. Just like the *Sun-Journal* was. Really.

JR: Okay, well then, yeah, I think we'll stop right here. Thank you.

End of Interview moh294.int