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Interview with Myrtle Milledge by Greg Beam

Summary Sheet and Transcript

Interviewee

Milledge, Myrtle

Interviewer

Beam, Greg

Date

July 19, 2000

Place

Mexico, Maine

ID Number

MOH 205

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Biographical Note

Myrtle Milledge was born in 1915 in Rumford Maine. She was very involved in the Democratic Party throughout her years living in Rumford. She came into personal contact with many high-ranking party officials within the state, including Lucia Cormier. She has spent much of her life observing Maine politics, and has seen Rumford and Mexico change over the years.

Scope and Content Note

Interview includes discussions of: Maine politics; her childhood in Rumford, Maine; Republicans and money; Jolene Lovejoy; Catholics and Baptists; Stephen Muskie; the environment; Lucia Cormier; McQuade/Harpe; volunteers; Vietnam memorial; Muskie memorial; William Loeb; and the Muskie and Kennedy comparison.

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Transcript

Myrtle Milledge: . . . I have a sister the same way. If there's a Democratic meeting we go. We went to one not too long ago, and we were disappointed, not, you know, there weren't that many. I think there was, it was down to the Mexico rec park, and there was a young fellow from the state there that was taking notes. I don't know, wasn't you, was it?

Greg Beam: No, it wasn't.

MM: I can't remember, I can't remember what he looked like, but I know there was my sister and I, and the town manager and one other man and this young fellow come in and took notes I guess. I don't know, but there wasn't too much that, but anyway, we're Democrats, very strict.

GB: Have been all your life?

MM: Have been all my life. My dad was. And the only thing is, I got a niece that is running here in, over, she lives in Rumford, so she's running here this year and, but we, Mexico can't vote for her. So I'm still a Democrat. I mean, I don't know what I'd do, I, you know. But she's the only Democrat in the party, I think the rest of us are all... I mean she's a Republican, and the rest of us are all Democrats, have been for years. Years and years.

GB: All right, well, well let's get into some background information. And we'll start with, you know, getting as much background information I can about you as possible, and hopefully develop some historical context for what you're going to tell me.

MM: Well, I've got something written here. I don't know, I didn't know, but you could read it and see what -

GB: Oh, okay, okay. Well, we'll get into this, we'll get into this in a minute, but first we are looking, this is a very broad project and we look for, you know, information, personal information about the interviewees first. So so we'll talk about you, and we'll definitely, you

know, get into thoughts on Ed Muskie, and that's definitely very pertinent. And that's exactly what we're looking for, but, so, we'll start way back and see where it leads us. This is Greg Beam, it's about 2:00 P.M. on July 19th, 2000 and I'm here with Myrtle Milledge at her home at, on Back Kingdom Road in Mexico, Maine. To begin, could you please state your full name and spell it?

MM: My name is Myrtle Milledge, M-Y-R-T-L-E, M-I-L-L-E-D-G-E. I live on Back Kingdom Road, 29 Back Kingdom Road.

GB: And when and where were you born?

MM: I was born in Rumford.

GB: And when?

MM: Do I have to tell you?

GB: Oh, it's okay, (*unintelligible phrase*).

MM: Nineteen fifteen, nineteen fifteen.

GB: All right. What was the Rumford community like growing up? What are your memories of the community?

MM: Oh, just horrid.

GB: Really?

MM: We were Catholics. And I can remember, we lived here in Mexico, and as children we had to, every Sunday have to walk from our home over to Rumford way up on Franklin Street. And I can remember a lot of things that, you know, that I did that was terrible. I mean, it cost you ten cents to go to a movie at that time when I was young. And I can remember my father was, had ulcers, and he used to have, at that time they thought cream was good for ulcers. They've changed that now, but I'd empty out the cream to get the nickel bottle, the cream bottle, just to go to a movie, but it was only ten cents. And the roads were bad. I can remember the houses here in the town, how the mill used to take the paint off from some of the houses back there in those days. And it was from the mill, whatever was coming up the chimney. And it even did things to the cars, so you can imagine.

I mean, I don't know how Ed did it to get so much attention, you know, on clean water and clean air, because, and to tackle, to me, to tackle the mill. Boy, you know what I mean, they, it couldn't have been easy for Ed. He just worked, worked hard for it. And I, I, this I don't know, I don't know how old Ed is, how old he would be. I know somebody-, I have it here, somebody was in his class and I was going to get in touch with him, but I thought, "Well, I got enough probably without that." But I thought if you wanted more information it would have to be McQuade or this Larry Hart.

Now, McQuade is the one that started this monument over there, he's the one that's been, you know, pushing it and trying to get the money for the monument. And they've got, they're going to put it in there, Rumford's going to have a monument for Ed Muskie. And they did have one down by the, the football field here across the river in Rumford. And there was a big sign, "Ed Muskie lived here" or something, a huge sign there. So if you crossed the bridge you'd have, you'd hit it, you'd see it, you know. So all I can remember is good things for Ed.

Of course I, I mean he was in sports, I've talked to people that played up at, basketball with him and track with him, and everybody says what a nice guy, hard working. And I got all the classes where he was into debating. And I also, one of my people that I visit, and I question them all because they're eighty-seven years old, you know, and this man said, "Oh, I knew Ed Muskie." I mean he was in school, and he said the girl that did the typing for his debates turned out to be this man's wife. At that time they were chums in school, you know. So, I don't know, everything he's done, I don't know how he's done it.

Of course, in later years when he went to college we didn't see him as much. And the few Democratic meetings we had in town, I met Ed, I met his wife, they were having a time at the Legion. Ed and his wife were there and other Democrats, I think Brennan and, they all used to drop in once in a while, you know, have a spaghetti feed or something. And I, when we got to meet Ed and his wife, of course you're standing in line waiting to shake hands with him and tell him who you are. And so I got up to Mrs. Muskie and I told her who I was, and she says, "Oh, I'll never forget your name." And I kind of looked at her, well, that's strange to say. But she, in her, I don't know if it was in her family or in the party, she says, "Well I know somebody that's Myrtle and then I know somebody that's Milledge, so", she says, "I won't forget your name." And I've always remembered that all those years, so. I hated my name in the first place, but she knew somebody in her dealings, I don't know if it was family or what, but. Every time they've come to town my sister and I would go. My sister has been interviewed, I don't know if you did her or not.

GB: Well, I didn't. What was her name?

MM: Pauline Dawson.

GB: Pauline Dawson, oh wow.

MM: That's on Hollow Hill.

GB: No, I didn't conduct that interview. It was probably another student. What, was that some time ago?

MM: No, it wasn't too long ago. Within the last year.

GB: Oh really, yeah, well -

MM: Is that a long time?

GB: Well, I've actually only been on the project for a couple of months, so, but -

MM: Oh, I see. Yeah, she said she had been interviewed, and she's very, she's a fighter too, she's very much Democrat, and she pays into of course. I don't have that much money to put into it, I've been a widow for thirty years and lived here alone, and so it's, but I don't know, I've always gone to the Democrats. And I still do, I still watch politics on the, on TV all the time. But I do, I do wish that the Democrats in town would pay more attention, I mean, and, you know, go to the meetings. We went to one that was, it was county and it was held here in Mexico, and I think my sister and I were the only ones from Mexico. And we're not on any committee or anything, you know, just Democrats, that's it. But we always, they put their signs out here, you know, like, well I can remember Brennan too, Brennan used to do that, when we used to, always had signs when it was election time. And she's right at the top of the hill there, so of course they're going to see her. And so, I don't know, I believe in the Democrats, I think they're for the working people.

They're, I don't have much sympathy for the Republicans, I think they're all rich and they've got all the money and that's, to me, I've always been not too rich and so maybe it's envy, I don't know. You know, envy the rich people. So I don't know, but I still say Ed Muskie was for the working class, it's, like I figure the president's the same way. I think we've gone a long ways, and I hate to think of Bush in there. So anyway, so I like my politics, I do.

And we have been asked if we wanted to go to Augusta there when they had the meeting, and my sister is, my sister's going on eighty-three, I'm going on eighty-five, so we don't feel like driving down to Augusta. But anything in town we, you know, we show up. And so I think we're good Democrats, nobody can run Republican. Even my niece, my sister's daughter in Rumford. Her name is Jolene Lovejoy and her, she's got something in, of course I love her, she calls me her favorite aunt, but here she's a Republican. But I almost think she could almost become a Democrat, I almost think that. And she always says I'm her favorite aunt but... Who was it, oh, it was the fellow from Bryant had signs so we put him up here, I had him right out here because there's a lot of houses up above. We've got a nurs-, not a nursing home, a home for the elderly up here. So I had this huge sign out on my lawn and my sister come over one time to pick me up. Well, my sister is Republican because her daughter's Republican, see. And I, here I've got this huge sign. And I bumped into my niece, and I said, "I'm sorry, Joey, but I can't." The only excuse I could say was, "I can't vote in Rumford anyway, with Rumford, because Mexico is over here, we're," but it was funny. But I think, she's just getting into politics and she's a fighter around Rumford. So, but I'll, we'll argue with her, my sister and I.

GB: Oh, I'm sure.

MM: Yeah, yeah. So, no, my father was a Democrat too, and it just seems as though, you know, it's our family.

GB: Now were there many Democrats in Rumford when you were growing up? Because I know that the state was, on the whole was heavily Republican at that time, wasn't it?

MM: It is, that's what I think today, they're more Republican. Mexico's a small town, small compared to them. All the Republicans that got money, they're over there. Here, Mexico is small town, not too many, not too much in taxes, where the Rumford people, they all have beautiful homes and camps and everything else. But, so I still say that about the guys on TV, the Republicans. We get talking and I'll, talking among friends, and I'll talk about, look at all those guys, you know, that are in the senate and representative. They don't have, they have young wives, they don't get these old ones, they divorce them and get a young chick, that's right isn't it. When they start talking about, you know. But anyway, no, I'm proud to be a Democrat, that's it.

GB: So, as a Democrat in Rumford did your father kind of stand out from the crowd?

MM: Well, that was so many years ago when I was young, and at that time there were Catholics against Baptists and everything else. So I mean, it was kind of a, it was a bad time I think, you know what I mean, it was the Depression. But we were fortunate because my dad had a store, and later he had a beer garden, but... And my mother, my mother just passed away three years ago. She lived to be a hundred and five and she was a Democrat all the time, too. We saw to it that she got there, you know. But my dad died at fifty-four. But she had a home on Main Street, down here by the green church, that she kept until about three years. Well, she was in a nursing home for three years, so.

But Mexico, they don't have too much help, they don't, it's like volunteering and different, different things that happen in town. You don't get many volunteers, which is too bad because that's the kind of work I do. I do hospice work, no money in it, and then Androscoggin Home Health, I work twenty hours a week. But it's, visiting the elderly for two dollars and a half an hour. Well, you figure that, I'm not getting rich. But I, it is volunteering. I think more people should pay attention to what's going on, you know?

GB: Absolutely.

MM: So anyway, that's the story of my life. Of course, my dad would, with the store we were able to have more than the, a lot of the other people, you know, because you just couldn't afford it, you couldn't afford it. You could go to a movie for ten cents, and look what you pay today. So -

GB: Did it appear that other folks in Rumford really felt the effects of the Depression?

MM: I don't know, I don't, in reading the paper, and I read Rumford and I read Mexico, in reading the paper, now Rumford's a bigger town than Mexico. But reading in the paper they don't have that many that go to meetings, even the Republicans or-. I still say, I mean, they don't go to the meetings and they complain if something passes. Here, I worked for the school district years ago when my husband passed away, and I was doing janitor work. And I can remember what the teachers got for pay at that time, you know, you'd see stuff all around, and I was cleaning the room the teachers were in. It was that little school down here. And I thought, "Holy man, no wonder the teachers get raises all the time, they're the only ones that go vote." They'd vote for a raise, they'd get it, that's it. So I mean, but townspeople, they just let it go by,

and let it go by, and then they, so I don't know. I am still a Democrat, I still think they are for the working people.

GB: Have you seen the party change over the years?

MM: Well, I thought that they used to be more interested in politics. When you, I always go vote and the next day they've got it in the paper, how many people attended and really, you know. But they're probably the first ones that kick if something is passed. Like I say, the teachers all go, the husbands go, so then we've got it. So that's what I think (*unintelligible word*).

GB: All right, now you took, as you showed me, you took some notes on Ed Muskie.

MM: Yeah, would you like me to read it and -?

GB: Sure, if you'd like to read it, yeah, that's fine.

MM: Well, I made it thinking that, I could think by myself, you know. I've talked with many of the elderly people as I do volunteer work, senior companion with Androscoggin Home Health. We all agree Ed's family were hard working people with children, they had five [*sic* six] children, they had four girls and two boys. And the mother never worked, she stayed at home taking care of the family. And Mr. [Stephen] Muskie ran a tailor shop on Exchange Street. He would sit, I can remember him just as plain, he would sit in the window with his needle sewing because that was his job, tailor, he would sit by the large window sewing by hand. He would notice people, you see him take his eyes and look to see who was going by. You couldn't help it, it was a huge window. And it was the time of the Depression, you know. His family were well respected by everyone, his sisters were respected and smart, they're all smart, and definitely Democrat and Catholic. I think they're Catholic too.

GB: Can I ask real quick: are there a lot of Catholics around here, is it kind of -?

MM: That's like, I think there was a drop off. Years ago everybody went to church. Today they, and I'm one that, I dropped out. My husband was sick for a long time, and I didn't go to church on Sundays because I had to care for him. And only about three months ago I decided, well, it's about time I went back to church, and things have changed from when I used to go. You know, at that time they didn't believe in, if you married a Protestant you're out of the church. And the Protestant was the same way, if you married a Catholic you're out of the church. Well now they've got together, and they still say, well, if you're a Protestant you're still a Protestant, if you're a Catholic you're still a Catholic. So it's helped that way. And what they're trying to do is get more young people going to church. And I do notice it since I've been going, that more young people, and they're bringing their children to be baptized, which for a while people didn't do that much. So I think it's helped that way. But there's fewer priests, so what do you do, you know? (*Unintelligible phrase*).

Let's see, Ed was very smart in school. In four years of school, the Rumford schools, Ed was president of the student council, president of the athletics council, secretary of his class,

president of the Latin club, president of the science club, president of the debating class. He was a great basketball player. Of course he was, and track, he was exceptionally good in track in his second, third and fourth years of high school. He was valedictorian of his class. This is about the person whose greatest dream was to clean up the air and water from our mills. And of course, after graduation he went to college, and Ed had many friends in Rumford and Mexico, and college friends. Ed came to Rumford for different Democratic party meetings, and that's, I used to see him at these too.

Without Ed we probably would have the odor from the mill and bad water, which was, that's the way it was. You didn't stay out in the air too often, I can remember that. He worked hard, and he saw, you could see the paint was peeling from the houses here, and the cars too. No one else could have worked harder than Ed. He was a hard worker, tried to help the people of Rumford and Maine. No one else in Rumford had made us so proud to be a Democrat in our great state of Maine. That's what I think.

GB: That's great, that's great.

MM: So, I don't know how he dared to tackle the mill because, hey, the mill, I mean, you know, that was, everybody was working there. But he still was trying to get clean air, and that's what he's noted for: clean water, clean air. And of course, it's gone all over the country, not just here in Maine. It's about time they did that.

GB: Do you remember what effect it had on the mill when a lot of that legislation came through? Did it hurt the functioning of the mill, did it slow it down?

MM: No, I don't think so, but when my husband was sick I took up a course in nurses aide because I knew, and I had to have a nurse for him, so I went and took the class while the nurse was there. And today I talk with so many people and they blame the air, they've got, breathing air. Two or three people that I know have to have the air, you know, and they blame it on, they blame it on when they were younger, that's what happened. And there is a lot of that. I went to a meeting one time when Dr. Martin, who, I think he was doctor of the schools years ago. Today he's got cancer, and real bad, but he tried all those years to tell them that it was the mill that was giving us so much cancer here. And a lot of people didn't like him for it but it's the truth. I mean, Rumford is terrible, the elderly, they have so much trouble breathing. Especially if you worked in there, if you worked in the mill. So that's how the people feel, the ones that I talk to that have to, have to use air, and it's too late now for a lot of them.

GB: But you've noticed that the air seems cleaner recently, it's a big change?

MM: Oh, oh yes, yes. I have my flower garden. I'm out in the flower garden and, no, the air has changed so much, and I think everybody feels like it because they all have nice back yards that they can take the family out. Oh yeah, an awful difference. But I think the mill is trying because, since Mead got it, but they put up an awful time there when Mead was going to use chips over here. So then Hanover decided they didn't want it. For some reason Mexico didn't want it. Because I think they thought probably the air, it would make a difference in our climate. All these big trucks that come in hauling (*unintelligible word*), so I don't know where they go

now to make the chips. And they lug the chips here, not so much the logs like they used to, it used to be all logs.

But I think they've improved, Mead has, and they seem to be working with the town, you know. They, I know not too long ago, every year they have busses that they, you'd go up to Rangely Lakes, where of course they have a lot of lumber, Mead does, and a lot of land up that way. And you could take a bus trip, anybody that wanted to go, and they'd take you all through to see what was going on. And I went up twice because I had a son that kind of loves the logging, loves to be in the woods, and I just wondered what his, what he was doing, because of course I never saw it. But they furnished a meal and they took you up. And they were showing us the big machines, and how they clean them off, and how they cut them, and then where they're planting other places, so it was really quite interesting. So anybody's interested, but I think it was a good thing. It was probably a day, but at times there was three or four bus loads going up. And that seems to be more in the fall of the year, when it's pretty, too, you know. So I do think they're trying to, but I mean there's, we don't get an odor. Although sometimes, if the weather isn't just right, I don't know whether the smoke going up that way or going down this way, especially if you go over by the mill, and there is an awful odor that comes with it. But it's just at times. I don't know whether it's wet weather or windy. I don't think the wind, I think the wind would help take it down, down the road on the way to Lewiston, because I can remember at a meeting one man got up and said that he lived down there on the road, and he blamed the paper mill for it because the wind would blow down that way, and they'd get the odor. And here in Rum-, Rumford or Mexico it would kind of bypass us, you know.

But I remember it was hard times. We, I have five sisters, so that was a big family, six children. But then I talk with other people and, I got my neighbor across the street, and I was kind of paying attention to her through the people I work for, senior volunteers, because she has a sick husband. And I never found out she, until I met her not more than three months ago, she had twelve children. And I lived here for thirty years, I only thought she had five. See, they, I guess I just don't bother with my neighbors. But I've worked ever since my husband passed away, and I have two sons in town, and I have a daughter that... But we're very close, my family, which is good.

GB: And are the rest of your family interested in politics like you are?

MM: Well, that niece of mine, that's for sure. You just want the Democrats, huh?

GB: Well, no, no, that's fine. But are the other ones interested as well?

MM: They're all, yeah, all my sisters are Democrats, yeah, yeah. And I think all the men are. Now, I questioned Jim Kelly, he's my brother-in-law from, he lives in Portland. His dad was, I think he was a representative, and it was the same time as Lucia Cormier. I know you don't know her.

GB: I've heard the name.

MM: Yeah, she was into politics, and everybody liked Lucia, and there was Jim's brother, and

Ed Muskie was in on that too. Lucia and Ed and Jim Kelly's father, the three of them were on, I think that was before Ed was governor. And I still think Lucia had a lot to do, you know, that... How do I want to say it? Ed looked up to her and into politics, and that, I think where she was in it. I used to go to Florida in the winter after my husband passed away, and Lucia was living down, she was in Daytona Beach and we were at Daytona. And she invited us and a bunch, that was when my brother-in-law and his wife were down there, and all Democrats. And she invited us out to her house, her condo, it was right on the beach. And she had pictures of Ed all over the house, you know, so I know there must have been a closeness there, because Lucia was a school teacher at one time and probably Ed had her as a teacher.

GB: Oh, really.

MM: And then, of course, she was, later years she was either in the senate or a representative, I don't know. But I think she took a, you know, took a great interest in Ed, I think, and so other than that I don't know.

GB: Do you know any other people who were close to Ed Muskie in that way?

MM: Yeah, I can tell you, I told you about Harold McQuade.

GB: Who is he exactly, now you said you know some of the things he's been, he's participated in, in getting the signs up and all that.

MM: Well jeezum, come to think of it I don't know if he's Democrat or Republican.

GB: Oh, really.

MM: But I know, yeah, he must be a Democrat, he's the head one of that drive to put that monument up over on the island, so he must be. He's been fighting for this and trying to get money, so.

GB: I'll tell you, there are some Republican fans, big Republican fans of Muskie.

MM: Yeah, I think so.

GB: There are some.

MM: Yeah. And another one was, and I come pretty near calling him today because I know him, Larry Harpe. He was in his class at school.

GB: Oh really.

MM: And I'm almost sure he's a Democrat too. But like I said, I come pretty near calling him over, then I thought, "Well, gee whiz, I know he's got a girlfriend, so I wouldn't want any trouble with him and his girlfriend," so I says, "Oh well." But I mean, you could get in touch with him. He's quite prominent in Rumford, in activities and stuff like that, you know. But he's,

he was in Ed's class.

GB: So he lives in Rumford?

MM: He lives in Rumford, yeah.

GB: Okay, so we can get in touch with him that way. All right.

MM: As a matter of fact, I'm invited to a Christmas in July party Sunday, so Larry will be there. I know he will because that's put on by the snowshoe club up here in Mexico, our retired, the guy that started the snowshoe club, got them going, was, is Steve Gallant. Well they just gave him an award for, I don't know, for "Man of the Year" or something. Well, he's having a party Sunday, so he invited, no, it's Saturday. I got it on my calendar. So he invites everybody that, friends, and he always has a big gang so... But Steve is French, I don't know what his nationality is but he's a guy that, he does an awful lot for everybody, you know. Which is about time they gave him an award for something. That's what I think, some of these people that, have you got that thing on?

GB: Oh yeah.

MM: Well I was, I was going to say, I don't know whether I should say this. No, where I work for Androscoggin Home Health I have to be careful what I say, you know what I mean? But there is, oh, one gentleman that I visit, and he's eighty sev-, no, he's in his nineties, ninety-two I think. And I'd go to visit him, and they'd talk about things that happened during his growing up, and he had done so much for the town of Rumford and Mexico and nobody ever said thank you or nothing for it. I just, and the reason that, I wrote a letter to the editor and the reason I wrote the letter was Severin Beliveau's mother passed away, and I never realized she had done so much for retarded children, for so many things, nobody knew about it. And I says, "What a shame they have to read it in her obituaries. Too bad they couldn't have said it while she was alive." So that put me, I says, "I'm going to do this man." So, I got that here, too. It was in the paper, he was, it was about volunteering.

"This man was one of those volunteering. He operated a logging camp from 1936 to 1939, he cleared three thousand acres of land at Flagstaff, Maine, he was a board member of," they're going to hear a lot of this, "he was a board member at Black Mountain ski area for ten years, board member of the park commission, was picked man of the year in 1984, he was an active member of the ski club, was a board member of Cozy Inn Nursing Home along with," this was all volunteer work, "He was a board member of Cozy Inn Nursing Home along with Bob Demers, Alphonse Duprez, Nick Poulier, Eli Gaudette, John Shea," these are all Democrats too. This is the original group working to build a Rumford community home, the, yeah, and volunteers, they, it was all volunteer work, and they, but through this guy they got the money to do it. And so he was, he belonged to the Elks, member of the Lions, was grand knight of the KFC, council, faithful navigator of Pacey Assembly, member of the board for mentally retarded, he was a grand knight of the KFC, faithful, he was a member of the board for mentally retarded, supplied all the wood to renovate St. John's School in 1949, chairman of the Tootsie Roll drive in 1959 to 1964. Through his efforts at the KFC Rumford-Mexico purchased a bus for the uses

of Horizontal Unlimited, a permanent group home for the mentally retarded in 1984 after two years of fund raising. He was chairman of Bingo Days to earn money.

All these things that that man did, and that, of course I had to talk to his family before I wrote the letter. He supplied all the wood to renovate St. John's, through the efforts of... He did a lot anyway. I've got so much paper here I don't know what to do with, but anyway, I sent that letter to the editor. It was in the *Times*, but it hasn't been in the *Lewiston Sun* yet. But I thought, here, nobody, here he is ninety-two and done so much and nobody, nobody said thank you or know all these men volunteered. So of course, they're tickled their name's in the paper. I got more, "Oh God, that was a good article you wrote." So I had it put in our *Times*.

GB: He must have been happy to see that.

MM: Yeah, oh yeah. As a matter of fact, I would go up to see him and the paper I left with his son because I wanted to make sure everything was correct, and the son is quite popular in the KFC. He's taken after his father, and he's caring for his father too, and I happened, I left the paper there and I didn't think this elderly gentleman would see it. But one other time I went to visit him and he's got his magnifying glass here and he's trying to read what it said in the paper. But, so many people thought it was a good article because he's a good man, and like I said, after I saw Severin Beliveau's mother, all she had done, and nobody, no credit. That's the story of my life. So anyway, but I'm sure Larry Harpe can tell you more about his school days. I don't, and McQuade, like I said, he's been the one that's got the money for the stone up there. And it's supposed to, I don't know when that's supposed to be put in or whether it's put in yet. I don't know.

(Taping of Frank Murray's interview continues - taped over with Milledge interview.)

End of Side A

Side B

GB: So, let me get this straight: did you know Muskie when he was growing up?

MM: Not really, I don't think I did until later, you know, when I, probably when I voted, knew I was a Democrat. I probably voted the first year I could. And, now who, somebody was telling me just in the last couple of days, they went somewhere and Ed was, oh, it was the fiftieth class reunion in Rumford, and Ed was there. And at that time, I can't remember if he was governor or what, but he was up there in politics. And they said Ed was right in there with them, and joking with them, and having a good time with all of them, you know, it wasn't, nothing put on. They were all people that he knew, but he was laughing with them and kidding with them. That was the fiftieth class reunion. I think that was in the eighty something, I think it was eighty-something that he -

GB: Yeah, probably, it must have been, he must have graduated sometime in the thirties, yeah.

MM: Yeah, I, oh, here is, since his retirement -

GB: Do you have some more notes?

MM: Well, I, yeah, they got the bus for the mentally retarded in 1984 after two years of fund raising. So, since his retirement this gentleman enjoys his children, grandchildren, great-great-grandchildren, and he travels to see them play sports, especially hockey. He's a great fan of the Red Sox, hockey and football, he enjoys TV, and has many friends. And I've put, thank you Armand, his name is Armand, for doing all the volunteer years you put in for Rumford and Mexico. Thanks to all the volunteers of Rumford and Mexico, we do care. So that, people are still trying to find volunteers, but some,- sometimes I think that, that if people are asked to do something... I belong to the garden club, and I visit up to the (*unintelligible word*) department every day because I have a friend up there. And I still think that if they were asked to do something they would, most people would. But they want to, I think they want to be asked to do it first. It's like me. I say volunteering, I don't think that goes too far today, it's, you've also got to say, "Why don't you come and see what it's like?" or see, you know, to volunteer. Because they have that trouble with everything. The garden club, we're looking for people to join, young people to join in. But until somebody drags them, you know what I mean, you got to ask them, say, "Come on, come and see what it's like." And it's like being a Democrat, see what the Democrats are doing, you know, or.

But I'm telling you, my niece from Rumford, her picture is in the paper almost every day. I can't get over it. She's the only, she's selectman in the town of Rumford. There's two men, I think, and her, and boy she always gets her two cents worth in, she's very, she's smart, she's smart. And I know Memorial Day I, I have a son that was killed in Vietnam, my youngest boy, and so I was down there. It was Memorial Day, and Mexico just put a new memorial down there in the main road by the bridge. And because I was thinking of my son I kept saying, I have always gone to every time they've had a memorial thing, and I kind of talk myself into, well, I don't think, I didn't feel in the mood. But as the morning was getting on, I began to get that guilt feeling. So, I had been working in my flower garden, this was about nine o'clock. I said to myself, "Well, I'll drive down and sit in the car and just watch it." I got down there and I parked my car and my niece comes by. "Hi, Aunt Myrt," and she comes over to the car and she practically drags me out, "Come on over and see the memorial." So I wouldn't have gone, only she did that, you know. I wasn't dressed. As a matter of fact I, I couldn't remember whether I had my hair combed or what, but I got over there by the memorial and I didn't want to be seen by anybody because I hadn't, no earrings, no makeup. I don't even know if, I had been working in the garden, you can imagine. And so she, while I was there this Gallant fellow that has charge, kind of runs these things. So he comes over to me and he says, "Mrs. Milledge, how about, how about naming these guys off that have passed away during the Vietnam War?" And I says, "Oh, not me boy, I been working in the garden. I look like sin." And I says, "No, you're not going to get me up there." Because they had kind of a stand, and what you do is you get up there and just name, there was eight in the Vietnam War, so you name one, I did that last year, but hadn't talked about it this year. So anyway, he says, "Come on, we got to have somebody that lost somebody in those years." "Well, Joey," I says, "No, no, I'm not going to." And this is my niece that's doing this, "Come on Aunt Myrt, come on." And the first thing I know, she runs over to her car, gets lipstick and is putting lipstick on me, which I had no earrings, no, ah.

So I had to get up there in front of all, and then coming out, I can remember there was, one of the, one of the fellows that had been in the war, it wasn't Vietnam War, but he belonged, he was

a veteran, and he was in the parade. He said to Joey, he said, "How come the town of Rumford doesn't have one like Mexico?" So I'll bet you before you know it there'll be, of course they're going to have that memorial for Muskie, but then they got that green over on the other side there. So, but I bet you, you wait and see, she'll do something about it. He says, "How come Rumford can't have one?" Mexico can, because we're supposed to be poor, you know. Rumford is rich. So anyway, they read the, I had to read those names, then between every name they, "Bong!" they'd ring a bell. Oh God, I could have gone, my feelings, you know, I could feel that I was going to start crying half way through it. But anyway, I got through it, but she's, she's a go getter. And I think she's running against Cameron I think, he's a Republican. So I don't know. But other than that (*unintelligible phrase*).

GB: Now, here's something I was trying to figure out. I was trying to figure out how you were referred to us at the project. Have you been involved with any of these Muskie's memorial programs, you know, anything like that? I guess, it says here that you were referred to the project by Chris Beam, who actually happens to be my father, in 1998, two years ago. And I was wondering if it was, if it was a meeting, like a memorial committee meeting or something like that.

MM: No, my sister I think, and my sister was telling me the other day she got an invitation there to go over to the memorial, but I didn't get one. But I think she sends money and her name gets on there. And me, I don't get, I mean I ain't got it, let's put it that way. I live alone and my husband was sick for years, and if I had the money I wouldn't be working for Androscoggin Home Health. But I've always liked Baldacci. I get a Christmas card from him and I send him money [*laughs*]. He sends a Christmas card every year with a picture of him and his wife and his son, so I figure, "Well, he's interested enough and he's a Democrat, and I figure he's a good Democrat, so that I will do." But, see, I didn't know that much about Ed. It was just, I think it's something you, he's up here and you've got to respect him, he's, kind of idolize him or something, you know? A good man and a lot of people when they get out of the service they, you know, or out of the government, you don't hear too many things about them, but Ed... and I remember when he went to, was it New Hampshire? I think that was the day that he broke down and cried. I could have cried with him.

GB: Nineteen seventy-two in New Hampshire.

MM: I could have cried with him, I felt so sorry for him and his wife, for anybody that had... and here it was a newspaper man that was against him in the first place. He's against Democrats anyway, wasn't he?

GB: Yeah.

MM: Must have been a Republican then. So, but I felt so bad, holy man. But no, I donate ten bucks or something every once in a while but I don't have the money. I don't have the money my sister has, she's got two paychecks coming in, her and her husband. And I live alone, so, and I own this, I mean it's on my land and so to try to keep things together is, I can't do much donating. But I'll show up. They, if they have anything going on, I haven't missed anything. Matter of fact we've come pretty near asking somebody to give us a ride down to the meeting in

Augusta there, you know, my sister and I, because it was a meeting and we're the only ones that showed up down here. De Roche knows us, you know him. He's town manager.

GB: Who is that?

MM: Joe De Roche.

GB: Joe De Roche.

MM: He's running for something.

GB: How do you spell that, De Roche?

MM: D-E-, I think it's, R-O, separate word, R-O-C-H-E I think.

GB: Okay, okay.

MM: He's town manager down here and he was there when we, when the Democrats came to town, you know, the last, and he went to Augusta, too. But there's not that many active ones, and I, it's like people that, ballot clerks. We say, the ballot clerks are all right, but they never show up for a meeting. Well, why don't they, I mean they're Democrats, they're Democrats and Republicans, why shouldn't those girls that are ballot clerks show up for a meeting? That's what me and my sister think anyway. We just think... and she's active like I am.

GB: I guess they must have met you just at one of those meetings that you attended. That must have been how you were referred to us.

MM: Yeah, it must have been, because there was a young fellow that come in, and we did sign papers. As a matter of fact, we pitched in, Joe De Roche is running for something, so my sister, he had to have so much signature and five bucks or something. You couldn't give more than five bucks, and my sister and I were the only ones there and we gave the five bucks, that's probably where you got the idea that, you know, that's probably what happened. But all you could give Joe De Roche was five bucks, that's all, you know. Well that's like this one in Rumford, Joey, she don't need money. Isn't it wonderful, you don't have, you have so much money you don't need money to run for office? But that's, and I know, her mother is my sister and I know they're well off, you know, and they, of course they're going to help their daughter. So I presume they're going to go Republican, you know. But she don't need, she don't need money.

But she's got a lot of advertisement by being in the paper. She goes to the ski meets here in Rumford and works all day doing something and helping, like the fourth of July thing they had here. She's over there in the middle of everything. Most of them are men, but she's there and she'd just as soon go and, a bunch of men, and she argues a lot with them too, you know, the men there, and see the, she's not afraid to talk. So I'll bet she gets elected. Well that Fred, Fred Canard, who's a Democrat from Rumford, he said that she had it all, she's got it. So I don't know. But I don't know who's running against, well her, it's Cameron I think. But here in Mexico, who have we got? Joe De Roche is running for something, I don't know what it is. But

of course we'll be there. But I always say, hey, they want to put up any, there's not much that I can do, but they could put signs up here in the yard, and my sister's the same way, you know. We take ribbing sometimes when a Democrat goes by, "Oh, I see you got the sign out, huh?" "Yup." So, that's about it.

GB: Well, I don't have any more questions, so is, are there any final remarks you'd like to make, anything you'd like to add or emphasize about Muskie or about anything else?

MM: Well, I just figure that Muskie was like probably Kennedy is in Massachusetts, for the working people, that's what I figure. Muskie, I can see he probably had to work harder than the Kennedy's, you know? But I mean, they're both, they're both helping the poorer class of people and doing things to improve our lives, because you bring up a family and you're, the same way with health and everything, you got to fight everything and, but I do think that they. And I like this Bryant too from, he's from Canton. I don't know even what post, whether he's in the, he's up at Augusta doing something. But I mean, he's been at some of the meetings, you know, and he's had his signs. That's the one that was there when my niece come here, and oh my lordy, lordy. So anyway, it's, but no, I just think people should try to get together, try to get something going.

So, but McQuade, McQuade has helped Muskie so much. Of course, it cost them fifty-thousand or something for that memorial over there, and McQuade has worked hard to, although McQuade is one of these rich people too we talk about. But somebody's got to do it, and if you, not everybody's got the money to do it, you know. But we're still a small town. I just figure, this volunteer work I sometimes wonder about it, whether they're looking, everybody's looking for volunteers, right? And when we do that then that's putting somebody out of work someplace and I wonder if it's the right thing.

GB: But you also wonder if it would get done at all if they didn't have the volunteers, so, you know.

MM: Yeah, that's true. But I keep thinking of that because working with Androscoggin Home Health, and I do visit people, and I just got through a class on hospice, you know what that is? That's you go in and stay with the person so people that live there can have a couple hours away or just a lot of little things. But then I'm thinking, "Is that good?" It's good for the family, but is it putting somebody out of work or something? Years ago if you went anywhere you had to hire somebody, you know, it would cost you money. But now Androscoggin Home Health is, and they keep getting volunteers. The first thing you know they're not going to have the nurses, you know. I just wonder about that. But I ain't going to worry about it now for a while though.

GB: I don't think, I don't think anyone could answer that question very quickly. I don't think there is a quick answer to it so, I don't think there's an easy answer.

MM: No, no, it's, I like what I do, I, like I say, that gentleman, and these are all terminal, these people I visit, so it's hard. You know what I mean. But I went through it, and I have so many friends of mine now that their husbands pass away or whatever, and what do you say to them? You say, "Oh, I'm so sorry," and "is there anything?" if there's anything I can do. What do you

say to a person that's just lost somebody? And I just wanted to know what to say. But now they're telling us, you pay attention to the family more than you do the person that's been so sick because it's after, after a funeral or something when that person is alone and don't have the company, and that's sad. So I think that's what, what the thing is all about. Which is good I guess, you know? But, so, I can't sell you anything else.

GB: All right, great, well we'll stop there. Thank you, thank you very much.

End of Interview