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Interview with L. Sandy Maisel by Andrea L’Hommedieu

Summary Sheet and Transcript

Interviewee

Maisel, L. Sandy

Interviewer

L’Hommedieu, Andrea

Date

April 5, 2000

Place

Waterville, Maine

ID Number

MOH 182

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Biographical Note

Louis “Sandy” Maisel was born on October 25, 1945 in Buffalo, New York. Maisel attended Harvard where he became involved with various campus and political organizations. Maisel went on to attend Columbia for his graduate work, where he received his Ph.D. in Political Science. In 1971, he settled in Maine, working on Bill Hathaway’s campaign for Senate and teaching at Colby College. In 1978, Maisel ran unsuccessfully in the congressional primary in Maine. At the time of this interview he was teaching at Colby.

Scope and Content Note

Interview includes discussions of: college experiences; first impression of Ed Muskie; coming to Maine; family background; evolution of political parties in Maine; 1992-1994 Maine politics; important figures in Maine politics in the last 50 years; Waterville town-gown relations; Muskie’s legacy in Maine and nationally; current trends in Maine politics; and term limits.

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Transcript

Andrea L’Hommedieu: This is an interview with Prof. L. Sandy Maisel on April 5th, the year 2000, in his office at 257 Miller Library at Colby College in Waterville, Maine.

L. Sandy Maisel: Got it all right.

AL: Could you start by stating your full name and spelling it?

SM: Okay, my full name is Louis, L-O-U-I-S, Sandy, S-A-N-D-Y, Maisel, M-A-I-S-E-L.

AL: And where and when were you born?

SM: I was born in Buffalo, New York, October 23rd, 1945.

AL: And is that where you were raised?

SM: Stayed in Buffalo through high school, haven’t been back there except for occasionally since high school.

AL: And where did you go to college?

SM: I went to Harvard College, Cambridge, Massachusetts, graduated in 1967. I got a Ph.D. from Columbia University in New York in 1971.

AL: A Ph.D. in?

SM: Political, actually they call it public law and government, but it’s political science.

AL: And what was your experience like at Harvard?

SM: Well, I had a terrific experience at Harvard. I was a government major, I was very much involved in student organizations, in student government, the Harvard-Radcliffe Combined Charities, which I ran for two years, the Young Democratic organization at Harvard, which I was the president of for a year. I was pretty well involved in most aspects of campus life. And actually, the first time I met Senator Muskie was when I was at Harvard. In 19-, the academic year 1965-66, I was president of Harvard-Radcliffe Young Democrats, and we had some opportunities and some money to have a speaker.

And that time a fairly young and fairly, not very well known senator from Maine was beginning to talk a bit more about the environment, and we had some students who were interested in the environment. And I decided that I would ask the senator to come to a dinner, give a speech at a dinner, for the Harvard-Radcliffe Young Democrats, to which I invited all of the Young Democrats. There were maybe a hundred in our club at the time. And every Colby student, every Harvard student, (I’m at Colby, I say Colby automatically), every Harvard student from the state of Maine and, we made elaborate arrangements for the senator to come, and he was

flying back, and at that time he, I think frequently at that point, came back to Maine through Boston. So we arranged it at a time he was going through Boston, that he was going to come to the campus for a dinner on a Friday night and speak with the students at the dinner. Everything was set up, and I was very excited, it was actually I think the first even I planned as a Young Democrat. Seven students showed up. I was mortified, I just could not imagine that here I was with a United States senator and seven students showed up. We had invited over a hundred Young Democrats and I think there were twenty or twenty-five students from Maine at that time. And two or three of the Young Democrats and two or three of the kids from Maine. And he, the senator of course later in his life had a reputation for treating people somewhat harshly in situations like that, or at least not making them feel at ease.

Well he made this very young Young Democrat feel very at ease and spent two hours talking to the seven of us. I learned more about environmental protection and the issues of at that time water pollution in that two hour session, and also about the politics of Maine, than I learned until I moved up to Maine in 1971, you know, five or six years, another degree later.

AL: So, what was your first impression of Muskie?

SM: Well, I think everybody's first impression of him was his size. I'm a fairly big person, but he dominated me, and I felt, you know, you just felt sort of in awe in his presence. And he had that slow talking way of working through a point until he made sure that everybody understood where he was going and how he got there. And to do this with a group of, you know, seven college students. All men by the way, no women showed up, was really very impressive, I think, to all of us, that he, you know, he knew the issues so much more than you expect a politician to know the issues.

He was conversant on every, on the details of the issues in a way that none of us were, and of the nuances and of how it was going to affect, you know, different kinds of legislation would affect different populations and how that had to be taken into account. So we learned about a substantive issue, we learned about the procedural techniques of dealing with the United States Senate, the political problems that passing legislation involved, all in really sort of one seminar, which was not at all planned. I mean, I'm sure he had at least some remarks prepared to give to a broader, bigger audience as an after dinner speech, and this was just sitting around and talking to a group of students.

AL: Did you get a sense of his, what his goals were for environmental legislation at that point, or do you remember that specifically?

SM: Well, I don't remember the details, but I do remember the question, the debate was over the cost of jobs for cleaning up the rivers. That was the debate that was nationally very important at that point, and it was just beginning really to be important at that point. People were beginning to understand the nuance of it, and his clear understanding that you could have both good jobs and a clean environment was, you know, that was what was driving him on this issue, as well as his love for the state of Maine, the outdoors of the state of Maine.

AL: So what led you to Maine in '71?

SM: Got a job. When I came out of, actually I had spent six summers here at a summer camp ten miles that way. And when I finished my doctoral, I was writing my doctoral dissertation, I wasn't even finished, and I was applying for jobs I decided I wanted to teach at a small liberal arts college, not a big research university. And I, there were only three jobs available the year I applied; Dartmouth, William and Mary, and Colby. I didn't get the job at Dartmouth; it actually went to a person who was a friend of mine who was also from Buffalo had a Yale Ph.D. and about four years ahead of me and much more deserving of the job than I. I was offered the job at William and Mary, or I was led to believe I would be offered the job, I don't think I ever got a firm offer, and I simply could not see myself living in Virginia.

I'm a liberal Democrat, I've always been a liberal Democrat, and I think Harry Byrd was still the senator from Virginia at that time, and it was not where I was going to be. And Colby had a great attraction, appeal for me, because of being in the Waterville which is just where I'd spent my summers and it was really (*telephone ringing interruption*) being in Waterville, which is where I'd spent my summers and I love the outdoors and I love rural areas, and I said this is where I want to spend my time. And I was, at the time that that happened, I was living in Washington writing my doctoral dissertation, which was on the Congress, and it was the year that Bill Hathaway was running for the Senate against Margaret Chase Smith. And when I was offered the job, Senator Hathaway, he was then Representative Hathaway, called me and asked me to come to his office to talk about working on his campaign.

Can you imagine a twenty-five year old guy getting a call from a United States congressman asking him, who didn't know me from Adam. That was all a tremendous feeling, this is something I'd really wanted to do. So I came to Maine. Well, so then I came to Maine, and I, it was actually a three year job supposedly not renewable, but I've been here ever since. That was 1971.

AL: Good, so it worked out. Now, to go back a little bit, your parents, you grew up in the Buffalo, New York area, what were your parents' occupations?

SM: My father owned a retail furniture store, my mother was a homemaker. She actually was trained as a nutritionist and worked in the schools until my sister was born but then did not go back to work after that.

AL: And sort of the family background, do they come from Ireland, or England?

SM: Oh, no, no, no, no, this is an eastern European Jewish family.

AL: Okay.

SM: All of my grandparents came from Eastern Europe, all four of my grandparents came from eastern Europe. My mother's parents from Hungary and my father's parents from, one from Poland and one from the part of Russia that is, at some point says Polo- Russia [?] which is some point in Russia, sometimes in Poland, but it was Polo-Russia [?] at the time. My paternal grandmother from Krakow and my ma-, I lived, my father grew up in Buffalo, so my Buffalo

relatives were the ones that were formative for me. And my grandfather was a liberal Democrat and believed that this country gave him his freedom and his ability to make some money and to make a success for himself. My father was a fairly active liberal Democrat. My maternal grandparents, in fact, were Republicans, but I never talked to them about politics. And my mother became a Democrat so that it was a Democratic household that I grew up in. One of my earliest political memories is my father receiving a telegram, people don't even get telegrams any more, in fact we have it somewhere in an old family album, asking him to come to breakfast with President Truman at an old hotel which doesn't even exist in Buffalo any more. This was probably during 1951, sometime like that, and how excited he was to go see President Truman.

AL: So your father was known in political circles, was he active?

SM: He was not terribly active, he was, I assume he gave money, who knows, I was five years old at the time. But he certainly was an active, you know, was an active Democrat and a concerned Democrat. There were, we had a good family friend who was treasurer of the Democratic Party in (*unintelligible word*) county and I think that was probably what led to the invitation.

But I, growing up, you know, was always interested in political campaigns. When I was of Harvard, before I became head of the Young Democrats, I worked as an intern for a congressman named Max McCarthy, Richard Max McCarthy from Buffalo, who also actually worked with Senator Muskie on the Clean Water Act, on the House side. And ran, was deputy campaign manager when I was at, between my junior and senior year in college for McCarthy's reelection campaign to the House and sort of commuted between Cambridge and Buffalo during the fall, the fall of that year working on the campaign, devising, it was the first time I'd ever devised an electoral strategy, a campaign strategy. It was kind of fun to do. Did detailed precinct by precinct voter analysis before computers, before we were using computers anyway.

AL: Have you examined the evolution of political parties in Maine, particularly in the last half of the twentieth century?

SM: I've actually written about that. There's an article that I wrote which appeared in a special edition of *Policy* which is the journal of the New England Political Science Association. I wrote it with a student looking at Maine, particularly in the last. Well, there's a very famous book by Duane Lockhart called New England State Politics, and I looked at the period after that. And certainly one is aware of the, Maine has a very interesting tradition in which the Democratic, I mean if you take away the earlier period when it was all Republican, and that's what Lockhart's book talks about, when it was all Republican.

But starting with, you know, the famous Democratic Party convention in the telephone booth and moving from there, of a state that has been very highly competitive with a Democratic party that's had until the last, until the end of the Brennan administration I guess, a fairly strong organization in many ways, and fairly unified Democratic Party with certainly leaders who have played a prominent role organizationally as well as in politics. Senator Muskie's very important in the organization, Senator Mitchell was very important in the organization, Governor Brennan was very important in the organization of the party. And many of the people who worked for

them, like Don, played a key role in party organization.

The Republicans on the other hand, which for a long time were the majority party, always had a divergence between their party organization, which is a very conservative party organization, and some of their elected leaders, particularly Senator Snowe, Governor and Congressman McKernan, and I guess today even Senator Collins, and the Senator Cohen, I'm sorry, I forgot to add him, all of whom really were, had their own organizations outside of the normal Republican organization. And then Maine has had this really unique part of, well we've had two parts of our political history which distinguish us from many other states.

One is the prominent role that women have played in high office, starting with Senator Smith of course, but now with Senator Snowe and Senator Collins, we're one of only two states that has two female senators. And I think one of only two states have ever had just two female senators. And, you know, for a long time we had Olympia in the House as well. That's one aspect, but the other aspect is the Jim Longley, Angus King independents running for governor. I think there are two very different reasons that led to the two of them being elected. In 1974 Governor Longley really caught a wave of dissatisfaction with the political system and particularly with the Republican Party.

At that point George Mitchell was not a very attractive candidate. He just, he had not yet figured out what his political persona was. He was still the smartest man, with all due respect to other politicians in the state, that I've ever met, certainly the smartest political man I've ever met. But I worked on that campaign, and the people who were leading his campaign, we really had a lot of difficulty getting him to relax and getting him to portray his personality as one that other people could accept. And I think, and the Republican candidate, (*unintelligible phrase*), and the Republican party was very much in disarray, that was as a result of the Watergate time, the Republicans were sort of taking it on the knocks in a lot of places. Although that was also the year that David Emery won the first congressional seat from Peter Kyros, he was one of I think only two Republicans beating a Democrat in the whole nation in that election. That could be wrong, but it's a very small number. That was 1974.

In 1994 when Angus won for the first time, I think it was a somewhat different reason going on. One part of it was that Angus ran a terrific campaign, self funded. The Democratic Party candidate was the wrong candidate, Governor Brennan, who has a long and distinguished career as a public servant in the state, I think people were tired of him, and I think he was tired of being a candidate. On the other hand he still had tremendous loyalty among Democrats so that Tom Allen, who ran against him in that primary couldn't unseat him in the Democratic primary. I think Tom Allen probably could have won the general election in that race. And Susan Collins was a totally untried candidate at that point and a very bad candidate. She didn't understand the issues, or at least she didn't articulate her view on the issues, she came across very badly in public, on television. And Angus is tremendously articulate, had a vision of the state, so I think that led to a difference.

And the other point was that politics in Maine from 1992 to 1994, which involved a shut down in the government, it involved incredible acrimony between Governor McKernan and Speaker Martin, really was a period of time when people were dissatisfied with the two political parties,

and Angus just stood up there like a beacon as somebody to attach to. And he's been a remarkably successful governor. I'm a firm believer in the two party system; I've written a book called Why Two Parties?, with a collaborator who's a professor at the University of Wisconsin in Milwaukee, who is as Republican as I am Democrat, and we both believe in the two-party system. And one of the reasons I believe in the two-party system is I think that it's very difficult to govern as an independent.

And I spent an hour in the airport with Governor King a couple weeks ago, we were both stuck in the airport. And we had a long talk about that in which, you know, I said, you know, he really has proved me wrong, at least in terms of my view of an independent in that particular example. But he said the reason was that neither of the two parties realized that they could defeat him any time they wanted to if they got together, but rather they continued to sort of let him play the leadership role, and by the time, at that point he gained a good deal of momentum in the- that role and he's been quite successful. I still don't think that, I don't think we know how this plays out. There's no logical successor.

I guess the other thing to note about Maine's two-party system is, there has been a serious third party candidate in every election for governor since 1994. Jonathan Carter got a good number of votes as a Green party candidate, Buddy Franklin got a number of votes as a, I don't know candidate, he ran as, when he ran, so there has always been somebody else who has really shown that there's a certain number of citizens in the state of Maine who don't want to vote for a Democrat or a Republican. I don't think it's played out in any way that's going to be meaningful yet because there is no one alternative that has appeared, I don't think. You know, Governor King could have formed his own party, he's chosen not to. And I don't see anybody else playing that role right now.

AL: So when you say you believe in the two-party system, are you saying that you don't think one party should dominate, or do you think there shouldn't be more than two?

SM: Well, when I'm saying I believe in a two party system, what I mean is I think that there should not be more than two serious parties. I think that a system works best if there are two parties, each of which have a certain allegiance in the electorate, run candidates for virtually all of the offices, and have to take each other into account, each other's platforms into account when setting strategy so that if you don't do a good job as one party, the other party is likely to win. And that's in fact what Maine has had, a rich tradition of that, a rich tradition in the last half of the twentieth century of that kind of a two party system.

I don't believe in a one party system to be sure, where you only have one party with a chance of winning because there's no competition, and the voters don't have a chance to say what they believe about the issues of the day or to cast a affirmative or negative vote about the incumbent. And I don't believe in a multi-party system because I don't think you can govern effectively if you can't form majorities.

AL: Have you studied the time period in the early fifties when the Democratic Party was sort of gaining strength?

SM: Not extensively, other than, I've never studied it, and I know it only by certain stories one hears about the, really the charismatic effect of the Muskie candidacy the first time that he ran, and also how surprised everybody was that he won, including him.

AL: My next question is, in terms of- You ran for office yourself.

SM: Right.

AL: In 1978?

SM: Right.

AL: And that was a congressional primary.

SM: I ran in the congressional primary.

AL: What was the condition of the political parties in Maine at that point?

SM: Well, it was a competitive two party state at that point. The, Senator Muskie and Senator Hathaway were the two senators, Hathaway actually ran for reelection in '78 when I was running and lost to Bill Cohen in that election.

The congressman at that time was Hathaway, was, I can't remember who it was now that I'm saying that. It was Emery in the first district, oh, and it must have been, it was Cohen in the second district, and Cohen was giving it up to run for the Senate, and Olympia won the seat, but it was a very hotly contested seat. And the governor was Longley, who was leaving office, and Joe Brennan came in and won the governorship in that race.

But it was a time when the parties were very well, were very important in the primary process. You could see it in a number of ways. I had been a delegate to the national convention in '72 as a Muskie delegate, and a delegate to the, and vice chair of the platform committee for the party in '76 and '78 I think. It might have been '78 and '80, I'm not sure which two years actually, and had been chair of the Kennebec county Democratic committee. And at that point all of those were vibrant organizations. The county committee meetings were well attended, people worked the precincts, the platform was hotly debated; people cared a great deal about the platform. And one of the ways in which you ran for office was to work hard to get the support of the local party organizations because they were the people who got people out to vote on primary day. I lost that primary to a man named John Quinn, you probably won't find, he doesn't live in the state any more, but I lost it to him largely because of Joe Brennan, it was very interesting.

Joe Brennan was running for governor in a contested primary as well, I think his primary, his most important opposition at that point was Phil Merrill, and Brennan was an Irish Catholic from Munjoy Hill. Quinn was an Irish Catholic from pretty much the same area, and after the election I did a, and Brennan really worked the party organization, particularly the Portland party organization because he, that's where he came from and he knew it very well. And I did a correlation analysis after my defeat of the votes, and Quinn just got votes that Brennan got votes,

and it was, you know, this very solid core of Irish Catholic Democrats who turned out to vote on primary day. I also looked at the places where I had organizational support. Unfortunately for me, it was Kennebec county and the small coastal counties, and I did well in all of those areas because the organization got people out to vote; there simply weren't as many people as there were in the Portland area. But that was, those were the days when we had caucuses and conventions leading people to the national convention, so people cared about what the party was doing, went to those kinds of party meetings.

And I thought we had a stronger electoral system because of that. I very much opposed Maine adopting the presidential primary, which we did in 1996. I think it stripped the party of one of the last vestiges of power that we had, which was to get people involved in the party through organization. It just doesn't happen any more.

And I think the other point to note about what was going on in the late 1970s is there was a core of people who had been built up I think by Senator Muskie and Senator Mitchell, in his candidacy in '74 and really in his stewardship of the Democratic Party, which went before that time and somewhat after that time. Who, while not part of the formal organization were the funders of the organization, people who funded campaigns, Scotty Hutchinson down in Portland. And I think, and I'm really sort of drawing this out of ancient memory, but if I put it back together the way I think it really worked, is there were a few people who were the lynchpins there. George Mitchell was clearly one of them until he went on the federal bench. Joe Angelone was a key person in the Portland area in terms of controlling or helping to figure out who was going to get support and money.

And particularly Severin Beliveau, who was one of the few people who was tied into both the ability and, to give money and gave money, and caring about the party organization, which he worked very closely with. He probably is one of the understudied and underappreciated people in the Democratic Party in the history of the state of Maine as far as I'm concerned. He should have been governor. I think he was not governor because of anti-French prejudice in the state that I think still exists in a lot of areas. He is immensely talented, immensely smart, and you know, the Democratic party for a long time owed a great debt to him for, you know, the role that he was playing in keeping it together.

AL: Now we've been talking about local political organizations, but larger than that, the state Democratic Party.

SM: That's what I was basically talking about there was the state Democratic Party.

AL: Right, tell me about how you've seen that change over the years? And if you're still involved today and have a sense of where it is?

SM: I have a sense of where it is; I'm not involved, I'm not involved because I don't think it's very important today. And I think it has lost that sense of importance, and it lost that sense of importance gradually, but it was exacerbated by the decision after 1992 to get rid of the primary [caucus] so that's almost a decade old now.

The last caucus convention we had was 1992, and that was a very hotly contested caucus election system. And, in fact, Tom Allen got his start in electoral politics in Maine as far as I know, and this accurate, by running the Clinton campaign in 1992. And I was a delegate in 1992 for Senator Tsongas. We had a big organization as well going around, you know, the state of Maine.

A lot of people got involved in local party organizations, the number of people up at caucuses was high, and caring about that. There's all sorts of evidence, some of which I've written about in one of the science journals, about people getting involved at the caucus level and staying involved, and other party building activities. That all disappeared. There was also a, really a change of generation from people who were interested in the party for the sake of party to people who were interested in the party for frequently issue purposes, and I don't discount that as being important but, but who didn't really care once their issue went away about the party maintenance kind of functions. So it isn't, the party is just getting, you know, getting by as well as it can, and I think the Republicans are pretty much in the same way.

There's a certain amount of money, that money is largely controlled from Washington, and it's telling the local party what they can do and how they can do it, as I see it. I think there are very good people there, who care a great deal, but they don't have the kind of commitment to the party cum party as, there aren't as many of them who have that kind of commitment as existed when George was chairman or when Severin was chairman, or when Toby Buxton was the executive director of the committee at that period of time. Nancy Chandler was, Nancy Chandler and George Mitchell were the two national committee people for a long time.

AL: So, what do we do? How do, what would you have to do now to make the party important again?

SM: I have a reform agenda, my reform agenda goes nowhere because nobody believes in my reform agenda, but I have a reform agenda. My reform agenda says that, and this is nationally, I think this is what you can do. Parties have lost control over the nominating process, both at the local at the state, and at the national level. And I think the, if I were to be able to put the reforms in place that I thought were important, I would give party that role back again. At the local level, at the national level I think we should have a caucus convention system, and I think that there should be a national caucus primary system which does not disadvantage caucuses.

The reform that I would put in place would say that there would be a window for primaries in April, May, and June, but if you wanted to have a caucus you could have it in February or March, so the caucus states could get the leg up on the primary states. And I would also limit the number of states that could have a primary at any one time. Because I think this lack of competition for the presidential nomination has killed the parties. I mean, sure there was a lot of intense effort around March 7th, but there's been nothing since then and two thirds of the states hadn't had their primaries on March 7th. Not two thirds of the voters but two thirds of the states. So that's what I would do at the national level. At the state level, there are a number of states in which the party organization has a formal role in nominations. Not the determinative role, but, voters always have the determinative role, but a formal role. For instance, state conventions which endorse candidates before the primary. Seems to me that's a very good kind of device. In

some cases state conventions nominate candidates unless they are challenged. In other words in Connecticut as an example, the state convention determines who the nominee is going to be. If anybody gets twenty percent of the vote at the state convention but loses, they then can challenge in a primary. Well, that makes the party important, and I think those are very good kind of reforms. You can go to the full extreme, I think the way Virginia has it is- is a state convention determines the way in which the nomination is going to be decided, whether it's going to be by a primary or a convention. I don't think I favor that.

But I think you want to give that, some role back to the party organization. I would do that at the local level as well, I would say that, you know, congressional committees or particularly county committees should endorse candidates and there should be something that goes along with that endorsement, the ability to give money, the ability to have a top name on the, your name first on the ballot, whatever it is. But some specific benefit that goes with being the party endorsee.

And the reason I believe that is because where you have a gap is when parties are weak, as they are throughout the nation now, in our state and throughout the nation, you will very frequently not have good candidates challenging incumbents in a number of seats. Where party organization is strong, one of their roles is to find, recruit good candidates for office, and we don't do that any more. That's even exacerbated by term limits. Why would somebody run against an incumbent representative, I think term limits are one of the stupidest ideas that ever came down the pike, and they've had a disastrous effect as far as I'm concerned everywhere they've existed. But why would, why would a rational person run for, say you've got a three term limit, run against an incumbent running for his third term when you know that incumbent is going to have to give up the seat the next time.

So that instead of enhancing competition, what they have done across the entire nation, is reduced competition, except for in the election when the seats are open. Well, I don't think that's what it should be all about. In 1998, ninety-six, ninety-five incumbent members of the House of Representatives faced no major party opposition at all in the fall election. I think that's a scandal, and I think that parties have a role in reversing that.

AL: Do you think it will happen?

SM: No. I think there will be a change in the presidential nominating process because people are dissatisfied with it. That depends on the Republicans, not on the Democrats. The Republican's rules are different from the Democrat's rules. The Republicans, if they're going to change their nominating process for the year 2004, must do it at the 2000 nominating convention, and there is a reform group in the Republican Party looking at that now.

The Democrats could change it at the 2000 nominating convention, or we can have a special commission like the McGovern and Frazier Commission or the McKulsky Commission, or the Winnegrad Commission, which have done it in other times. So that, I think something will happen, the Republicans will take the lead in that. There's a group of Democrats and Republicans working together on that procedure, and I don't know how far along they will get. At the state level it will depend upon initiative by people who really believe in the parties and they'll want to commit themselves and time to the parties and say, you know, "Wait, we are not

doing our job as political parties, we have to do better and this is how we can do better.”

I don't know what our state party rules say any more. State party rules used to forbid party officials from endorsing candidates before the convention. I think it should be the exact opposite, and I think that's a change that could be brought about.

AL: Who have been, in your view, some of the more important political figures in Maine since, I'd say 1954, but since you've been involved?

SM: Well, I mean certainly Senator Muskie is the father of the Democratic Party in Maine. And until his death, he was viewed as the father of the Democratic Party in Maine by all of the people who were active in the party. I remember when I was county chair, Senator Muskie coming to a county committee meeting, and they were carrying on the business of the meeting. He walked into the room and everybody as one stood and applauded, and this was, you know, in the mid 1970s, and he wasn't coming back to the state as often as he did prior to that time. And he was, you know, whether people liked him or disliked him, there were a lot of people who didn't like Ed Muskie; he had a temper, he was certainly haughty by the end of his life, he was not always pleasant to be around. But there was nobody who didn't respect him and who didn't stand in awe for the job he had done or the role he had played in essentially establishing the Democratic party. Ken Curtis was a transition figure in that, and was an important transition figure because it was somebody else who went out and won and was enormously popular.

I think George Mitchell was a very critical figure because he spanned the gap between, really between Muskie and now. He was part of the Muskie organization way back when, he served as Democratic state committee chair, he was unsuccessful candidate for governor, he was a member of the national committee, he was the executive, on the executive committee, the national committee, unsuccessful candidate for chairman of the national committee when Strauss won, but very high up.

Then, you know, the senator, and the senator who clearly brought most prestige to the state after Muskie when he was majority leader. And in fact in that role went a step further than Muskie had ever gone in the Senate. Those are the three figures. The other one that I think you mentioned because of longevity is Joe Brennan. You know, Joe Brennan, he's always been an enigma to me. I don't understand why he was a politician because he's shy, he doesn't -

AL: He's reserved?

SM: Yeah, yeah, he really is, he's personally very reserved, but he's a terrific politician and engenders amazing loyalty from the people who are his supporters. And he's a genuinely very nice, compassionate, concerned man, and he was a central figure of the Democratic Party from, certainly, in the early 1960s. I don't remember when he ran. I mean the mid 1960s, I don't remember what he ran for, I think it was county attorney in Cumberland County that was his first position. But by the time I was involved in politics he was already in the state senate, had been there a while, this was in the early '70s. And then the governor, you know, he ran unsuccessfully against Mitchell for the Democratic nomination for governor in '74, so he was out for a while, but he was attorney general I think at that point. Then ran successfully for

governor, went governor, congressman, then running for governor again, so you know, it's an incredible career that he had, spanned two decades at least as sort of one of the central figures in the party. I don't think we know yet whether there's anybody who's going to take on that role next in Maine. I suppose Congressman Baldacci may if he is successful in running for governor. Congressman Allen may if he's successful in running for senator, which I assume they will both do. They may or they may not, I don't think we have the, they're not up on the giant podium.

AL: Do you know Frank Coffin?

SM: Yeah, I was just with Judge Coffin last Monday at Judge Brody's funeral. I, you know, I know Frank Coffin as an icon, I don't know him personally. I mean, he's somebody who was, I've read John Donovan's book about Frank Coffin and probably know as much from that book as anything else. But he is, you know, he is an amazing man as well, has had a very important role in the formation of the party. But he has been out of party politics since, I don't know, when did he go on the federal bench? It must have been -

AL: Long time ago.

SM: Well, could probably figure it out, he must have been a Johnson appointee to the federal bench I would bet, so before '68 I would think, I'm not sure. But it's a long time ago, so he really hasn't been involved in politics in three decades. He's been very much active in the state, you know, as the, in his judicial role, but not as a political role. I think his role and John Donovan's role in the formation of the party, you know, they've been pretty well documented in lots of ways and they're very important that way. Russ Squire as well from what I know.

AL: You've been a college professor and a political activist in Waterville. How have you managed to bridge the town-gown divide?

SM: There's a Don Nicoll question.

AL: Recognized that, didn't you?

SM: Well, I mean, some could say I haven't, I lost badly when I ran for office. There are very few people at Colby on the faculty who have been interested in the affairs of the town and of the state. I have found, and I'm an outsider, I'm not from Maine, I'm in a religious minority, which is a very small minority in this state. In some ways, not prejudiced against because it's such a small minority I would argue, but it's a small minority nonetheless.

I'm perceived as an intellectual or an egghead or an ivory tower person, or whatever you want to say. On the other hand I, you know, if you are active, if you care about the concerns, if you do things like serve on the board of the Y or the Boy's Club or you coach little league or youth soccer, you very quickly become part of a community. And a lot of it has to do with, you know, who you care about and what your personality is. I spent four years as a faculty member in residence living on this campus with my, I was a single parent, and I had custody of my two young children, not young any more, two children who at that time were young. And one of the things that amazed me was that I knew because I just said hello to and knew every single person

that worked for dining services, every single person that worked for physical plant. And I could come up to these offices and ask all the other faculty who they were and they would have no idea, they were just faces. And to me they were people with interesting stories and who you wanted to know, and you wanted them to know you. And, you know, if my kids were running around the campus, I knew that they were, had, you know, a hundred and fifty people who knew who they were and cared who they were, and it seems to me that's what life is all about.

You come to a small town, you want to be part of the life of the small town, and that was why I came here, that's why when I go to Washington or New York or Boston, I quickly come back here, because I like it, you know. My wife and I kid that when we were dating her mother said to her, you know, "You don't do anything in Waterville if you don't want everybody in the town to know it." Well, that's absolutely true. There's a down side to that certainly if you, if I had gone through a divorce or dated somebody or something of that nature. On the other hand, when you have a family crisis, you have all these people who care about you. And it seems to me that if that's why you live in a place and if you are sort of of that place as opposed to just of your discipline. I suppose if I were somebody who studied Rousseau, as my colleague next door does, I wouldn't be as interested in everything that goes on. I don't think- I think my personality would lead me to be that way anyway. But, you know, that's simply what it is. And there are some very important people in this town who welcomed me and welcomed me into politics. Kevin and, Kevin who's passed away about, probably ten or twelve years ago now, and Nancy Hill who were, Nancy was the mayor for a number of years. And they ran my, they were the chairs of my campaign committee when I ran for office and were very involved in that. Bill Lorie is a former state representative from Fairfield, who was one of the first people I met in Waterville and has been a friend for thirty years, and yeah, lots of others. Sam Shapiro, the former state treasurer, treasurer of the Democratic Party, sort of an iconoclastic figure in anybody's mind, but he is somebody who once you know become part of the town, he was a very important person in Governor Curtis' administration.

So that, you know, those are the kind of people who I think allow somebody to bridge town-gown relations. And there are other--, Nancy and Bruce Chandler who, Bruce lived, retired and left the state, but Nancy was a national committeewoman, and Bruce was very, ran for state chair at one point. I think he lost to Dave Bustin is who he lost to and then went on to the superior court bench for the state before he retired. But those were very important people in my life. Severin and Cynthia Beliveau, who were p--, a lot of people who I met through the 1974 Mitchell campaign, all of them -

AL: Is that how you met them?

SM: You know, I knew all those people tangentially but we all worked together on that campaign in one way or another, Tony Buxton, who lives over in Buxton, a lot of people. That was a campaign where George Mitchell brought people together, there's no question about that. And I suppose the swisher.

AL: Johnny?

SM: George's brother, John, who, you know, makes sure that everybody in town knows

everybody. John was, Swisher taught my kids in junior high school and he used to say, he'd call me aside, you know, he coaches basketball up here at Colby. He called me aside and said, you know, "I don't mind you, Sandy, but I can't stand the fact that your kids both know more than I do and they're in seventh grade." A very humble man and great.

AL: Well what have the local political figures taught you about party politics in general?

SM: Oh, that's a good question. I think they taught me the questions to ask, you know, to see when they were influential and why, one of the things that local people don't understand about politics that professors do understand-

AL: I'm sorry, I don't mean to cut you off, I'm going to have to turn this over, I should have done that.

SM: Okay.

End of Side A
Side B

AL: We are now on side B of the interview with Professor Sandy Maisel.

SM: Okay, one of the things that people don't understand about, that local people don't understand about party politics is how different party politics are in one state from another, which is to say that, you know, until he went to the national committee and eventually to the senate and ran the Democratic senatorial campaign committee, I probably knew more about various state politics than Senator Mitchell did. Although he did run in the Muskie vice presidential campaign so he learned parts of it at that point. But certainly more than Tom Allen knows or John Baldacci does. But what you can do is you see what works and what doesn't work in one place and say, "Gee, is that exportable? Is that something that should be done?" And look at what's done in other states, would that work in this environment, and I think you can do that.

The first thing I ever wrote in political science was a study of the effects of the McGovern-Frazier reforms on local party organization in Maine. And I went around the state, it's the first time I'd ever been to Eastport, drove to every- interviewed with every Democratic county chairman and just looked at the differences of what was happening in different counties and how they either did or didn't understand sort of what effects these things were having on them and, you know, how they responded to the new McGovern people who came into the party in 1972. Some of them were viewed as anti-Muskie, some were viewed as people who would bring energy to the party, and to me that's a role that was important to understand, that they enhancing the party, not detracting from it.

So I think that really is, you know, it talks about questions that you could ask, what you can see is important, what you can see working, what you see not working. And, you know, my colleague Tony Carrato's office is three doors down from mine, is probably one of the smartest political operatives in the state of Maine, but he's sort of, he's an instinct politician as many

politicians are. I'm not an instinct politician, I'm sort of a study politician, you know, what, and, you know, what can I get from one experience to take to another experience? And that's sort of a different way of learning so that by viewing different state and local people around, and different careers of different people, you can get some of that. And that's why to me the demise of the strength of party organization in the state is really very sad. Sad may be a little, detrimental to democracy.

AL: Have you had any memorable experiences working with political figures in Waterville or the state of Maine?

SM: Oh, there were many memorable experiences.

AL: Can you recount them?

SM: Well, some funny experiences. I do remember the first time I introduced Senator Muskie when I was county chair of the Kennebec county committee, and it was at the Calumet Club in Augusta. And I made what I thought was a joke, and I can't even remember what the joke was in the introduction. Senator Muskie didn't think it was very funny, and Nancy Hill said to me after the meeting, she said, "It will take you three years to get over that. You should never try to joke with Senator Muskie; he tells the jokes on these occasions." I said, "Okay," learned that lesson.

And I also remember at one point Senator Mitchell, this is actually in 1981, and he had been appointed to the senate and was running for reelection against David Emery. It was the spring of 1981, the spring of 1982 I mean. I was teaching a course on the congress, and I asked him to come speak here at Colby, the course had about a hundred kids in it. And we were down in Lovejoy 100, and we're up on the platform, and I had set up a stage where I was in the center. And there was another colleague of mine, who was sitting to my right, and Senator Mitchell was sitting to my left at little table. I was going to sort of run it like a, you know, conference with these kids asking questions. And Senator Mitchell came in, looked at the seating arrangement, took my colleague's seat, moved it over to my left, took his seat and moved it over to my right. And we'd started talking, I didn't think anything about it, I sort of thought it was odd but I couldn't figure out what was happening, I didn't think anything of it. And he got up, and he started speaking, he said, "You might have wondered why I changed the seating arrangement here," and everybody sort of tittered. And he said, "I never want to be to the left of Sandy Maisel, I never want to be accused of being to the left of Sandy Maisel," and everybody sort of figured out what was going on at that point. And it was, you know, and it was a very nice thing because it sort of acknowledged to my students that he thought I was somebody who he had to be concerned with, which was very gracious of him, and also sort of said to the students, perception is a very important part of what's going on in politics. That was a very, a fun experiences.

I've had a number of experiences with Senator Mitchell and he's just a wonderful man. He, I was one of his hosts when he got an honorary degree at Colby and to hear him come up here and talk about the fact that you have to be the son of a groundskeeper at Colby in order to get a Bowdoin degree, which is a speech he's given scores of times.

AL: I've heard that one.

SM: But you know, it's still, it's wonderful to hear it. And to hear, I've been on a number of occasions when he has talked really from his heart about what the people in Waterville and organizations like the Boy's Club-Girl's Club in Waterville meant in terms of nurturing him.

I think, you know, it's really neat to see these people as human beings. And people who are really icons nationally, important figures on the national stage have been, you know, there have been really five Mainers I think in history who have had a major national effect, maybe six: Hannibal Hamlin, James G. Blaine, Thomas Brackett Reed, Ed Muskie, and George Mitchell, maybe Margaret Chase Smith. I think I'd add Margaret Chase Smith if for nothing more than the Declaration of Conscience, which is, you know, an important, marked a very important point in American history. But you know, to have been lucky enough to know three of those people, I was actually Senator Smith's host when she got an honorary degree at Colby as well, and she was.

It's a very interesting story about that actually. She, an earlier president of Colby, I won't say who it was, awarded her an honorary masters early in her career because she didn't have a bachelor's degree, and she was always offended by that. And President Carter- and I actually nominated her, arranged for her to get an honorary doctorate about two years, maybe three years before she died, very close to the time she died. And she, I mean she was a very old woman at that point, and it was really a wonderful tribute to her and she took it as a wonderful tribute, told wonderful stories, you know, sat around with a number of us on the faculty and told great stories about old times. She didn't ever tell the story about when she was speaking on the lawn at Colby College, it's probably one of the most famous Colby stories.

AL: What's that?

SM: This was in 1970, it was the year before I came, and it was the time of the Cambodian invasion. And she was up there, and actually Senator Muskie was at the same occasion, but she was up there giving a speech saying that Americans are not in Cambodia, that she was the ranking Republican on the Armed Services Committee and she knew that Americans were not in Cambodia. And a guy got up, a Bowdoin graduate sitting in the front row and says, "Excuse me, Senator Smith, with all due respect, I just came back from Cambodia. And how can you say we weren't there? I was there carrying out my military mission in Cambodia. You're telling me I wasn't there. And she turned back to the general, her aide, you know, said, "What's going on here?" And he, you know, he had no answer to that. (*Unintelligible phrase*) one of the low points, and that was also one of the reasons she didn't have any great affection for Colby, because this was pretty much a seat of anti-war sentiment during the Vietnam War.

But you know, to be, to know three of these six people, and again, Senator Muskie at a number of occasions, Senator Mitchell as a friend and somebody who I've worked for and who was an advisor to me when I ran and who I kept in close contact with over the years. In fact we talked about writing a biography at one point, though I never did it. That's a tremendous privilege I think. And you can't do that, by the way, if you live in New York state. You know, I lived in

New York state eighteen years and never met anybody. When I came to Maine, Ken Curtis invited me to lunch about the first week I was here. That's really, the real difference being in a state this size.

AL: Do you find that there's a big difference in Maine -?

SM: Oh, absolutely.

AL: - that the connections. Just, one person connects to another, connects to another?

SM: I was sitting in the Portland airport; I've mentioned this earlier, a couple weeks ago. I was talking to my wife, and we were trying to get down to Washington, we were delayed, the flights were delayed, and the governor comes up to me and talks to me. You know, there's not many states where that will happen, and he's talking about old times when he worked, we both worked for Bill Hathaway in the 1972 campaign. And, you know, his, my daughter's boyfriend just bought his former boat, there was owners in between. It's like, those are the kind of stories that you get in a state like Maine that you do not get in lots of other places.

AL: And Angus King does have some Democratic roots, doesn't he?

SM: Sure, he was a Democrat. That's as Democratic root as you can get. You know, I think -

AL: But he ran as an independent.

SM: Yeah, I think that he made a judgment that it was easier for him to run and win as an independent than it was to get the Democratic nomination. It was a very wise judgment. I would have advised against it; he was right. But he had the advantage of 2.3 million dollars or whatever he spent of his own money, I can't remember what the number was. I think I can tell you what the number was. I'm not sure I can tell you, but I think I can tell you what the number was. But you know, a lot of money, of his own money that he spent in that campaign that can make up for, you can get name recognition and get a way of not being in the party if you have that kind of money of your own. Nope, doesn't say how much the governor spent, does say how much senators and congressmen spent. That's because we -

AL: And what book is that?

SM: Almanac of American Politics. That's because the federal- it's a book that's consistent throughout the Federal Election Commission, it quote reports of national spending but nothing, it reports state spending in some states.

AL: You've been referred to as a Democratic activist, which is different than running for office.

SM: Sure.

AL: What sort of things have you done specifically that have put you in the category of

activist?

SM: Of course I'd call myself a former Democratic activist.

AL: Okay.

SM: I think I'd call myself a senior statesman at this point. Well, I was a county chair. I was vice chair of the state platform committee twice. I was on the national rules committee once. I was on the national platform committee once, I've been a delegate to two national conventions. I have been a volunteer or paid staff person but in a line position on, you know, a number of state wide and congressional campaigns. Helped, in my later years helped raise money even for a candidate, Congressman Allen, so that I, you know, I, I believe in the Democratic party, I believe in the principles of the party, I believe in the candidates of the party, and I do whatever I can to help them. But in recent years one of the things that has happened is people have come to me and sought my advice because I'm old. And that's fine, too, and I tell them, "Just remember, I lost." Do you know Gordon Weil, have you met, have you interviewed him?

AL: Gordon Weil?

SM: Weil, W-E-I-L, he lives in South Harpswell. His wife, whose name I'm just blanking, Roberta Weil, was the, was in Governor Brennan's cabinet, and I think maybe in Governor Longley's cabinet as a business person. Gordon ran, worked very high up in the McGovern campaign for president and then moved back to the state. And he really knows a great deal about the politics of the state. He also said to me, "People march to my door to give them advice, and I tell them that I worked for George McGovern. Just remember, remember the source."

AL: What do you think Muskie's lasting contributions will be to the state of Maine?

SM: Building up the Democratic Party.

AL: And how about to the nation?

SM: Clean Air and Clean Water legislation.

AL: Did you follow that legislation as it went through?

SM: No, I mean, only as a citizen, not as a political scientist. But it's very clear that he had a critical role in focusing the nation's attention on environmental concerns.

AL: As a resident of Maine during that period that he was working on that legislation, could you see it, coming from Washington, that Muskie had his name and his stamp on the things that were happening?

SM: Oh, absolutely, absolutely. Muskie was a player on the national scene after 1968. I mean he really was less a player in Maine after 1968, much more a player on the national scene.

AL: After the vice presidential, right.

SM: After he ran for vice president, absolutely, even after 1972 when he ran the unsuccessful campaign for the presidential nomination, he was a national player. And he would have stayed one had he not gone, become secretary of state, which I think was a, I, I did not concede and talk to me. I don't think I spoke to him between the time. Well, I guess he came back to the state once for a Democratic function. I've never seen him after that.

But you know, I had very little contact with him at that point, but it seemed to me what he was saying by taking the secretary of state position at a time when it looked very much like the presidency was going to end, the Carter presidency was going to end, that that was how he wanted to retire, and that was a key position and he did that. And that, people have a right to do that. You know, people do not owe their entire life to public service and not making any money, not being able to live in the life style that they, that other people who don't do that, and he gave thirty years. Thirty years? Almost thirty years, probably thirty years by that time if you (*unintelligible word*) became mayor of Waterville. Something like thirty years to, you know, to sustain the citizens of the nation. Just as, you know, Senator Mitchell does. I think, you know, I was so sorry when Senator Mitchell retired, but I don't resent the fact that he retired, I think he had every right to retire.

AL: Are there things that you think are important that I haven't asked you yet, that-?

SM: No, I think you've asked pretty good questions. I think you got most of the, most of the information you're going to get out of me.

AL: Let me just ask this question.

SM: Sure.

AL: What trends do you see happening in Maine right now that we haven't, we've talked about the state party structure, but are there other trends politically that you see in Maine?

SM: I don't know what the next generation of political leaders looks like. I don't think we know what the effect of term limits is. One of the things that we've frequently had is people who build their time up in the state legislature. Joe Brennan did that, Olympia did that, David Emery did that, I'm just trying to think of others who followed that route. And we don't have that route available anymore. Ken Curtis did it until he was secretary of state.

And it seems to me that route is, I don't think we know what's going to happen, and I don't see, I don't think the people have the opportunity to become leaders and make a real mark in a way that, you know, whether you like him or dislike him, that John Martin did with this term limits movement. And I think, you know, what the effect of that is going to be, I fear that it's going to be amateur politics in the state legislature, rich people running for state wide office and I think that will be a shame. You know, if you don't have the people who are really dedicated to public service showing that dedication. I don't know Les Otten, but I don't think just because Les Otten is a great entrepreneur, he should be a state wide public office holder. He maybe is a great

guy, I just know that, but you know, I'm much more interested in somebody, you know, who has worked on a city council or was a mayor or in the state legislature and has demonstrated in that setting what they can do.

AL: Now, John Martin was a Colby College graduate.

SM: No.

AL: No? University of Maine.

SM: University of Maine. He taught here for a while actually, he taught -

AL: Okay, maybe that was what I had in my head, he had a -

SM: He taught a course on state and local government here for a couple years.

AL: And that was, was that before you were here?

SM: No, I hired him, actually.

AL: Oh, you hired him? And he-?

SM: And I also didn't rehire him.

AL: So he was here for a couple of years teaching.

SM: He did two or three years, yeah. He teaches up at Presque Isle, and frankly his courses were not as rigorous as ours. And that was because he was being a speaker of the house at the same time he was teaching the course. I think the only politician; state wide politician that was a Colby graduate recently is Phil Merrill.

AL: Is he -?

SM: I think he's head of the Maine State Employee Association now?

AL: Okay.

SM: Last I knew.

AL: And have you, do you know where he lives, what area of the state?

SM: I assume Augusta, but I don't know. I haven't seen him in a long time.

AL: You mentioned Joe Angelone? As a big fund raiser for Democratic -

SM: I don't know if Joe Angelone's still alive? Don would know.

AL: I wondered, I hadn't heard that name before.

SM: You know Angelone's Pizza in Portland?

AL: Yes.

SM: That's Joe Angelone.

AL: Okay, okay.

SM: Don will know him, and he'll know if he's still alive or not.

AL: And Tony Buxton?

SM: Tony Buxton is an attorney for Preti, Flaherty, Beliveau & Pachios in Augusta.

AL: In Augusta, okay. I think that's all the questions I have. Did you want to add anything else before we end it?

SM: No, I've enjoyed this very much, thanks very much. I've had a lot of fun.

AL: Thank you.

End of Interview