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Interview with Frances McKnight by Andrea L'Hommedieu

Summary Sheet and Transcript

Interviewee

McKnight, Frances

Interviewer

L'Hommedieu, Andrea

Date

September 10, 1998

Place

Auburn, Maine

ID Number

MOH 046

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Biographical Note

Frances McKnight was born on July 18 1921 in Rumford, Maine to Grace and Harry "Cliff" Rolfe. Her father was a supervisor at the Oxford Paper Company, and had a secure job during the Depression. Frances attended Bates College, graduating in the Class of 1943. She went back to Rumford to teach. After retirement she moved to Auburn, closer to her daughter and son-in-law, Barbara and Dick Trafton.

Scope and Content Note

The interview includes discussions of Oxford Paper Company; Rumford and the Depression; the Muskies of Rumford; Bates in the 1940s; Professor Zerby; religion in Rumford; the Trafton family; and Muskie's contribution as an environmentalist.

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Transcript

Andrea L'Hommedieu: This is an interview with Frances McKnight on September 10th, 1998. Mrs. McKnight, would you state your full name and spell it for me?

Frances McKnight: Frances Rolfe McKnight, F-R-A-N-C-E-S, R-O-L-F-E, my maiden name, M-C-capital K-N-I-G-H-T.

AL: When and where were you born?

FM: Rumford, Maine, July 18th, 1921.

AL: And tell me, did you live all your life in Rumford?

FM: I lived all my life, I was away in Boston a couple of years, going to the conservatory, and then in 1984 I moved to Auburn.

AL: And that was when you retired?

FM: Yes.

AL: So, did you, you spent all your childhood in Rumford?

FM: Yes.

AL: Can you give me an idea of what kind of a community it was during that time period? What was going on and how did it affect you growing up?

FM: Well, it was a paper mill town, the Oxford Paper Company which has gone through many companies, now it's down to Mead. And it was the Depression, 1921, and of course the stock market fell in '29. And we had a few family problems; my mother came down with tuberculosis and had to go to Hebron Sanatorium, she was away for six or seven years. And we didn't, nobody had much money because all... My father had a good position in the paper company, but, and then they kept adding more departments to him, but he was... My sister had entered her first year at Bates College. He was supporting his mother and father who were elderly, and his brother was out of work and he was supporting him and his wife, and we think some of the nieces and nephews in there. And then he took over a store that was in Mexico, the adjacent town. And because my mother's sister's husband was ill and the doctor wanted him to go off to the country. And so, you know, life was difficult for everybody. Nobody had very much. They, everybody was poor. But, you know. We always had enough to eat and we lived in what they called Strathglass Park, which was a very nice area. It had been a mill arrangement. They had owned these places. In fact, they owned them when we were living there, when I was a child. But later on they sold them to the oldest tenant which happened to be my dad. And they were duplex. And we, my husband and I, moved into the other side. So it was the Depression and people were poor, people would walk around and come to the door. There was hardly a day that somebody didn't come to the door asking for bread or a sandwich or money; we always gave them food but we never gave them money. And it was, everybody was out of work or hard up or just getting a little bit of time, and, you know.

AL: Now, what were your parents' names?

FM: My father's name was Harry Clifton Rolfe, everybody called him Cliff. And my mother was Grace Park Rolfe.

AL: Now what were their political affiliations? Were they very political people?

FM: Well, my father was very much interested in politics and he was a prolific reader. He would love to have been able to go to college, but he was brought up on a farm and circumstances just weren't so anybody could afford to. But he read so much, he knew a lot. He had all kinds of volumes. He had all the Britannica and he had a set of engineering books and so forth. So, his, he was interested in politics and he was teaching citizenship classes. And he happened to have Steve Muskie in one of his classes, and Steve Muskie, of course, was Ed Muskie's father. And Dad thought the world of him, he was a wonderful, wonderful tailor, and he made all my dad's suits. And he was in this class and Dad had the privilege of bringing him into the American, he naturalized him actually. So that was kind of interesting. But Dad was a "dyed in the wool" Republican. He pulled himself up by his boot straps and he felt everybody else could. And it was kind of interesting, but he had tremendous respect for the Muskies and for Steve Muskie. And of course Ed was in school when my older sister, Evelyn Rolfe Curtis, was there, at, she married a Bates man by the name of Curtis. And so he knew who Ed Muskie was, and everybody in Rumford knew who Ed Muskie was, because he'd done so much and been so wonderful. And so my dad broke down and voted for a Democrat, which was quite something for him because he was a very strong Republican. When he was running for governor and I don't know what all else. He knew the family and he had so much respect for his father, and my sister had been in high school with Ed and so he knew that he was a great person and he voted for him.

AL: Now, did he, was he part of the Republicans for Muskie? There were some groups around the state who were Republicans who supported Muskie; was he that much involved?

FM: No, he wasn't. He wasn't that. He was just interested, he was, as I said he read everything, he read the paper from cover to cover and he knew what was going on politically, you know. But he wasn't active. I don't think he ever ran for anything, I don't think so. I was pretty little, I didn't know too much of what was going on then.

AL: Now your sister Evelyn, she went to high school with him?

FM: I think, let me see, my sister graduated from high school in '29, and I think he was a freshman then, I think he was about the class of '24 maybe? Or '23, '24, '25?

AL: He graduated from Bates in '36 so he graduated from high school in '32.

FM: Thirty two, yeah, well that would have made him a freshman when she, if she graduated in '29, wouldn't that?

AL: Maybe he was a soph-, yeah, maybe he was a sophomore and she was a senior.

FM: Well, anyway, he was an underclassman, but of course he started out being prominent when he hit school I'm sure, you know. He was a smart, smart man.

AL: So she also went on to Bates?

FM: Yeah, and they were there at the same time.

AL: Did she ever talk about him at Bates?

FM: Well, all I know is that we went somewhere once and he came up, and this was afterwards and I don't remember where it was, it could have been at Bates, and he saw her and came over and gave her a big hug and a kiss. So I don't really know how, you know, I don't recall her ever saying anything particular, but you know, I probably wouldn't have remembered it if she had because, you know.

AL: Now you were Ed Muskie's sister Frannie's age?

FM: Frannie was in my class in high school. She was a tall girl like the Muskies, well she was one of the taller ones actually, because her other sisters weren't as tall as she was, and I knew her. We weren't close friends; they lived in a section called Virginia of Rumford, and I lived down in Strathglass Park which was the other end sort of. And I knew her but I wasn't close friends. But I, after we both were back here, well I, I don't know where she was living at the, but I remember meeting her in the mall in Lewiston. Of course we always stopped and talked and everything when we saw each other. And then I believe Ed spoke at, in the Muskie Archives one time way back. I can't remember exactly when that was; must have been after '84 because that's when I moved down here. And she was there and so we had a nice long chat then. So I knew her, but, you know, she wasn't one of my closest friends.

AL: So you never maybe went over to their house when you were kids?

FM: No, I never was at their house. I have a friend [Dorothy Marchi] who lives around the corner who was very friendly with his sister Irene, Irene Chaisson, and Irene [*sic* Dorothy] went over to their house. There were a lot of little houses sort of in a cluster up there in Virginia and apparently they lived in one. I think there were six of the Muskie children, and I vaguely knew Irene. One of them, and I think it was Betty but I'm not sure, worked in Day's Store and I talked with her quite often. Let me see, there was Irene, Frannie, Betty, and there's another one, I can't think of her name.

AL: Lucy?

FM: Lucy, right, Lucy, right. And then there was a brother and I don't know where he came, whether he was older or younger. And he's out in California or somewhere, he's far away and I never knew him at all. In fact I was just talking with my friend the other day and she knew the family better than I did because she was very friendly with Irene, and Irene Chaisson [*sic* Dorothy Marchi] apparently lived next door to the Muskies up in this section of Rumford called Virginia, and she had visited Irene a lot, and I know she was friendly, she and her sister were good friends of theirs.

AL: And what is her name?

FM: The girl who knew, Dorothy Marchi, and she lives around the corner from me. She was a Rumford gal and she and her sister, they were never married and they both worked in the mill for many, many years. They were the top notch secretaries in the mill. And she and her sister moved down here at the same time I did, in the fall of '84. And her sister died about a year ago just like that of a week's illness, I don't know what that's all about; this isn't of much interest but I forget that I'm on ...

AL: That's okay. Now, let's skip ahead a little bit to when you entered Bates. Tell me what Bates was like during that time period.

FM: Everybody was poor, they were still poor.

AL: Even into the '40s?

FM: Yeah, it was '39, yeah. I mean, Bates wasn't what it is today because I have three grandchildren. And now every room has a refrigerator, a VCR, a television, a telephone, probably some little place they can cook or microwave and it costs a fortune to go to Bates. It used to be, well, some of the sayings about it was, if you can't go to college, go to Bates, that was one thing that you heard a lot. And another one, they called it the poor man's college. And when I was there, most of my friends had jobs. My roommate was there on a shoestring, she was from Fairhaven, Connecticut [sic Massachusetts], and she waited on tables. The only job I had was, my father wanted to make sure that I had plenty of time to study, and, but I was Dr. Zerby's assistant my senior year. That was just a slight job and I just worshiped that man, he was so brilliant.

AL: I've heard a lot about him.

FM: Oh, he was wonderful. And he influenced my teaching so much.

AL: Now how, in what way?

FM: Well, I remember one thing that he taught in one of his classes, he said there were three words that I'd like to have you remember. Now if I, see if I can remember them. What we need, oh no, I went down to see him after I was teaching and he said there are three things, and I don't imagine I can remember them, my mind is not as good as it used to be. Ah, hmm, I can't even remember any of them. Wait just a minute, can you turn that off for just a minute because I've got that written down here.

AL: Sure, we'll just take a pause.

FM: I can't remember the other one, but I'll think of it and I'll look it up for you sometime.

AL: Integrity and motivation [*and compassion*].

FM: Yeah, but there was another one. I don't think it's in this, I saved this out of a Bates thing. Integrity, motivation [*and compassion*]. I don't think it was in here, but I saved this because he was my inspiration. I mean, he was the best thing that ever happened to me. And I used these words, at the beginning of the year I would put these three words on the board. And I said, now, as we study novels and short stories in literature, I want you to see, I'll be asking you essay questions, to write essay questions on how certain characters measure up and so forth, and I want you to keep these three things in mind. Integrity, motivation, that's awful, well, I'll find it out for you.

AL: Now, what was your major at Bates?

FM: Religion.

AL: Religion.

FM: Well, I wasn't terribly religious and I'm not what I call terribly religious, I don't go to church very often. But I, you know it, back in those days they more or less told you what you were going to take your freshman year, and they said, well, I think religion, freshman religion would be a good course for you. And I had been active in the Methodist church in Rumford; I'd been in the choir and I'd taught, well, no I hadn't taught Sunday school there, I taught Sunday school afterwards. But I, you know, I wasn't especially religious I didn't think. So anyway, they steered me into that and they also steered me into Peter Bertocci's psychology which I enjoyed very much. And then I got into Bobby Berkelman's classes which I loved. But I was so impressed with Dr. Zerby that I decided I wanted to take every course he taught, and I did, every single course that he taught. And I majored under him. And then he asked me to be his assistant. And, you know, he's been a profound influence on my teaching, on everything. Even his methods of teaching were methods, he had time lines so you would remember. I mean, and I got all the teachers together and we all made, well all the freshmen teachers. I convinced them to put up time lines so we could coordinate our different subjects and have an idea of the history and development of things, and that was, you know, all, everything. And then he had key words, a whole list of key words and a list of key dates. And of course on the time line we had dates that he gave us, you know, and remembering all the religious things, and you could apply it to anything.

AL: Now, Ed Muskie was said to have been a fairly religious person.

FM: He was a Catholic, I'm sure.

AL: And he was a Catholic, yeah. Growing up in Rumford, in that community, were there any ...

FM: It was very Catholic.

AL: It was very Catholic? Did you notice that in functions, were there, was it a barrier for people, their religion?

FM: Well, you know, back then there was a lot more, maybe prejudice is too strong a word, but a lot more feeling, I suppose in a sense it is prejudice. We had a place in Rumford called Smith's Crossing and that's where all the Italians lived; we had a lot of French people there; we, a lot of, there were quite a few Scotch people there because a lot of the Scotch people were brought over by Hugh J. Chisholm to run the paper mill. And there were Lithuanians and some Polish and Russian, it was kind of a melting pot, you know, the people would come there to work in the mill. Strong Italian and strong French, and quite a few Polish, Lithuanian, quite a lot of Lithuanians, yeah, there were, you know, it was a melting pot. Did I say Italians? Yes, there were, yeah, there were Italians. In fact my friend over here is Italian. But I think there was more feeling then than there is now. I don't think there's as much feeling, although in high school a lot of my best friends were Italian and French, I mean, you know.

AL: Did you ever get a sense of Ed Muskie's religious convictions when he was running for governor or in the political scene, did you have a sense of his religion?

FM: Well, if I do, I don't remember it. My memory's not very good. He was, well, I think he was democratic, he was a Democrat, but I think he was democratic in the sense of wanting a good life for everybody without prejudice. You know, I just had the feeling that, you know, I imagine, well, I don't know what Bates was like when he was there but, Bates has always been pretty liberal and caring about everybody. I mean, I think Bates has, I don't, I think Bates has always been a truly liberal arts college, I think liberal, I don't think there's been a lot of prejudice at Bates.

AL: Was Bates a political place when you were there? Did people discuss politics and get involved with community politics?

FM: Yeah, Frank Coffin was there, oh, he was a Democrat. But, I can see this Republican, I can see him but I can't think of his name. Oh dear, I should have, you should have given me a little homework to do. Oh yeah, this other fellow was, he was very prominent but he was a Republican, but... Of course I knew Frank very well and I knew his wife, well his wife had a sister in my class, Helen Ulrich, what was her name, Ruth, Ruth Ulrich, and she married Frank Coffin. And of course Frank was an incredible leader and he was, you know, a good Democrat. Yeah, Bates was kind of political then because we had some good leaders. There were a couple others, too, and I can't think what their names were offhand.

AL: This would have been just before, or the start of WWII that this, when you were ...

FM: Oh, tell me about that, yeah. WWII began, I remember very well I was in Rand Hall, that was the senior dorm. And one of my friends, Dot Malsby, very, very smart, she was a four point all the way, came in and she had just been listening to the radio and she said the Japanese had just attacked Pearl Harbor. Well! And then all the men left, they had a V12 unit there somewhere along the way. And we couldn't go anywhere or do anything. It really changed life

at Bates and we lost I remember Norm Marshall, ... (pause in interview).

AL: Now I did have another question for you. In 1936 or '37 I believe Ed Muskie came back to Stephens High School between graduating from Bates and going to law school, and he did some substitute teaching. Is that anything that you remember? We're trying to verify it.

FM: Now when was this?

AL: It must have been 1936 or '37, and since you were high school age then, I thought you might remember if that is the correct time period. No?

FM: Don't remember a thing about it. Thirty-six. Gee, I would have been a freshman in '36 or a sophomore. I don't remember.

AL: That's okay. I might have the years wrong. We're just trying to figure out exactly when he did some ...

FM: Well, I don't think it was when I was there.

AL: Now did he ever come to the high school while you were teaching to speak to classes?

FM: I don't know about his speaking to classes, but I remember hearing him in the auditorium once. And I can't remember whether that was after I was married or... See, I lived in Rumford, I was born and raised there and I met my husband when I was teaching. Well, I went to the conservatory in Boston two years after Bates and studied public school music, and people, teachers were very scarce because of everybody being off at the war and people were scarce in general. And so before, I was going to stay and get my degree and the superintendent said could you possibly come because we don't have anyone, you know, and we'd like to have a music teacher. So I went back and I taught there a year and about that time my husband, who became my husband, came down from Canada into the research department of the paper company. And I was putting on Pinafore that year and he volunteered to do the scenery and get some of his research people to come up and do it. Well, that was the beginning of a beautiful friendship and we were married the next summer. And, what was your question?

AL: Ed Muskie, do you remember him speaking?

FM: Oh, I remember him speaking and I'm trying to think whether he, I think that was after I was married, but I taught a long time after I was married and I taught almost up until I came down, in fact I did teach until I came down here.

AL: Now when you went to Bates College, did you live on campus?

FM: Yes.

AL: What was the relationship between, I've heard a lot about what they called townies, people

who lived in town and just commuted to Bates each day, and those who lived on campus. Did you find that there was, there were different groups or did they interact a lot with each other?

FM: Well, I'm trying to think. I'm sure I knew some who were living in town. I can't really remember much about it one way or the other.

AL: Were you involved in any extracurricular activities at Bates?

FM: Yes, I was in the college choir and the chorus and I was president of the McFarland Music Club, which wasn't terribly... I'm trying to think if there was anything else. I can't remember anything else, but, oh I was on student government, I was a proctor over at Frye Street, my roommate and I. I roomed with the same gal for four years; we were very good friends. I mean, we still are. And so I was a proctor and she was a proctor with me, we roomed together, and I was on student government I remember. I can't remember that I belonged in the outing club or not, I remember going on some of the trips but I don't remember whether I was... I was, spent a lot of time studying, you know, I liked to study.

AL: And you said that your family has had a long tradition of being involved with Bates?

FM: Oh, yes.

AL: Tell me a little bit about that again, how ...?

FM: Well, my sister went to Bates and she met her husband there. And then two of her sons went to Bates. Then I went to Bates and my son went to Bates and he met his wife at Bates, and his wife's mother had gone to Bates and her brother went to Bates. He was there while they were there. And then my son, who's out in Seattle now, he's at the Univer-, he's a professor at the University of Washington, in science like his father, he, two of his daughters went to Bates. Sarah, the oldest one, graduated from Bates and got married last year to Scott Steinberg, the director of alumni affairs. And her sister Liza, from Seattle, is a senior at Bates this year. Then my daughter Barbara, who is a traitor, she went to Wellesley. She thought there was enough Bates and she thought she'd like to go to Wellesley so she went to Wellesley. But she married Dick Trafton whose father was the secretary, I believe, of the trustees for many years. So, you know, he was well known at Bates for awhile anyway, he was there ...

AL: Was he politically involved as well?

FM: Politically?

AL: Yeah.

FM: Yes, and as a matter of fact he ran against Muskie when Muskie ran for governor and he was defeated.

AL: Well that name rang a bell for a second.

FM: Yes, Bill Trafton ran against Muskie on the Republican ticket.

AL: Tell me a little bit more about that because I don't know.

FM: Oh, well, of course I didn't know the Traftons then. But Bill Trafton was a wonderful, wonderful man but he was a Republican and he ran against Muskie and he was soundly defeated. And he was the one that was I believe secretary of the board of trustees for many, many years at Bates. And now he has a grandson who's at Bates.

AL: Is he still living?

FM: No, he died, oh, a few years ago, two or three years, oh, maybe more than that, three or four years ago. And his wife died two or three, a couple of years ago. He died first. No, wait a minute, no, she died first. And then he died more recently. So. But he was a wonderful man, you know, he would have been a good governor, too, but he was a Republican and he didn't stand a chance. You know, I think Ed Muskie related better to the common people if you know what I mean. Bill Trafton had always had a silver spoon in his mouth. And I just, although he was very nice and very friendly with everybody, I think people put him in a different category. And I think Muskie would get the popular vote where Bill Trafton probably wouldn't.

AL: Did you always want to be a teacher? Is that where you started out with aspirations for?

FM: No, I don't think I knew what I wanted to be. But you know, back in those days a female could be a teacher, a secretary or a nurse, and what else was there? And I liked studying, I liked learning, I liked going to classes and I liked good professors and you know, I enjoyed the school atmosphere. And I like kids, high school kids particularly and that's where I always taught.

End of Side One
Side Two

AL: This is Side B of the interview with Frances McKnight, MOH #46. The beginning of this side begins mid conversation. Frances McKnight is responding to a question I just asked her regarding her father's career.

FM: He took over the... well, he was head of shipping, he was head of the order department. And he was head of the entire finishing room which meant the cutters, the rewinders, the counters and I don't know what else. And he was one of the top three or four people in the whole organization. And he didn't have a college education and a lot of the people he was working with did, but he was a prolific reader and he obviously was a smart man.

AL: So he built his way up to the top.

FM: Yeah, he just went up, I don't know that you could do that today, I don't think you could, I don't think you could. But that was, in those days if you had ability and studied and read and

worked and thought, you could get somewhere. Today I don't know that you could do it without that degree after your name. I don't know, what do you think?

AL: I think it's a lot harder. I think it's more a lottery these days.

FM: Yes, yes.

AL: And tell me again, what position was he in that he was teaching this naturalization course?

FM: Oh, he was just a citizen that they, I don't think he had any special credentials that I know about. He, I guess any good citizen that seemed to be smart enough to, I don't know, take the manuals and teach it and all, I guess. I don't know who picked them, I don't know anything about that because I was very little then, I guess. I don't remember, I just know that he did that and I don't know why I know it but I know that, probably my sister told me. She was probably, see, there was ten years difference between my sister and me and apparently my mother lost a boy in between us.

AL: Was it just you and your sister?

FM: Just the two of us, but we were ten years apart. In other words she graduated from Bates in '33 and I was '43.

AL: Have you ever been involved in politics yourself at the community level, or?

FM: Well, yes, in a sort of funny way. My daughter became involved and so of course I helped her and campaigned. She ran for city council and she didn't get it, and then she decided to run for the house of representatives and she got it.

AL: Was this in Rumford?

FM: No, this in Auburn.

AL: In Auburn.

FM: In Auburn. And then she decided to, she served I don't know whether it was one or two terms in the house and then she decided to run for the senate and she got that. And I can't remember, I think it was one, I don't know, it was one or two terms. And then her husband decided to take her place. Dick Trafton. And he was elected. She was a great campaigner.

AL: Now what is your daughter's name?

FM: Barbara Trafton.

AL: Barbara Trafton.

FM: And he served in the senate for, I don't know if he served one or two terms either, that's kind of hazy in my mind. And they have the theory that everyone who can and is capable and able should serve for awhile but not stay there forever. And then he came back and he ran for mayor of Auburn and he served there I think three terms.

AL: Really. So they've been very politically active.

FM: Oh, very political.

AL: And you've kind of helped them.

FM: And they're Democrats. Of course, Bill Trafton was a dyed... And there are nine children in the Trafton family; half of them are Democrats and half of them are Republicans. But when she was running, of course I was campaigning for her and when she and Dick were running I was running. And then I, we have a city councilor here that we didn't care too much for and I worked with another person, actually she's mayor of Auburn now, I'm trying to think of her name. I know it just as well as I know my own, can't think of it. But anyway, and I helped her. No, I've worked on quite a few political campaigns between Barb and Dick and, oh, what's her name. Her husband's head of the hospital. That makes me so cross when I can't remember a name. So, I'm interested in politics, and ...

AL: Do you remember the time period when Muskie was running for governor, the feeling that you got in your community and around the state as the momentum built in his campaign? Did you sense that he might win?

FM: Well, I think he was very popular. I think they felt he was a very good man. And then of course he ran for the senate and then they thought he was wonderful and of course then he ran for President. And we were all terribly disappointed, I mean, people were terribly disappointed. We thought that was dirty politics, which politics is pretty dirty. And of course I like Clinton and I'm not happy with what he did but I'm not happy with what the Republicans have done to him either, so. Of course I was brought up Republican, but I'm like an awful lot of Mainers, I think they're mostly independent. Because I voted for Margaret Chase Smith and, oh, I'm trying to think, I certainly voted for Muskie. Who else have we had, I'm trying to think of some other people we had.

AL: Angus King.

FM: Oh, I vote for Angus, I like him. In fact he spoke at my grandson, the one that's at Bates, graduation from Carrabassett Valley Academy. He was very good. I like him, too. He's a personal friend of Barb and Dick's. So, they're quite political and I've been kind of political along with them if you know what I mean. I'm interested in politics, I'm tremendously interested in politics, and I always vote and you know, I vote, I split my ticket all the time. I vote, oh I love George Mitchell, but I like Bill Cohen too, I've always voted for both of them. So has most of Maine. I think Mainers in general are quite independent.

AL: Well you know, George Mitchell may be going to Washington. That was the newest report this morning, that Clinton might ask Mitchell to come in and help him out.

FM: Really?

AL: We don't know. You know, this point they're rumors.

FM: Oh, you can get everything so you don't know what's going on. I was so glad that Mark McGwire hit that home run because that gives us a little relief from the trauma of the rest of it. Well, George Mitchell, oh, Barb had a big party for George Mitchell once up at her house. Oh, and another thing, too, talk about political. She was a delegate to the national convention for nominating presidents one year, I think it was out in Oregon or somewhere, I may be wrong. And she entertained Rosalynn Carter at her home one day and she invited me and my dear friend Ann Wood, who was the other English teacher and is a very dear friend of mine. And we had a great principal at the time, they've got a rotten one up there now, but he was wonderful and he said this is a lifetime thing, you and Ann go. And so they let us go and we came down and went to this. They lived up on Dillingham Hill, I don't know how well you know the area, in a great big house. And it was all cordoned off and we were standing up there in the front row, shook hands with Rosalynn Carter and she spoke to all of us and it was very interesting. No, I've had a lot of contacts politically.

AL: Yeah, as you were talking, I seem to remember the names Trafton, Barbara and Dick and I think they may be on our list to interview.

FM: Oh, well they knew Muskie. Because I remember going down, this is something else I just remembered, I remember going down to, where was it on the coast that he had a home?

AL: Kennebunkport?

FM: Kennebunkport I guess it was, to Muskie's home with Barbara. And I believe George Mitchell was speaking to a group of Democrats there. And I, they had it outdoors and there was a big tent and tables and luncheon and everything, and Barbara asked me to go with her and so I did and had a wonderful time. And I remember wanting to go to the ladies room and I went in and Ed's wife, I can't remember her first name.

AL: Jane.

FM: Jane was very gracious and friendly and she showed me her house and, you know, it was very nice. And I had a nice time that day. Forgot about that. Yeah, I've done a lot of political things now that I think of it. I was always interested in politics. I took a lot of history courses at Bates and had some great, Doc Sweet was a great history professor.

AL: Oh, Paul Sweet? Yeah, he's still living.

FM: He is? Oh, I liked him so much, he was a wonderful teacher. I had some really good courses, I liked, you know, I had good courses there. I liked this [Professor] Tozier, too, that was a history course. I liked history, sociology, had Peter Bertocci, had Angelo for French, too. We had, I thought we had some wonderful professors at Bates.

AL: You know, I've heard that over and over again, and some have said that possibly that was because it was during the Depression years, that these people weren't in business, so you got some of the best of the best in the teaching profession. Do you think that might be why?

FM: The thought never crossed my mind. I thought if they were teaching, it was because they wanted to teach. They all seemed, these ones that I had that I liked so much I thought were enthusiastic teachers. I had a lot I liked. Freshman year I had, oh another one I liked a lot was Andy Myhrman, he was great. And his wife and my sister were great friends because my brother-in-law Jack Curtis worked in admissions at Bates for a long, he worked at Bates for a long time. And they were there at Bates when I was there, and if I wanted to stay out late at night all I had to do was to sign out that I was going down and stay overnight with my sister. That was kind of nice. I remember coming home from one formal, they had a porch and on the other side of the porch, there was a, sort of three windows together. And on the other side there was a couch, it was sort of a studio couch, and it had big things that were holding the cushions up, wood. And I decided after this formal I would stay down there all night so that I could go in as late as I wanted to. And I somehow didn't get the key or, anyway I was locked out. And so we managed to force a window up and I climbed through this little, it was a little narrow window, you know, a big window in the middle and two little narrow ones, but I was small enough and I climbed in. But on the way in I hit my eye on the back of the studio couch. And the next day, I think this was just before we left to go home for some reason, I had to walk around campus all day with a black eye. And I got quite a lot of back talk from people. They wanted an explanation because I'd just been to this dance with this boyfriend at the time. Oh well. You remember all these silly things when you think of college. But I loved Bates, I enjoyed it a lot, I had a great time even though it was war time. We were handicapped toward the end, it was bad because all the fellows went off to war and we couldn't take any trips that, like, you know. Everybody was poor, I mean most everybody was poor at Bates. We had a good time.

AL: What do you think Muskie's biggest contribution to Maine was? Is there something that he did that really sticks out in your mind that he left?

FM: Well, I think he was, I think he was an environmentalist. And I can't remember exactly but I think he was, I don't know if instrumental, but I think he was certainly involved in doing things like cleaning up the smelly Androscoggin River. And also I think he was influential as far as George Mitchell was concerned. And I think this is when they began, see the Androscoggin was terrible, and the paper mill, because my husband was on a river committee with Doc Lawrance. And I don't know who all else was on that, but I know he was on this. And of course he was, my husband ended up being research director of the paper company until he had Alzheimer's. And he used to go to these meetings with Doc Lawrance and I don't know who all else. But I think Ed Muskie and George Mitchell both were quite instrumental in environmental

things.

AL: The Clean Air Act and the Clean Water Act.

FM: Yeah, yeah. I think, weren't those about that time? I mean, I'm asking you.

AL: Yes, yes.

FM: Because this is what my lame brain recalls, that they were both very instrumental in that.

AL: Yes, yes.

FM: So I'm right. Good. So I just confirmed what everybody else has said probably.

AL: Well, everyone has a different view of what the biggest thing was that he contributed. You know, some people say, and then there's other things too.

FM: Well, I'm sure he did a lot of things. Of course I was more involved in the river clean up because my husband was in it, so I remember that. Now when was he governor of Maine?

AL: Nineteen fifty-four to 1958.

FM: Nineteen fifty-four to what?

AL: Nineteen fifty-eight. He had two terms.

FM: Nineteen fifty-four to '58. I was living in Rumford then and I was married and that's when my husband was on the river committee in there, somewhere along the way.

AL: Well thank you very much for the interview.

End of Interview

[Additional Notes - comments made by **FM** after recorded interview]

John Marsh a leader at Bates, also great singer and actor. As I recall he was also political and did some kind of foreign service. A lot of activists at Bates.

Muskie spoke at Bates during Vietnam War - was against it. Very effective speech. My husband and I attended. My son Stan had the honor of introducing him. Alumni Gym was packed on the occasion. Also John Donovan. Dave Nichols was the strong Republican leader on the Bates campus - very smart, nice young man. Don't recall any political animosity on campus.

[End of notes]

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