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Interview with Vincent L. McKusick by Andrea L'Hommedieu

Summary Sheet and Transcript

Interviewee

McKusick, Vincent L.

Interviewer

L'Hommedieu, Andrea

Date

July 23, 2001

Place

Portland, Maine

ID Number

MOH 311

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Biographical Note

Vincent Lee McKusick was born October 21, 1921 in Parkman, Maine on the family dairy farm. His parents were Carroll L. and Ethel (Buzzell) McKusick. His father graduated from Bates College in 1904, as did his sister, Grace, in 1930. His father served with Ed Muskie in the Maine legislature in the early 1940s. Vincent's twin brother, Victor, is a renowned geneticist. Vincent's education included attending a one-room school house, Guilford High School, Bates College (class of 1944), MIT (engineering 1947) and Harvard Law School (1950), where he was president of the Harvard Law Review. He joined the U.S. Army in 1943, and was part of a research group for the Manhattan Project. He has been a member of the Pierce-Atwood law firm since 1952, and was Chief Justice of the Maine Supreme Judicial Court from 1977 to 1992.

Scope and Content Note

Interview includes discussions of: Bates College in the 1940s; Great Depression; Manhattan Project; Guilford, Maine; Pierce Atwood law firm history; Willis A. Trafton; large companies he represented; Hal Gosselin; Bates Manufacturing Company; Brooks Quimby; Bates College debating; Frank Coffin; Edmund S. Muskie; and Maine legal services for the poor.

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Transcript

Andrea L'Hommedieu: This is an interview with the Honorable Vincent L. McKusick at his office at Pierce Atwood in Portland, Maine on July 23rd, the year 2001. It's approximately 1:00 PM, this is Andrea L'Hommedieu. Could you start by giving me your full name and where and when you were born.

Vincent McKusick: I am Vincent L. McKusick, Vincent Lee McKusick. I was born on October 21, 1921 in the town of Parkman, Maine.

AL: And did you grow up in Parkman?

VM: Yes, I grew up there. And incidentally, my twin brother Victor was obviously born on the same day. I always make it clear, though, that I was born first. There are certain perks that go with that. Yes, we grew up on a family dairy farm in Parkman and went to a one-room schoolhouse for all of our grammar years, and then went to Guilford High School.

AL: So Parkman was just outside of Guilford.

VM: Yes, I always called it a suburb of Guilford.

AL: And what was it like growing up in that area of Maine, do you have a basis for comparison? Having lived in Southern Maine for a while now?

VM: Quite different, but I look back on my youth as very enjoyable. I had two unusual parents. My father was a graduate of Bates College and had been a high school principal and a teacher in Chester, Vermont for some years until he decided that a healthier life would be back in his hometown. He came from Parkman. And he went into dairy farming. My mother was a, did not have a college education but at that time taught in the one-room school houses, prior to our birth, and was very much interested in education.

AL: And what were their first names?

VM: My father was Carroll, Carroll L. McKusick and, Carroll Lee as in, the same as my middle name. And my mother was Ethel Buzzell McKusick.

AL: And you mentioned that education was important to them.

VM: Yes, very much so.

AL: Did they talk to you about the importance of it, or how did they show it to you?

VM: Oh, yes, I think in a lot of ways. Also they always were very proud of, and properly so, the achievements of our older siblings. We have a daughter, they had a daughter, Grace was thirteen years older than the twins, a son Harry who was ten years older, and a son Robert who was seven years older. And they'd all gone to college and done very well and they were always held up as models for us.

AL: And did any of them go to Bates College as well?

VM: Yes, yes, both Grace was the class of 1930 at Bates, and Harry went only his first year to Bates, he would have entered in 1929.

AL: What, you said your father owned a dairy farm. Is that what most people did in Parkman, Maine, or what drove the economy there?

VM: No, Guilford had woollen mills and a toothpick factory as it was called. But they made, in addition to toothpicks, it was hardwood, Guilford Hardwood Products, which manufactured tongue depressors as well as, and other wood products of that sort as well as toothpicks. The, but that were the basic industries. Sangerville, which is right, runs into Guilford, also had a woollen mill at that time. I suppose that's long since gone. Although Guilford, Guilford Industries still operates in, not in woollens but in other kinds of fabrics.

AL: And you were born in 1921, so you may have some recollections of the Depression years?

VM: Oh yes, very much so, of course. You know, on a dairy farm, we were protected from it more than a whole lot of places. Farming in Maine at that time was, you grew an awful lot of things that you ate. And we had a, we had a retail milk route in Guilford and Sangerville. And that's what we as growing up did a lot, not only in milking and doing the farm chores, but also in delivering milk. But we knew, we knew those communities pretty well.

AL: Did you, what, in what ways did you see evidence of the Great Depression?

VM: Oh, it's hard to be terribly specific. To be very, very specific, I remember once that a man who had team of horses that he worked in the woods with and that were really very important to his livelihood. He always had a very large family. And I remember his coming up to my father and asking for a loan or a gift of two or three bags of grain just to keep the horses going, because that was essential to his livelihood, but a whole lot of other things. The hired man got under a dollar a day pay, and that sort of thing. And, you know, there were very little extras in life at that time. But on the other hand we, you know, we had adequate to eat and clothe ourselves and so on.

AL: Tell me a little bit about your relationship with your brother, being, both being twins and also both being so much younger than your other siblings.

VM: Well we, we did everything together and dressed alike. And we went to, except for the first year, we entered the second grade; our first year our mother taught us at home because we were about a mile and a half away from the one-room school house where we were going to go. But after that we went to a one room school house that, for, through nine grades which it had at that time. And interestingly enough, and there typically would be twenty to twenty-six students in different, in those grades. And, except for the first year, we had one teacher. But then for the other whatever it would be, seven years we had the same teacher for those seven years that lasted with us. Then we went to Guilford High School and did everything together and dressed exactly alike right through to our graduation. And we were co-valedictorians of the largest class that Guilford High School had ever had in 1940: twenty-eight in that big class.

The, then, if I can go on, Victor had become interested in medicine because he'd had a serious infection of his elbow and under his right arm, a Staphylococcus infection, and a very resistant

one. And he spent ten weeks at Mass General in Boston in the summer, I think, of 1937. And this, and fortunately penicillin came along, and just at the right time, to cure that. But this young fellow from the country, apparently doctors and nurses take a liking to and they showed him all around. And that instilled in him a bug of medical school. So, when we got around to going to college we of course were looking for as large a scholarship help that we could get. And we soon discovered that we'd get more in total scholarship aid if we went to two institutions, separate institutions, than we would if we went to one and they had to double up on two of us. And so he chose to go to Tufts because it has a medical school. And I went to Bates, which was my father's college, because I was interested in debate and of course knew already of Brooks Quimby's fame in that department.

AL: Oh yes. Did it reach you all the way up in Guilford or was it because -?

VM: Oh yes, very much so.

AL: So you went off to Bates College. What was Bates College like at that time?

VM: Well, it was about half the size of it at present. And I think the tuition, the tuition was either two hundred dollars or it had gone to two-fifty that fall. The, a lot of changes in the sixty years.

AL: And did you start being interested in debating (*unintelligible word*)?

VM: Oh yes, I was always interested in debate. As a matter of fact, I wrote to Brooks Quimby expressing my interest back, I think, before the senior year because we did not have a debate team at Guilford High School. And I, but I did do a public speaking, public speaking contest, and Victor did also. And I'll always remember that Professor Quimby wrote me back a long handwritten note encouraging me in it, and said that it didn't make any difference if we didn't have a debate team, and etcetera, etcetera. It typified the kind of guy he was.

AL: So tell me what it was like to be on the debate team with Quimby as coach.

VM: Well, you had to be prepared to have a debate with the Quimby Institute, as it was called. He would take the opposite side of the debate and, just as if he was in fact debating you and you had to, he put you through your paces that way. He was, the other thing that he did with great skill was to, and this is pertinent to the interview that you are having with me, he got great performance from his current debaters by telling about the great things that his prior debaters had done. And one of those of course was Ed Muskie, and another one was Frank Coffin quite recently. And that was a very effective way of building if you wanted debating spirit for the college, and holding up models for, to try to achieve and match.

AL: How did he get such great people debating? I mean -

VM: Well, I think because of his success, you know, nothing succeeds like success. And Bates from a fairly early time has had success in debating. And it's something that a, that first of all he attracts from within the student body, the best that's available, but also at the admissions

level it attracts to the college. I think that continues to be true. It's just the same as somebody has a great running of success in hockey, or football or something. They build on that kind of record. He did the same kind of thing.

AL: What was his teaching style?

VM: His teaching style?

AL: Yes, how did he get you to really be interested?

VM: Well, he was a bright man in his, and a good teacher entirely apart from his debating skills and so on. He emphasized substance. In other words, if he, of course presentation, speaking ability, yes that was important. But he also drilled in the necessity for research and preparation in the subject matter and that careful preparation is awfully important.

AL: Did he, besides the preparation, did he teach you how to -

VM: How to organize, yes, to -

AL: And convince people to believe your view? Did he have terms he used, or?

VM: Yes, to some extent, but basically the point was to know your subject thoroughly, and also to be convinced of the rightness of your cause. And that reminds me, the, there was coming into vogue at that time and is quite in vogue now, for debaters to go in for tournaments and to, in the forenoon take one side of a subject, then in the afternoon be prepared to take the other side of the same subject. He thought that was very, very bad. And I believe that he was right, that, he believed that, and he tried to give opportunities to the debaters to choose up their sides on how they felt on the subject. And even if they, perhaps they might not have strong feelings on either side, but at least when they got that side, that was their side and that's how he, to be convinced of what you're trying to sell. And number two to be, know everything that can be known about it. And those were his two principal elements as I remember it.

AL: Who were some of the other professors that you had a Bates College that stick out in your mind as being good professors?

VM: Well, I, Pa Gould, so-called, Professor Gould was, I majored in government and history. But I also had a minor, with the onset of the war, in physics. And Professor Carl Woodcock, and I was an assistant to him, and thought very highly of him. Professor [John Murray] Carroll, who was the economics professor, I thought very highly of. And others, but principally those are the ones I've mentioned.

AL: Do you remember Harry Rowe?

VM: Oh, my goodness, yes, yes.

AL: Tell me -

VM: He was administration, not a professor, yes. Oh yes.

AL: What did he, what did you feel he embodied as part of the college?

VM: History, the history of the college. He was at the college from the time he entered Bates, which was about 1909 I guess, continuously. He was a great pillar of the college and continuity and its history.

AL: Now, you went through Bates, and where did you go from there?

VM: I was in the class of 1944, but I graduated in June of 1943 by going to college in the summer of '42 and then taking extra courses. And then I, the draft had been held at bay all this time when I was finishing up. And so I went into the Army immediately and was, got infantry basic training at camp in Texas, which was northeasterly, northeastern Texas. And, Tyler, yeah, Tyler, Texas, and then was sent in the fall of 1943 to ASTP it was called, Army Specialized Training Program, an engineering program. First for three months at Drexel Institute in Philadelphia, now called Drexel University. And then to DPI as it then was called, it's now called Virginia Polytech Institute of the State University, or Virginia Tech, and there in electrical engineering. And at the end of that program at the end of 1944 I went to, was sent to Los Alamos on the Manhattan Project where I spent the next fourteen months of working there in a research group.

AL: Oh, wow. Now, the stuff that you did there, was it in relation to the Manhattan Project?

VM: Oh yes, the Manhattan Project, it was on the high explosives side and not the nuclear side. And I knew that we were working on a device, but knew very little about the nuclear side. Our small research group actually was developing and manufacturing and testing the detonator for the bomb. The Big Boy bomb was ahead the concentric spheres of the uranium material that were, two concentric spheres, that were brought into critical mass by having lenses of high explosive on the outside of him implode in and bring the two masses together. And these lenses on the outside of high explosives, there were thirty-two of them shaped together like an igloo to form a sphere around. Each one of the thirty-two lenses had a little detonator in the middle of it that looked like a, the little tube, transparent tube, looked like a little fuse with a filament through it. And a charge of current was put through the filament and there was a powder in there and it would touch this filament and that set off the lens. And the trick was to have the thirty-two lenses go off as simultaneously as possible so that the implosion would be smooth. And so that one wouldn't go off early and blow up the whole thing without bringing the uranium into critical mass, the two parts of uranium in the critical mass. And that's what the, the little detonators were actually made right there by, manufactured by women who, Indians from, Indian women from the (*name*) Pueblo which was just down the hill from Los Alamos.

AL: Oh, my God.

VM: And the group that I worked with had the job lining these, thirty-two of the detonators up on the, in a-. I won't go through the details of the experiment, but it just fired these off for test

purposes and see how close they came to firing at the same time. The Manhattan Project is a perfect illustration of what great things can be done if the job is cut down into small enough pieces that can be achievable. Of course somebody has to be on top to know how the pieces all fit together.

AL: Right, right. Achieve all the small parts and then have the organization enough to bring them all together slowly so they work well together.

VM: Precisely. But when you think of, all over the country, Hamford, Washington, and Oak Ridge, Tennessee, you know, they were doing various things all fitting together, and it was quite remarkable.

AL: And you had no idea what the -?

VM: No, no, what the bottom line was, what the end result was going to be. Oh, we would talk about it, but nothing -

AL: Nobody dreamed -

VM: And it was another remarkable thing, the degree of security that was achieved. At the, of course there was an awful lot of mail. There was a considerable number of civilians of course at, and there was a lot of mail coming into APO in Sante Fe and, to Dr. So-and-so and Dr. So-and-so. And the joke was, oh well, they have a hospital for pregnant WACS out there.

AL: Did you know that you had, there were other Bates people working on the Manhattan Project? I'm sure you didn't.

VM: Not that I know of, but I'm sure there were. Of course there were.

AL: The one I always think of [is] Lewis Davis -

VM: Oh, is that so? Yes, yes.

AL: - who was involved in that.

VM: Yes, I guess I now remember that. Yeah, I sit on the board of trustees with him.

AL: Oh yes, yeah. And so what, when you realized what the Manhattan Project was and what happened, what it did, what was your reaction?

VM: Well, pride and, oh yes indeed. I've often been asked, you know, was asked once in a particularly critical time, what did you think about dropping the bomb on Hiroshima. You know, not that I had any part in that decision, I don't have any second thoughts about that and they now talk about that. That it, whether it was a million men or five hundred thousand men or whatever it was that would have died in a invasion of the mainland in Japan. And Japan was perfectly determined to go on with the war and, I have no second thoughts about it.

AL: After your service in the Army, did you go to law school then?

VM: No, I, with the help of the G.I., I'm an over educated fellow, with the G.I. I'd always intended to go to law school, very definitely. But I had thoughts that I would combine my engineering, which was really quite extensive by that time, with the law in being a patent lawyer. And I could get a master's degree at MIT quite readily and, in (*unintelligible phrase*), I did do that. And in March of '46 I went to MIT in the electrical engineering cooperative program. And in five terms, by September of '47 when I was going to enter law school I got my, actually both a bachelor's and a master's degree in electrical engineering. And then I went to law school from there.

AL: And where did you go to law school?

VM: I went to Harvard Law School. As a matter of fact, after my first year in law school I worked for a patent law firm in Boston, Kenry and Jenny, which did the, Kenry, Jenny, Whittier and Hildreth which did the patent work for MIT. But I got weaned away from that in time; broader opportunities presented themselves.

AL: And what were those?

VM: Well I was very fortunate to serve as the President of the *Harvard Law Review* and then clerkships followed that. Patent law is very interesting so far as the litigation and the contracting work, at least it seemed to me, I've never been in it but it seemed to be. But on the other hand the application work I think is kind of deadly, it's, I call it wood chopping. You put in an application for a patent and it's turned down and so you put a limiting adjective or limiting adverb into the claim, don't want it limited too much but limited enough to get by the patent examiner. In any event, I never followed up that possibility.

AL: And then you made your way back to Maine, 1952?

VM: Nineteen fifty-two, yes, after clerking for two years.

AL: And what position did you hold when you got here?

VM: Well, I went right with the firm that you call Pierce, Atwood now, oh yes, and I was with Hutchinson, Pierce Atwood & Scribner. And then, then it, and I was with that and its successive firms for twenty-five years, until I became a chief justice. And then I was chief justice for fourteen and a half years, and I came back here and have been a counsel since. And for a period of time from 1961 to 1977 it was Pierce, Atwood, Scribner, Allen & McKusick.

AL: And some of the original partners in the firm are Scribner and Pierce?

VM: Yes, Leonard Pierce was the great head of the firm and one of the great lawyers of Maine of any time; extraordinary figure.

AL: So you knew him.

VM: Oh yes, he died in 1960 so I was with him for eight years, yeah.

AL: What was it about him that was so amazing as a lawyer?

VM: Well, he, great, great ability, great ability and a great sense of fairness and equity and absolutely (*unintelligible word*) at the same time, but he could turn his hand to any part of the law whether it was trying a case, (he had been a very active trial lawyer), or working out a major commercial transaction, or whatever. He was very, very able and very, very highly respected in all ways.

Ed [Edward W.] Atwood, the second named partner was also very able in his own way. He was a WWI ace, a flyer in WWI, and came to the firm at a very early age, I think served in the legislature and came with the firm about 1924. He did a great deal of lobbying and represented the paper companies, and also very, just a very good lawyer. Also represented the Portland Pipeline Corporation when it built the (*unintelligible word*) pipeline from South Portland to Montreal and continued to represent them. Very effective lawyer.

Then there was Fred Scribner who, I haven't, going back a minute, I didn't mention Hutchinson, Mr. Hutchinson at that time was very elderly and very inactive. But had, going back to the 1890s when he first joined the firm. Mind you, this was in early 1950s but he'd been with the firm over fifty years at that time. Fred Scribner of course is a great, great figure in Maine history and in the law. At that time he was, very active practice. In 1952 he was a member of the Republican National Committee and the general counsel of the committee. And was one of the group, along with such people as Warren Burger from Minnesota and Wisdom from Louisiana and Elbert Tuttle from Georgia, who were very active in the Republican convention of 1952 and getting the nomination for General Eisenhower. And then he went to Washington in 1955 as the, first as Assistant Secretary of the Treasury and then as Under Secretary of the Treasury. He also, coming back to 1952, he was treasurer, and counsel of course, and very active in the management of the Bates Manufacturing Company which at that time had five plants, three in Lewiston, one in Augusta, and one in Saco and was by quite a margin the largest employer in Maine.

In addition, the firm had Sigrid Tompkins who was the first woman partner in Maine of any significant law firm, and Charles W. Allen who had come back to Portland right after the war after spending four years before the war with a big New York law firm, Sullivan & Cromwell. And finally Jotham Pierce, who was Leonard Pierce's son. I've gone on longer there than you perhaps needed.

AL: No, that's okay. So you said Jotham was Leonard's son?

VM: Yes, yeah.

AL: Okay, so the Jotham who works here today is the grandson.

VM: Grandson, exactly, yeah, he's Jotham D. Pierce, Jr.

AL: And so tell me about, this was 1952 was when you came back to Maine and you started with this law firm. So we're in 1952. When is it you first heard of or met up with Senator Muskie?

VM: Well I, he wasn't a Senator. I -

AL: I mean later Senator.

VM: I referred to Brooks Quimby and his use of his past heroes who inspire the best in his current debaters, and Muskie was one of those. Frank Coffin, going back from me, Frank Coffin was four years ahead of me, Muskie was eight years ahead of me, and then John Davis was, and so on going back, the great debaters at Bates, and Muskie was one of those. And Brooks Quimby had pointed Ed Muskie in the direction of Cornell Law School. I'm quite sure that that's where Muskie ended up because of Brooks Quimby.

And then when I came back, then going on, coming, when I came back to Maine, and of course I had kept a lot of connections with Bates all the time prior to 1952. In fact I went on the Bates board of trustees in the fall of 1952 as an alumni trustee. And I don't think that I'd had any, I knew what Ed was doing but I don't think I'd had any contact with him, I don't remember that I'd had at reunions. I might have, but I don't remember that I had. I had a lot of contact with Frank Coffin, and Frank was clerk for Judge Clifford. He graduated from Harvard Law School in 1947 and he clerked for Judge Clifford for a couple of years and at the time. And I would see him at times back to Bates or otherwise because he lived right on the edge of campus on Mountain Avenue.

But when, in 1951 when I was clerking for Judge [Learned] Hand in New York, I already was thinking about where I was going to go and I remember I came up and David Nichols, another Bates debater who was active in the Young Republicans, wanted me to speak to the Republican, the Young Republican state gathering, and I think I saw Frank at that time. I went to see him at that time to talk about the, he of course knew well all about the firms in Portland, to see what the possibilities might be. And I guess also, I'm quite sure at that time I also corresponded with Fred Scribner and so on. But specifically, pertinent to your questions, I had quite a lot of contact with Frank in deciding whether or not to come here and he was very outgoing and encouraging to me.

Then when I did come here, I remember very clearly, and again it was only sort of a passing social kind of meeting with Ed Muskie, I remember that the lobby at that time was a very cozy affair that was centered at the Augusta House in Augusta. And I remember being in Augusta with Ted Atwood who did a lot of lobbying, and I remember I think quite clearly that Ed was there, and I think that he was also lobbying. He was no longer in the legislature, he was helping Carroll Perkins, who was a very distinguished lawyer in Waterville who represented various companies. He was working with Harold Perkins in a lobbying effort, and I remember a dinner at the Augusta House. I happened to be in Augusta and got in one. Just that, that's the first contact of any note.

AL: Yeah, I was wondering because, I mean you heard about him from Brooks Quimby when you were at Bates, and then your, and you'd heard of him probably also from your father?

VM: Yes, yes, thank you, thank you for mentioning that. My father thought a lot of Ed Muskie and it was reciprocated. My father was in the house for two terms in the first half of the forties, and then was in the State Senate for four terms through to the, through the, through until 1952. And so he had served with Muskie in the legislature and knew him quite well in that connection, exactly. And of course because my father was a Bates man and Muskie was a Bates man and they had some affinity in that (*unintelligible word*).

AL: Sure. So what were your initial impressions of Muskie?

VM: Well, he was a very handsome, tall fellow. Handsome, you know, in a somewhat rough hewn way, but no, I could see easily how anybody would have high respect for him.

AL: I'm going to go ahead and stop the tape right here so I can flip it over.

*End of Side A,
Side B*

AL: This is Side B of the interview with Vincent McKusick. And maybe the best thing is, can you tell me more instances when you came into contact with Muskie? How did it, chronologically how did that happen?

VM: I want to make clear that I never had occasion to be close to Ed. We were in different political parties, not that that necessarily would mean any great antagonism, but it led us into different channels. I cannot remember when Ed went on the Bates Board of Trustees, but he did at some point. He was terribly busy at the time, he may not have gone on the Bates trustees until he went to Washington. Of course, he went to Washington in 1958, and as I remember it he wasn't always able to make the meetings. But that would be where I would have had contact with him. He was, he received a Bates honorary degree at some point and I had contact with him in that.

AL: I'm not so much looking for hard facts or situations that you remember, but do you have sort of recollections of impressions about any work you did on the board together, what his style was, how did he work with people on the board?

VM: Well, I think because of the limited contact with him, I can't be very helpful to you on that, that was the point I'm trying to make. He, very quickly I think he established a reputation of effective dealings with other human beings, and everything I ever observed he lived up to that. And I think his reputation went ahead of him so that it helped him. He always expressed himself in a deliberate sort of way, which, you know, was impressive and people felt comfortable with.

AL: Now, you said you were politically involved yourself for a short time. What years were those and what was your involvement?

VM: Well, I wasn't very, very much involved. I was active in the Young Republicans when I first came back to Maine, and yes, I was the president of the Portland Club of Young Republicans. The only one time, and this is pertinent to your interview relative to Muskie, I was close to a fellow trustee at Bates, Bill Trafton, Willis A. Trafton, Jr., who was the Republican candidate for governor in 1956, which was the year in which Ed Muskie was reelected as governor. And Bill used me really quite a lot as a sounding board on his speech making and approaches and so on and so forth. I remember him and Timmy and Nancy and me going for a canoe trip on the Saco River just to get away, and his talking strategy with me, which was flattering to me, and obviously we weren't successful.

But after that, perhaps partly because of the lack of any great success, I became very much involved starting in 1957 in writing new rules of civil procedure. We had in Maine almost unadorned common law pleading up to that time, and a lawyer from 1856 could have come into a court room in 1956 and would have felt completely at home, (*unintelligible word*) and all the rest. And a movement that as a matter of fact Frank Coffin had started in a speech to the State Bar about 1951, but had not succeeded in getting any movement on, a move which was really brought to a head by a committee that Leonard Pierce, that Chief Justice Williamson persuaded Leonard Pierce to be the chairman of and I served as a secretary on, drafting new rules modeled on the Federal rules of civil procedure to completely replace the procedure. And we had as a reporter on that effort Professor Richard Field of Harvard Law School, and it really was quite a concentrated effort between '57 and '59. And then Dick Field and I introduced that red volume over there, Maine Civil Practice, which subsequently went through a number of pocket parts and a second edition in two volumes.

But anyway, that kind of, and I also became very, very heavily involved in the practice of law. I, when Fred Scribner went to Washington I took over representing Bates Manufacturing Company. And, I did not take over his job as treasurer which was a business position, but I took over representing them. And then in the early, very early 1960s I took over from Jim Reid, who went on the Superior Court, I took over the representation of the Maine Telephone Company. And the firm had always represented, Leonard Pierce had represented Central Maine Power Company and I got all the rate cases for them. So I, the practice of law kind of absorbed everything.

AL: I guess so. Now, did you represent the railroads, too?

VM: As a matter of fact, we did.

AL: You did.

VM: We represented Maine Central, yes, yes.

AL: Well then, you covered all the big businesses in the state. Did you know Hal Gosselin?

VM: Oh, Hal Gosselin is a very, very close friend of mine, yes, yes. Did you know, how, did you ask him?

AL: No, but I've had the pleasure of sitting and talking with his wife and his son -

VM: Oh, very good, yes.

AL: Because they had a lot to say about the Lewiston community and politics on the Republican side in the fifties and -

VM: Yes, but he, very, he's one of my very closest friends and of course in the Bates Manufacturing Company. Yes, I, yes, his wife's name, I can't think of her name.

AL: I want to say Juliette, but I'm -

VM: Is it Julie?

AL: I believe it is.

VM: I think it is, yes. No, I hope really you will tell them that, Hal was a wonderful, a remarkable fellow. He had had no education, you know, beyond high school, but is very bright, a very bright fellow. And a very effective speaker, very effective and very active in the community, great civic responsibility and so on. He's just a wonderful person.

AL: I'm trying to think, because a lot of our research, some of it in the Lewiston community centered around Bates Manufacturing because it was such a large business. And I'm trying to remember some of the other people whose names have been talked about.

VM: Well, Herman Ruhm was the president of Bates Manufacturing Company up until 1954 about, and then there was a great takeover by Lester Martin in '54 and quite a change of, change in top management but not in, Hal Gosselin continued (*unintelligible word*).

AL: And he was fairly close to Margaret Chase Smith, which is where the connection came in for us.

VM: Yes, was very close, yes, very close to Margaret Chase Smith. And he was active in establishing the library at Skowhegan, the Smith Library.

AL: Oh really?

VM: Yes, he was on the board. But long before that Margaret Chase Smith would consult him, for good reason, and Hal had a line in to the Senator.

AL: Now, were you close to Margaret Chase Smith at all?

VM: Not in the same way, although again, I, very pleasantly I, you know, I was in Portland when opportunities or chances, they aren't always advantageous opportunities. But when things come up, when you feel, I really ought to do that sometime, the thing to do is do it now, not to

put it off. And one instance in which I'm very proud that we did it now rather than putting it off, we saw Margaret Chase Smith up at Augusta at some kind of special event. And she said to Nancy and me, "I would like to have you come up and visit with me sometime and we'll have, we'll go into town and have lunch together." And I said, "I'd like to do that." And she said, "Well call me up when you can find the time and we'll do it." Very soon after that I called her up and we went up and did it, and you know, she didn't live very much longer beyond that. It is so important to do that sort of thing.

I digress a minute, exactly the same thing happened to me with the Senate, Chafee who died, he was a school classmate and a fairly close friend. And Ted Stevens, Senator Stevens who was also in our class, Senator Stevens from Alaska, and Chafee announced that he was not going to run for reelection. This was in '98 I believe, in the summer of '98 I believe, I think I have it right. And so Ted Stevens arranged to have a dinner for Chafee and others, of his law school classmates that were particularly close to him. And this was going to be held in the dining room in the, the senate dining room and all that sort of thing. And anyway, I said, oh my, it's awfully hard to get down there and so, but I went ahead and did it. And John died, John Chafee died exactly four weeks to the day after that dinner. And how important it was to have done that, you know.

AL: Absolutely.

VM: So that's my moral that I pass along.

AL: Yes, don't procrastinate.

VM: Don't procrastinate.

AL: Yeah, it's a good thought. So next, tell me significantly what, you had the '56 campaign that you were involved. And then you no longer remained in political, concentrated on your law and representing the big corporations in Maine. And then, tell me what was the next big era or -?

VM: Well, a lot of other things. I became very active in, I went, became very active in the American Bar Association and went on the American Bar Association Rules Committee because of my rules effort here. And then again in 1971 I went on the board of editors of the *American Bar Association Journal*, which is the magazine of the American Bar Association.

AL: American Power Association?

VM: American Bar, Bar Association.

AL: Bar, okay, okay, that's what I thought you said.

VM: Lawyers Association. Bar Association, and I served three terms on that because I happened to be chairman of the board (*unintelligible word*) my second term ran out and that entitled me to have another term. And then I became a commissioner on Uniform State Laws which is a, actually that's a gubernatorial appointment, state gubernatorial, that each state has

commissioners that get together once a year and draft uniform statutes for, to propose, model statutes to propose to the states and Governor Curtis appointed me to that. And as a matter of fact, I was that right up until the time I went on the bench. I found it very, very enjoyable, very, it's sort of an intellectual exercise that the, really quite an unusual organization. The commissioners take their work very seriously and, of course the Uniform Commercial Code is the big example of that. But there a multitude of uniform acts that are, Uniform Divorce Act and so on that are very important in the law. So that kept me quite busy, and then also having a wife and four children and (*unintelligible word*).

AL: Oh, four children. Now did any of them follow you to Bates?

VM: Yes, yes, Barbara, our oldest went to Bates in the class of '74 and her husband Paul is Bates of '74. And Jim, our second son, was the class of '77 I believe, '76, '76 I guess. Seventy-six or '77, I'm not sure.

AL: Have any of them followed into the law?

VM: Well, yes and no. Kay, who's our third, went to Duke Law School. She finished her last year here at the University of Maine but got her degree at Duke, went into law and practiced briefly but she has retired to motherhood and she -

AL: And then you went on the bench in 1977?

VM: In September '77.

AL: And Longley appointed you.

VM: Yes, Longley appointed me.

AL: What was it like being on the bench, from being a lawyer?

VM: It was wonderful. I think every lawyer who has any (*unintelligible word*) goal has that aspiration, and I was very, very fortunate. I tremendously enjoyed the practice of law, it was just great, very satisfying. But the, I equally enjoyed the bench and I think that I'm made up in such a way that I probably enjoyed the Chief Justiceship more than I would have enjoyed other judgeships. The two sides of the job, the chief justice is the head of the judicial branch and has very substantial administrative responsibilities and leadership responsibilities. And then you have, the same as, you know, you have the same responsibilities, the casework that other members of the supreme judicial court have, and that's very enjoyable. I always used to say my casework was my R&R from the administrative work. The administrative work, but the administrative work was enjoyable. Administrative work was open ended, you could, anything that, you can spend any amount of time on it. You just had to draw the line somewhere and -

AL: By administrative do you mean how the court systems in Maine will -?

VM: Well, you are running an organization that has fifty judges and two hundred and fifty plus

other people and so on. But the, yes, you have a variety of ways of running those. You have the job of naming a chief justice for each of the courts, you have, and however your system may be. We had rather frequent administrative meetings, that is we would get together. You have court administrators that are non-judges who do an awful lot of work, then you have the clerks at each location who deal with the lawyers and have systems and so on. It's, the, it's a very substantial enterprise. You also have the responsibility, which Chief Justice [Daniel] Wathan, my successor has done much more effectively I believe than I was able to, you are the representative of the courts in the public eye. You have to be a publicist, you have to be, each year the chief justice gives a state of the judiciary address to the legislature in the same way as the governor gives a state of the state address. And you have to be available for public appearances, at the beck and call of the media and other people.

AL: Now, has Justice [Daniel] Wathen, Chief Justice Wathan, ever called you for advice, or was there a transition time, or?

VM: Oh no, but he and I talk often at times, and he's been very splendid in keeping me posted. I also, I was president of the Conference of Chief Justices which is a national organization of, and as that I'm a member of a committee of past presidents the conference calls it. Which entitles me to go to their meetings twice a, they have meetings twice a year, and Chief Justice Wathen has been very nice in encouraging me to go and I, they're really, they're very interesting. In many ways similar to the Conference of Commissioners on Uniform State Laws; they are people from all over the country that come together with a common interest, and they always go to nice places to meet and I find it very enjoyable. It's a way of coming to know people all over the country under very interesting circumstances.

AL: Can you tell, I'm interested to know a little bit about your twin brother who is a geneticist. What sort of a, what sort of things did he do that gained him recognition?

VM: Well, his, interestingly enough he started as a heart specialist but shifted over to, or moved more and more into genetics at a very early stage. And of course as it happened, very fortunately, right now he is at Bar Harbor running the short course, at Jackson Lab, running the, his short course in genetics that. And this believe it or not is the 42nd year that he's going to, he started this in 1960. And so to emphasize how early it was, and they have oh I guess now a hundred and thirty to a hundred and fifty people. And many of the people now are coming back who have been there before. It, he, the, what he has, mainly I think is known for, is his Mendelian Inheritance of Man which is a, which is now in something like its, I think, thirteenth or fourteenth edition and is many, many volumes with collects all that has been discovered. It's also on line and is kept up every day, everything that is known in the genetic field and, as a resource for other people to build on that kind of thing. Then he was the chief of medicine, which means the top dog at Johns Hopkins Medical School from 197-, 1974 to 1986 I think it was.

AL: I guess the next thing to ask is in general terms, what are your recollections of Senator Muskie, is there any time period I missed where you may have had a connection with him?

VM: Well I think, I think perhaps a connection most directly on the same thing I should

mention is Ed Muskie's very valuable work in the legal services area. And if I remember, this is when I was Chief Justice and so it behooved me to give every possible encouragement to it that I could. But he did in a way that nobody else could have done pull together support for examining the lack of adequate legal services for the poor in Maine, and to get action and do something about it. It was very, very valuable.

AL: Now you weren't on the commission itself?

VM: Oh, I couldn't be, I was a Chief Justice.

AL: Because you were the Chief Justice.

VM: But I had to give encouragement to it, yes, yes.

AL: As an observer who wasn't politically involved himself throughout the years, what were your impressions of Senator Muskie? You must have heard about him in the news and by the other Maine people around you.

VM: Well, of course he had just a perfectly remarkable career and showed himself to be a very, very special person throughout. We can be very proud of Maine; we produced a man of that caliber indeed. He, and in the political arena, just to, stepping back from it, Frank Coffin of course deserves a very great credit for it. But between the two of them, both Bates men, they created the two-party system, which hadn't existed before. Sometimes I think as a Republican they went too far with it. I'm joking, but it was just remarkable. And the, but it, one can't help but think that that good Bates debate training helped both of them a whole lot. Or else they took the same skills that they had shown there; they put it into the political arena. Of course Frank Coffin is, entirely apart from the political arena, he was an exceptional judge and we're very fortunate that he is, he you see has finished thirty-five years on the federal bench. Just remarkable.

AL: In closing, is there anything that I haven't asked you about that you feel is important to add today?

VM: No, I don't think so. I think you've done, covered the field very well indeed.

AL: Well great, thank you so much.

VM: You're quite welcome indeed.

End of Interview