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Interview with Frank Murray by Andrea L'Hommedieu

Summary Sheet and Transcript

Interviewee

Murray, Frank

Interviewer

L'Hommedieu, Andrea

Date

November 3, 2000

Place

Bangor, Maine

ID Number

MOH 236

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Biographical Note

Frank Murray was born March 12, 1949 in Bangor, Maine. He attended St. John's Elementary School, John Bapst High School and the University of Maine at Orono and majored in Mathematics. When he was 20, he ran for a seat in Maine State Legislature and won. He served until 1974 when he ran for Senate unsuccessfully and then Secretary of State unsuccessfully. After his defeats, he taught for a couple of years and then went to Catholic University in Washington, D.C. to earn his doctorate in Theology. At the time of this interview, he was serving as a priest in Bangor, Maine.

Scope and Content Note

Interview includes discussions of: growing up in Bangor, Maine; his father's involvement in politics; his term in the Maine State Legislature; his father's role in Muskie's 1954 campaign; Bob Murray; priesthood as another public service; his role as delegate to the state and national conventions; 1972 National Democratic Convention, how it differed from Chicago and how it differs from them today; Elmer Violette; Severin Beliveau; President Carter and Murray's ride on Air Force One in 1978; the Human Rights Commission; Ed Muskie, and Ken Curtis.

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Transcript

Andrea L'Hommedieu: This is an interview with Father Frank Murray at St. Mary's Church on Ohio Street in Bangor, Maine on November 3rd, the year 2000, and this is Andrea L'Hommedieu. If you could start by telling me a little bit about your background, first of all where and when were you born?

Father Murray: I was born on March 12th, 1949, which makes me fifty-one right now. Born in Bangor, I'm a native, brought up in Bangor, went to Catholic schools, St. John's School for elementary and then John Bapst High School, and then I went to University of Maine at Orono for my bachelor's degree.

AL: In what field?

FM: Mathematics. I didn't study theology for the priesthood until about five or six years after I got out of college. So my theology degree is from Catholic University in Washington, D.C., so I'm a priest that has a math background as well as a theology background.

AL: Now growing up in Bangor, what was the community like at that time? I'm talking ethnically and socially and religiously.

FM: Well, I'm one of those who grew up in the '50's and the '60's and, being born in 1949, so just post WWII, one of the baby boomers. Growing up in Bangor when I did things were pretty stable, pretty black and white, no pun intended, but life wasn't confusing at all. I, as I say, grew up, my parents bought the home that I presently own in 1950 so, I mean, I don't recall living any place other than this one home all the time I grew up through college. And as I say, we still own the home in a very middle class neighborhood about a mile from the, less than a mile from the church, less than a mile from the school, close to the playgrounds and the athletic fields and hospital and library. And as I say very what I would call a traditional 1950 experience where neighborhood and family and church were all very central in our life.

AL: And your parents, were they very religious in bringing you up?

FM: My mother is half French, half English, my dad's all Irish. Both of them come from a very Catholic background, they went to Catholic grade school, a Catholic high school. I think, I suspect my grandparents did as well, so we grew up in a very Catholic environment where the church and the school were sort of central to our life. Excuse me. Politics was also pretty central to our life because my father was very interested in politics so that also was important. Neighborhood was important, we had cousins that lived on the same street. And very stable neighborhood in the sense that there are still people who live on Maple street who are now fourth generation. So growing up when I did and where I did, things seemed to be very clear, there was no confusion about where you were going to be living next year or what you were going to be doing next year or what you were going to be believing next year, everything was pretty set for you.

AL: And in what ways did your father show his interest in politics?

FM: Well he showed it by getting involved. He worked at the precinct level and the ward level, for many years he was the ward chairman. I remember in 1968 and '70 when things were not as stable in terms of the Vietnam War becoming a concern for people. And the Democratic Party was, you know, really struggling with those issues and Gene McCarthy and George McGovern and Ed Muskie and Hubert Humphrey and all those people who were struggling with the issue. And so I know that my dad was running for city chairman right around that same time and there was lots of political activity within the Democratic Party. And Bangor being so close to the university, a lot of interest in Democratic politics certainly was being discussed at the university and a lot of university professors and staff lived in Bangor. So I remember it was just a time in politics where there was just an awful lot of involvement. And my dad was, as I say, right in the middle of it. But always very loyal to Democrats so I, you know, I, growing up, whether I was in fourth grade or fifth grade or seventh grade or ninth grade, it was just expected

that, you know, we'd be supporting the Democrats and we'd be working hard for them. So I remember as a pretty young child going to Democratic caucuses and functions, and also helping, you know, with the distribution of campaign material and that type of thing.

AL: Now, did your father ever talk to you about his political philosophy?

FM: I don't think we got into very many deep, political or philosophy discussions. I think he definitely was very committed to the Franklin Delano Roosevelt approach of, you know, the government can be helping, especially people who were in need of help and that we could create a system that really watched out for the average person and the below average person economically. I think his, his understanding of Democratic politics is that it was certainly the safe place for the average person and the place where the average person would be taken care of. And that his perception of the other party was that they were more concerned about the status quo for those who were, you know, safe and well off and that type of thing. So, I remember my basic, you know, understanding that the Democrats are concerned about the working person and the unemployed and the person who needs help, and that we need to put together a government that is conscious about that. Not much philosophical talk beyond that, we just assumed that Democrats would be sharing that.

AL: And what were your parents' names?

FM: My dad was Robert, he was known by Bib, but Robert Emmett Murray. As I say, he comes from an Irish family. Robert Emmett was an Irish patriot and he happened to be born on, my dad was born on March 4th and my grandparents recognized that this is Robert Emmett's Day so we obviously have to name him Robert Emmett because he was born on Robert Emmett's Day, and so, so he kind of came from very Irish background. My younger brother, whom we refer to as Buddy, is Robert Emmett, Jr. I'm named after both grandfathers, ironically both grandfathers were Frank J. and so when I came along they decided to name me after the grandfathers. And then when my brother came along ten years later that's when he became the junior, so he was named after my dad.

AL: What was, what was the political make up of Bangor during, was it more Republican or Democrat or, what was the feeling?

FM: Well, growing up I would say when I was youngster it was more Republican than Democrat. I think in the early '60's, or from 1960 on when John F. Kennedy ran, that there was a resurgence in Democratic politics in Bangor. I really, I'm too young to know when Senator Muskie ran the first term, I think it was '54 for the statewide office, whether he carried Bangor or not I don't know. I'm sure if my father was alive today he could tell me a quote. But then I was, as I say, I was only five years old and so I can't remember in 1954, but by 1960 when I was ten or eleven I certainly can remember lots of enthusiasm around John F. Kennedy's campaign. And I think in the '60's, from Kennedy on, is when the Democrats seemed to make ground in the Bangor area.

I ran for the legislature in 1970, I was twenty years old when I was started running. I was twenty-one by the time I got elected which was good because that was the constitutional

minimum, was twenty-one. And the year that I ran in 1970 there was five legislators elected from Bangor. Back in those days we didn't have house districts in the city so you ran at large. And so it was just, if it was a city that had five legislators then of the list of five Democratic candidates, five Republican candidates, and usually there was one or two independents, it was just the five top vote getters and that was to, ten or eleven or twelve names would be elected. There was no districts, but back when I was elected in 1970 there was three Democrats and two Republicans, which is pretty reflective of Bangor, that it's not like a Biddeford or a Lewiston that's very, very Democrat, or it's not like, you know, a coastal town that's very, very Republican. It's sort of down the middle and presently there's only four house seats and it's two and two. When I, as I say, when I was elected in 1970 it was three Democrats elected and two Republicans. So, as I say, it was a very competitive town in terms of politics, nobody was guaranteed anything. So you'd have to work pretty hard if you expected to get elected.

AL: Right, so when you entered you must have been one of the youngest members of the house at that time?

FM: I was the youngest member.

AL: The youngest member. And at that time as you just mentioned earlier the tables had turned, or evened out somewhat. What was the situation, was it fairly evenly split, Democrats and Republicans in the legislature when you entered and -?

FM: Yeah, the Democrats were in the minority both in 1970 and 1972, which was the two terms of, that I was in the house. I was the, in 1974 the year I didn't run for the house is when the house became Democrat. So when I served it was still controlled by the Republicans, David Kennedy was the speaker my first term and Dick Hewes was the speaker my second term. And then if I had gone back to the house for a third term that's when John Martin became speaker in 197-, after the '74 election, so in January of '75 is when he took over as speaker. So I was just at the tail end of the Republican control of the legislature, and now it's been, at least the house has been controlled by the Democrats ever since. The Republicans have, you know, controlled the senate off and on over the last you know, twenty to thirty years, but the Democrats in the last twenty-six years or so have pretty much controlled the house.

AL: So you must have run for the legislature just after graduating from college.

FM: Actually my first campaign I was still a senior and so I, the fall of my senior year is when I was running right around this time since this is election time. And so the legislature went in session in January and so I didn't go back for my second semester of my senior year so I put off my graduation for a semester because I, instead of going back for my final semester of college I went to Augusta. And then the legislature tends to adjourn in the summer and then not go into special session until the following January so I did that last semester of college between my first year and my second year in the legislature. So, I actually jumped the gun in terms of going even before I finished college.

AL: Right, so did your family help campaign with you?

FM: Definitely, yeah.

AL: The year you ran?

FM: Yeah, I had, as I say for years growing up, in sixth grade, seventh grade, eighth grade, tenth grade, whatever I'd been involved with a lot of people's campaigns, not, I mean just doing light work basically. And then, so, and my family had been too. And so, and when I was at college towards the end of my junior year and in my senior year when I decided, actually it was my junior year because I needed to run in the primary in June of my junior year of college, and then the general election in the fall of my senior year. My family, my older sister Cynthia and my, the whole family got very involved with knocking on doors and distributing campaign material.

As I mentioned before, it was challenging in those days in the sense that you didn't have a particular opponent because there was no districts. And so when you were running in the Democratic primary, you know, there might be eight Democrats running for the five seats. I can't remember how many, but there was usually a list of Democrats that are running and then the top five would be the Democratic nominees and the same for Republicans. And then for the general election you'd have the five Democrats and five Republicans and maybe a couple of independents and you just had a long list. And so the race, you know, I have to admit, is more a popularity contest than issues. You'd like to raise issues and you try to do that but when you have a list of ten people running, you could raise an issue and not every Democrat agrees with you and so they don't want you to raise that issue because then it's sort of starting to divide the troops, you know.

So it's more a popularity contest and so when you're twenty or twenty-one and you're running for office, state office, even sometimes it's just as well that it be a popularity contest because at least, you know, if they recognize the family name. I remember knocking on doors and actually, you know, not having a clue who the person was but they would know me. And my grandfather whom I'm named after had a position during the Depression involved with some of the Public Works projects that were part of the Roosevelt era. And I had people say to me when I knocked on the door, you know, your grandfather helped me get a job, that type of thing, I mean, and that resonates. You know, oh we'll help you out now, that type of thing. And as I say, or we know your dad, or we know your aunt or your uncle, whatever, so as I say sometimes it's just making sure that people know the name. That old political adage, it doesn't matter what they say about you as long as they spell your name correctly, there's some truth to that, you know, and I think that was definitely the case when I first ran. Especially under the system where the cities back then were not districted so you really weren't zeroing in on a primary opponent or even a particular general election opponent, you just wanted to end up on the top of the list. I mean some place on the top of the list as opposed to on the lower half of the list.

AL: Well what were your experiences like in the legislature?

FM: It was a wonderful experience for me in the sense that when I got there I had just turned twenty-one and I was a math major, I wasn't a political science major. I had a lot to learn but I really felt pretty secure in the sense that it's a deliberative process, I didn't, it wasn't like I was

governor and had to make all the decisions. It was one of a hundred and fifty one people or one of thirteen people on a committee so that, you know, you could put your two cents worth in but not really have to worry too much about leading the state too far, you know, adrift or anything like that. So I just was amazed at the number of issues thirty years ago in 1970, or I actually took office in '71, the number of issues that the state was dealing with most of them which I didn't know much about and I had to sort of learn quickly. And constituents are good that have an interest in particular things in terms of filling you in, obviously from their perspective, but they're very good about cluing you in. Obviously the people who work in state government are very quick to fill you in on the effects of certain legislative proposals. Lobbyists are very good about filling you in on the effects that certain proposals have for their constituency. So, I mean I was just like a dry sponge sopping up a lot of information about things that, you know, that a year or two before I hardly even knew existed.

I served on the education committee which, you know, was of interest to me, I'd just finished. I, subsequent to Augusta I taught high school math so, I mean, education was something I was thinking about. I served on the Public Utilities, which was of interest to me. I did, one of those two terms when they were reapportioning the legislature, which they have to do every ten years constitutionally, I did serve on the reapportionment committee. And that one, looking back on it, I didn't enjoy too much, I mean the only thing you were talking about is personalities and politics and trying to rework the numbers and, you know, every time you rework the numbers from the census, you know, you're dealing with certain personalities and certain politics. You know, and as I say that, that after a while it wears on you, you know. But as I say, so if I went back to the legislature I'd certainly offer to be on the education committee again, and I'd offer maybe to go on Public Utilities, and then I probably would seek reapportionment, even though that was a committee that a lot of people sought because sometimes (*unintelligible phrase*).

AL: Governor Curtis was governor the whole time that you were in the legislature, so I, I've heard a lot of people talk about Governor Curtis, he's very charismatic, had a lot of ideas, but at that time Democrats were in the minority. From your own position as a legislator how, what was your sense of his governorship, and him as a person?

FM: Well first of all, seeing him as a person he's a, just a great individual, just a very enjoyable person, someone that, you know, you really become very committed to very easily because of that charismatic nature. I was in the legislature the second half of his term, he served from 1966 to '70, and then was reelected in 1970, the first term that I was elected and I served in Augusta throughout his second term in office. So he was I would say a more veteran governor by the time I worked with him, he was in his second four year term. I think the Republicans were very, very surprised that they had Ken Curtis a second term because he, you know, had the income tax passed during his first term and a lot of people thought that would be the kiss of death, that he would never get reelected, which he did. So he was quite a surprise that he was able to institute a broad base tax like that and still be reelected.

And so he was in a better position that people had to take him seriously, even though he still did have a Republican legislature, and he still also had the executive council, which was something that has been subsequently just done away with. But a lot of his appointments did not have to pass the muster of the legislature but they did have to pass the muster of the executive council.

And again the executive council, like our constitutional officers today, attorney general, secretary of state, state auditor, state treasurer, the executive council was also elected by the majority party in the legislature so Governor Curtis, a Democrat, had a Republican executive council who had to approve a lot of his appointments in particular, so.

So anyway he was pretty effective considering the challenge. He also realized after his first four years that Maine government was very cumbersome, the governor didn't have a lot of control. He had about two hundred and thirteen I think boards and commissions and bureaus, and he created a cabinet form of government basically. And that he did during his second term, so I was in the legislature during all of his government reorganization legislation and felt good about how well we did in terms of reconfiguring state government into departments that had department heads that were co-terminus with the governor so that, you know, when a governor came aboard they would be able to appoint certain people themselves for a term co-terminus with theirs as opposed to having the state board of education appoint the commissioner of education, and the PUC appoint these people and, you know, other boards and commissions appointing other administrators. And the government just sits back and hopes that he can get along with these people and that you get something done, you know. So Curtis years were good years, those second four years that I was, his second four years, my first four years. Good leadership, he offered us good leadership as the Democratic head of the party, even though as I say he was dealing with Republican majorities everywhere he turned.

AL: What made you after four years, after Ken Curtis' second term, to not seek office again?

FM: Well I did, I sought a state senate seat, so my retirement was involuntary, not voluntary, so. I didn't choose to go back to the house, I chose to run for the senate and I didn't succeed. That seat was traditionally held by, back in those days, by a Republican and I thought I could win it but I lost. It was a close race, I lost by a hundred and sixty-three votes as I recall so it was a close vote. As I say, it wasn't in the cards. Ironically, as I described before the house ran at large so, I mean citywide. The senate seat wasn't quite the whole city and so actually I was running for higher office in a smaller district which is quite a twist on things because usually when you run for higher office you have more of a population base. And in the senate I had a smaller population base and part of it, the part of the city that I lost, which was put in with Brewer and the other, was a part of the city that I could have used, you know. But anyway, I don't want to take up your time reliving an election that's long past, that was the '74 election.

So I left Augusta not only with that defeat but I actually left with two defeats because after I lost the state senate race in November of '74, I got involved with the secretary of state race. The Democrats did take over in '74 as we mentioned before, and so now the house and the senate combines like they do every two years to elect an attorney general, secretary of state, state treasurer, state auditor. And so shortly after I lost that senate race in November of '74, I got involved with the secretary of state's race which would be determined by the joint convention of the legislature in January of '75 and I lost that race by one vote. So as I said, my exit from public office actually was involuntary and it was two close losses, you know, sort of back-to-back, one in November and the one in January, senate and the secretary of state.

And that's when I got serious about teaching. And in 1976, two years later when I think people

expected me to run for that senate seat again since I'd lost it, you know, by just a few votes, that was when I was in my own mind, not publicly but in my own mind, was thinking about priesthood. And as I say, I was teaching, I was still teaching high school at the time but I was thinking about priesthood and I realized that if I jumped back into another political race and won, then that would only make the decision relative. Do I want to study theology and consider priesthood, that would only make that decision tougher but I make it from the state senate as opposed to from the classroom. So I never ran again after that secretary of state's race in January of '75.

AL: I'd like to talk a little about, more about your dad's involvement in politics. Did he ever relate to you if in what ways, well, I mean obviously he supported Muskie, in what ways he was involved in Muskie's campaigns back in the '54 election for governor? Did he ever tell stories about that time period? Was Muskie ever directly involved with your family at that time?

FM: Yes, in the sense of political events, you know. I'm sure, as I say, I can't remember '54 and '56 which were the two years he was elected governor I believe, and then I think he went to the U.S. senate in '58. That's where my recollection of politics sort of begins, more in terms of, I mean I knew he was governor but I didn't really recall much about his gubernatorial campaigns. But I think my dad's involvement was, as I say, very loyal to people running as Democrats and articulating the fact that we as a people and as a government need to be committed to the working people and those who aren't able to work as well. So I think his loyalty to Muskie was primarily because Muskie was a Democrat and articulated those things. And I think he, like other local party workers, you know, were fired up for Muskie and were there at political rallies and political events to show their support. I don't think there was ever a personal relationship where he would feel like he needs to call him up and tell him this or tell him that, you know. That I don't think ever existed.

I think, I think my father actually felt closer to like Ken Curtis. But that was years later, Ken Curtis didn't really become strong until '64, '6-, Ken Curtis I think was, he got elected secretary of state in 1964. That's the, that was that Johnson landslide when Democrats took control of the legislature so we had a Democratic constitutional officer so Ken Curtis was elected in '64 to the secretary of state. And he was the type of statewide office holder who, you know, really did sort of create these personal relationships with so many people, you know? And so, so as I say, in comparison I think my dad would have felt much more at ease picking up the phone and calling Ken Curtis as opposed to Ed Muskie. So his relationship to Muskie was more just work hard for him, make sure the guy keeps getting, you know, reelected. And of course when he went to the senate I believe in '58, is that the first year he went to the senate?

AL: Yes.

FM: Yeah, you know, that there were a number of times Muskie needed help, was every two years in fact, in those days the governor ran every two years. He's now on a six-year cycle which, you know, he didn't have to work so hard for him. Plus he became more and more powerful so it was easier and easier for a Democrat like him to get reelected, just like George Mitchell. In recent times when George was up for reelection it wasn't something you lost a lot of sleep about, you knew that people were going to send him back, just like when Muskie was up

for reelection you knew he was going to go back. So, as I say, I don't, I don't ever, I never got the sense from my father that, you know, he and Ed were buddy-buddies, you know. I know more about Ed Muskie through my relationship with Don Nicoll than I do from my father because, you know, Don was the one who worked for him for so many years. And then as an adult after I got into politics I became friends with Don in the early seventies and so -

AL: Now, how was that, how was that connection made of, the result of you being in the state legislature?

FM: Yes, the primary reason would be because of my connection in the state legislature and John Martin and Elmer Violette became very good friends, or I became very good friends of theirs when I went to the legislature. I actually ran Elmer's 1972 congressional campaign, he was in the state senate and I was in the house. John Martin was minority leader. He was elected minority leader for the first time in 1970, the year that I was elected, and again reelected as minority leader in '72, then was elected speaker in '74, the year I, you know, was no longer in the house.

But anyway, to get back to your question, Don was very close to John Martin and very close to Elmer Violette. Those, Elmer just died, but John and Elmer were very committed to the Allagash Wilderness Waterway. Don, you know, was the staff person that was helping Muskie on the federal end of that project to come up with, you know, federal money to help, you know, finance that project. So I used to in, started I think in 1972, doing the Allagash with those guys and Don continues to do it with us, and we did it just this past summer again. So my you know, knowledge of Ed Muskie came more from beginning in the early seventies through this connection going to the present, versus my dad's connection to Muskie from the mid fifties, you know. So, so anyway and that's the sort of a relationship, you know, in terms of with Don who worked for him for so many years in so many different roles, that relationship I still maintain.

AL: You were about to tell me a little bit about, I think it was something you were thinking about going into the seminary? And you talked about earlier growing up with the Catholic faith, being very comfortable with it, your whole family was involved. Was that, do you feel that was the basis for the impetus that made you feel that you wanted to pursue this area, or was it something else, where did that, where did the-?

FM: Well I think it's all of the above, you know. People joke today and they have ever since, 1977 is when I started the seminary, I was ordained in '81. But you know, I was pretty much fresh out of my political life in 1977. As I say I, my secretary of state's loss was in early '75 and as I say I think a lot of people thought in the fall of '76 I'd be running for the senate again and I didn't. But, you know, a lot of people joked about, you must have been pretty bad in your public life that you had to, you know, go and become a priest. And, you know, the fact is is that I think all of the above, my early life in terms of a very tight Roman Catholic family, connected very closely to parish church, that coupled with public service and commitment to affecting people's lives in a positive way, and coupled with that desire to teach. I think all of those things together sort of pushed me in this, in this direction of ordained priesthood because the fact is is that priesthood is teaching, it is public service, it is community and family. And so I would say (*unintelligible phrase*) is not really a radical hundred and eighty degree turning away from

anything, it's really the next step in the progression of a lot of things that had been going on in my life early on and right along. You know, that it's a natural progression I think more than any type of any great momentous conversion experience or something like that.

Even though, as I've said to people, I wish I was like St. Paul and was just, you know, tripping along on my horse some day and the thunder clap came and the voice from the heavens, you know, Frank, why are you persecuting me, you know, this type of thing. Be nice to get a dramatic call like that, then you'd be sure first of all that you're doing the right thing, plus it would make a much better story for people who are recording history. But unfortunately I can't really say that, that it was some type of a dramatic experience. It's definitely more a progression where you really look at who you are almost from day one, and what things that you've done that really have been significant and meaningful and that you sort of resonate with. And when you look at it from that way it's to me a pretty logical step, you know.

AL: Makes a lot of sense when you put it the way you just put it.

FM: Yeah, yeah, so, and the nice thing is is that it'll be twenty years this June, it was June of '81 I was ordained so June of next year it will be twenty years and I have not had a vocation crisis in that twenty years, I've felt very much in the right place. And, and very fortunate to be able to continue all of those lives, I don't have to let go of any of them. I still have an awful lot of, well my younger brother is a state senator and all these people we've talked about are still good friends, I'm still teaching. Now I'm assigned back to my own, not my home parish, I didn't grow up in this parish but I grew up in the neighboring parish. I'm assigned to, you know, my hometown, you know, so I'm still connected to that original community. So I mean, it's not only been twenty years where I haven't reconsidered whether this is the right thing or not, it has been twenty years where I've been able to hopefully still grow and mature and take on new challenges, but at the same time still remain connected to a lot of the people and the things that are still, you know, very important. I didn't have to go and be a priest in Miami where I wouldn't know so I therefore wouldn't be able to be involved in politics or education or community. So it's really worked in a very wonderful way, you know, for me.

AL: I'm going to stop right here and turn the tape over.

End of Side A

Side B

AL: We are now on side B of the interview with Father Frank J. Murray. And we were just talking a little bit about your career in the priesthood. And I had in my notes here I wanted to ask you about, and this is switching gears somewhat back to the politics part of it, were you a delegate to the state convention at one time?

FM: I've been a delegate to both the national convention and the state convention.

AL: Now tell me what years, at which, which were, and who was involved and what was it like?

FM: I was a delegate to the state convention definitely in 1970, the year I was running for the legislature. I was a delegate to the state convention in '72 when I was running for reelection, and also I was running Elmer Violette's congressional campaign. In 1972 I was also elected to the national Democratic convention which was the year Muskie was supposed to get elected president, be nominated, excuse me, which didn't happen, excuse me. We probably should tell them that I'm drinking a Sprite so that they (*unintelligible phrase*). But, so I did, and I think I might have been elected to the state convention again in '76 as a delegate, but the national convention that I was a delegate to was the '72 convention which was when Senator McGovern was nominated. And then Senator Eagleton initially was nominated as the vice presidential candidate and then he stepped down, if you recall, you might not recall it but you've probably heard about it, and he stepped down. And then Sargent Shriver was appointed to being the VP choice I believe after the convention. Eagleton stepped down a day or two after the convention got over so they didn't bring us all back to Miami.

But, but that was a very interesting experience, being a delegate to the national convention. Unlike the ones we just saw this year, the 1972 Democratic convention wasn't orchestrated for television and it wasn't just a coronation. It was, when you ballot out any party platform, you know, platform, plank by plank by plank, you know, it was an amazing experience. I mean, it also was 1972 and if you recall 1968 was Chicago when everything sort of blew up, and so Miami in 1972 was not going to let another Chicago happen in terms of demonstrations and riots in the streets like we saw in '68, the year Muskie was nominated for vice president. And so, I mean, the security was amazing in '72 in terms of making sure that the convention didn't get, you know, out of control like in '68. But still, but it was long nights and I remember the night that the platform was debated we went right until six o'clock the next morning in session trying to come up with a party platform. When you look at the conventions of the last, of this year and four years ago, which are all orchestrated for prime time television and all those little battles are just relegated to some back room. That wasn't the case in 1972.

I was one of the delegates from Maine that after Muskie's campaign fell apart and wasn't going to obviously make it, our delegates were not bound as some were, we could, you know, vote for whomever we wanted. So it was five of us I believe, I can't remember if that year there was twelve delegates or whether there was twenty delegates that year. But there were some, I think five, it might have been more, that did vote for McGovern on the first ballot as opposed to waiting until the second ballot. And I, my theory was that Muskie was basically out of the race at that point and it was time to, you know, as disappointed as we all were that he wasn't going to be the nominee, because we saw how well he did in '68 as the VP nominee. I did vote for McGovern on the first ballot along with, as I say, I think there was either five or seven, I can't remember how many in the Maine delegation did vote for McGovern on that first ballot. But I was one of the two that was elected from Penobscot County. At that, that particular year I think Penobscot County or, and maybe it included a couple of the other smaller counties, had two delegates, Professor Bud Schoenberger was the other one from this area.

AL: And tell me about your involvement in Elmer Violette's congressional campaign.

FM: In '72, the same year that there was the national convention that McGovern was the Democratic nominee, Elmer was running for state, excuse me, he was in the state senate but was

running for congress in this district. He had run in 1966 for U.S. senate and lost to Margaret Chase Smith. Six years later the incumbent congressman, which was Congressman Hathaway, in 1972 decided to take on Margaret Chase Smith. So instead of Elmer running for U.S. senate, he ran for congress where the seat was being vacated by Bill Hathaway. That is the year that Billy Cohen was mayor of Bangor and ran as the Republican nominee for congress against Elmer.

Elmer was, you know, just recently died, and is just a dear, a dear, dear man and a very close friend. And when I went to the legislature in January of '71 he was in the senate, senate leader, and I just admired him very much, he was just a very genuine person. And so when that session was ending in, around June of, no actually in '72 the session ended in about April because it was the off year, when he asked me if I'd consider running his campaign. I was more than happy to, you know, because he was just the type of person to become very, very committed to, you know, because he was somebody that you admired so much, I mean, so. So it was interesting, I was from Bangor. I knew Billy Cohen, he was a city councilor here in Bangor and I was the state representative of Bangor. And, and actually I had some of his kids in little league and, he had two boys at that time. So I knew Billy, Billy's a nice man as we know and, but as I say, I was very committed to Elmer, and Elmer did lose that race. It was a good race but, you know, you can Monday morning quarterback, all these things, you know, and who knows what's the reason for people winning and people losing. But that was just very disappointing.

He subsequently after that 1972 congressional loss went back to practicing law and then a few years after that went to the bench and had a great career as a superior court judge and then a supreme court judge. So, you know, he did continue to serve the state in a different way after his legislative career. Those races though, whether you're running yourself and losing or whether you're working for somebody else and they win or lose, they all have lots of lessons, you know. And I think working for Elmer and also seeing him lose and also seeing him accept it as a move on and continue to contribute, those are all wonderful learning experiences.

AL: Did you get a chance to spend more time than you had normally in the county during that period?

FM: Yes, yeah, I think, both through Allagash canoeing trips every summer from 1972 to the present, I've probably only missed maybe three, three or four of those trips. That, that coupled with working Elmer's campaign I feel really attuned to the county and really love it very much. It's a wonderful place and people are very genuine and it's a, it's a nice part of Maine that an awful lot of Mainers don't even know about, you know. Wonderful people and very committed to, especially the Franco Americans, to their heritage, you know.

AL: What was it like to have your family become part of the Beliveau family as well, strong Democrats unite with each other, did you know Severin or any of the Beliveaus before Cynthia? Or how (*unintelligible phrase*)?

FM: Well, yeah I'm the one who connected them. I knew Severin first.

AL: Okay.

FM: Yeah, but actually there was, we were somewhat connected in the sense that my, Severin's mother who just recently died was Margaret McCarthy Beliveau, and my father growing up knew the McCarthy's who actually originated from out here in Glenburn. So my father knew Severin's, you know, lineage, especially on his mother's side, but I don't think knew Severin personally. I, when I went to Augusta in 197-, you know, I went to Augusta a few times before I got into that race as a junior in college trying to decided whether I wanted to run, and that's back when Severin was chairman of the Democratic party. And so I got to know him and he, you know, was interested in whether I was going to run. And then when I got into the legislature and started running and then when I got involved with Elmer Violette's campaign and running that campaign. And Severin was chairman of the party and he would come to Bangor for different events that I was putting on and Cynthia would always be helping me.

Eventually he asked me when I was going to invite, I mean when I was going to introduce him to my sister and so in a sense I was somewhat of the Cupid in that whole thing. No one thought it would go anyplace because they're both pretty independent and never thought that, no one ever thought that this would be the one that Severin would eventually, you know, fall in love with and marry. But, you know, that was twenty eight-years ago I guess (*unintelligible phrase*) so I think it's the real thing, you know. (*unintelligible phrase*) four nephews later and whatever. So, so that was wonderful. And there's other ironies, my great uncle, my grandfather's brother, was Ned Murray and he was an Irish Catholic on the supreme court here in Maine. And the Franco-Catholic on the supreme court was Albert Beliveau, Severin's father, and they served together, the, sort of the two token Catholics and ironically, you know, Mr. Beliveau's son Severin and my Uncle, Ned Murray, his grandniece, and they end up marrying so Maine's pretty small when you think about it. Especially when you look at Democratic politics or Roman Catholicism. It's pretty small, you know, where you don't have to look too far to make, you know, to make the connections.

Another connection that always amazed me is I became so close to Elmer and Marcella and, and they in turn became close to my parents and we discovered in that relationship that, you know, started thirty years ago they discovered that they were married on the same day. Then on further discussions they discovered that not only did they marry on the same day, they honeymooned in the same hotel in Quebec. So they, you know, became very good friends and as I say obviously celebrated their fiftieth the same day. And so, there is just a lot of nice things about the state of Maine, because we're so small but also because of these networks that are created through religion and politics and communities that you really discover you're more connected to some people than you realize, you know. And it's almost like it's all very destined that these things happen, you know.

So, one other thing that we haven't talked about yet but that, you know, was a real high point for me in my (*unintelligible word*) life of politics was when President Carter came and, to Bangor in 1978 for a town meeting, and he, and the White House decided that he'd stay at my parents' house overnight. After he had the town meeting at the city, at the Bangor Auditorium, that he'd spend the night on Maple Street at my house. And I was at Catholic University at the time studying theology in '78 and so when I heard from my parents that the president was going to be in Bangor and that he was going to stay overnight, of course I came home and, as did my

brothers and sisters all make it home so that they'd be there for the president.

And when he discovered that I was a student at Catholic U, he said to me, well gee, Frank, you might as well come back with me on Air Force One. So I flew with him, you know, from Bangor to Manchester where he had another speech, and then from Manchester to Washington. And during that time, not from Bangor to Manchester but from Manchester to Washington he, you know, came into the guest cabin on Air Force One. And there was Governor Curtis and myself and a couple senators from New Hampshire at the time, and we just had this wonderful flight, just like you're old buddies you know, and yet, you know, this really is the president of the United States, you know. So that was another experience where you say, this is not where you, you'd never, never picture yourself, you know, flying on Air Force One or having that type of casual time, you know, you know, chit chatting with the president, you know?

And of course President Carter is such a genuine person as well, I mean he falls into that same category as Elmer Violette, you know, very, just a man of great integrity and great faith, you know. And at the same time very sensitive and also very desirous to know who you are and what you're all about. And I remember President Carter was very interested in that decision on my part to become a priest, you know. And he spent a lot of time just talking to me about it, you know, as we'd talked a little earlier, you know, what's behind all this, you know. And not just because he's curious but more because he's, you get the sense that he has a desire to be really connecting with you.

So that was another big event in the Murray family history, you know, when they were chosen by the White House, and again that why that jogged in my memory it's all these connections. It's because Muskie was a U.S. senator and Hathaway was a U.S. senator and John Martin was speaker of the house and Joe Brennan was governor. And I think when the White House kept asking these different offices, you know, where should we be going in Bangor, I think a consistent name that just happened to be on everybody's list was. You know, my mom and my dad's name and so the White House decided to check it out and see, you know, who's this Bob and Laura Murray, you know. And before you know it they were saying, yeah, we want the president to stay with you, you know, which was very nice, you know.

AL: At one time were you chairman of the Human Rights Commission?

FM: No, I've never been chairman of it, I've worked with the Human Rights Commission a lot when I was in the legislature.

AL: Okay.

FM: And one of the things that that led to was when I was in the legislature we, we were doing, or we initiated a lot of work in the area of migrant workers in terms of their conditions. And I used to be involved with Terry Ann Lunt, the director, in terms of getting the commission to face some of those issues in terms of their living and working conditions. And that was controversial because there was certain people in Washington County that didn't want the federal government or the state government to be telling them how they should be dealing with migrant workers. And as I say, that got, it got quite controversial and almost nasty at some

points during a particular time when the Human Rights Commission decided to go down and just take a look see at what the conditions were. And I happened to go with them. Gerry Talbot who was a legislator from Portland who, he's no longer in the legislature, but has always been concerned about civil rights and has been involved with the NAACP, you know.

He and I both went down with Terry Ann Lunt and some people from the Commission. And as I say it was, it was a very difficult situation because the, the people who were managing the migrant workers had sort of turned them against us, making them think that it was because of us they couldn't have their children in the fields with them when in fact, you know, if the owners were doing what the federal law required in terms of having some day care and some provisions and whatever, things would have been much better for them. But as I say, when we showed up they were (*unintelligible phrase*) very angry mobs. I really wondered whether we were going to get out of there, you know, because of how the tables had been turned and instead of people understanding that it was in their interest that the Human Rights Commission was there, it didn't look that way to them at all. It was like, oh we're not going to, it was sort of like, you know, if you don't rid yourself of these people then you're not going to have a job, you know, they're doing you in.

AL: Oh, yeah.

FM: Yeah, yeah, so, and those were the days I look back on now and say, geez, I, you're lucky you survived these things, you know. But now I'm sure that years later people probably wouldn't think of not providing some of the basics for the migrant workers when they show up. And I hope that's the case at least today.

AL: Now would that, that sort of thing would apply to the DeCoster workers as well?

FM: It should, it should. I mean, I never personally was involved with the, you know, the chicken, the egg industry or whatever. But right, those federal laws are relative to, you know, migrant, it doesn't matter whether you're picking, raking blueberries, that's what in particular we were concerned about. The blueberry rakers who back in those days tended to be Native Americans that crossed back and forth as opposed to today migrant workers tend to be more Mexican Americans that make their way up here for the broccoli and the, you know, potato and other, and also now for the blueberry raking, too. I think there's as many Mexicans as there are, you know, Native Americans. But back in the early seventies we were more concerned about the blueberry fields and those, those workers, than DeCoster. Hopefully today somebody else is carrying the torch relative to that issue.

AL: The reason that I mentioned is because what you said about the, you know, the sort of feeling you got from going in there sort of triggered what I've heard in the news and thought being close to that area of the state.

FM: Yeah, yes, that's happened, you know, again, and that's, when you talk about the big powerful and those who need a government that can help them. The big and powerful can turn things so that those who are really down on the bottom rung see things in a very convoluted way. And they can almost see those who are really concerned about their interests, they can see them

as the bad guys because they can be painted that way, you know. You let those do-gooders come in here, you know, you're not going to have any job, that type of thing, you know. So, it's hard when you see that but it still happens today I'm sure.

AL: Now tell me, is there anything that I haven't asked you, an area that we haven't covered that you feel we need to add here? Or any final comments that you'd like to make?

FM: I guess one that I didn't talk much about but I think is real important is that when you talk about growing up in the fifties and then as a teenager and young adult being sort of thrown into the turmoil of Vietnam and that whole soul searching that the country was doing twenty years plus after WWII, and then coming out of that, you know. I'm part of a generation where we just really were immersed into the whole sense of community and community service and seeing how a government really needs to have a vital role in, not only my life. I mean I'm very fortunate, you know, my parents worked hard and I got an education and I now am in a position where I can fend for myself pretty much. But I am still social conscious about making this government work and making this society work so that more and more people can, can really participate fully. And I guess one of the things that I, I'm very, very joyful that I've had the type of opportunities and it's nothing that really I earned. I mean, it's just that I was very fortunate as I say, whether it was at twenty years old knocking on doors and people would say, oh, I know who you are. That I didn't earn, you know, that's, I was just very fortunate. And other things, you know, in being a young person in the legislature, or as I say, flying around with the president, those are all, those certainly are graced moments, but not something earned.

But I think that I've had a lot of opportunities. And I think a lot of people like me who, you know, knew Ed Muskie and knew Ken Curtis, and knew Elmer Violette, I think all of us knew that we have a real important role in terms of being community and effecting positive change. And I guess that's the thing that I now, I'm sounding like an old man, look at the present generation and I sometimes think that there's a different prism that people are looking at life through. I mean, and I'm not getting real political, I mean when you think about Social Security and you say well we'll give you back your money for you to invest so you can make the right choices for yourself. Or any of the, whenever you use the standard of, well, I need to decide what's best for me, I think that when we do that we really narrow the scope of what's going to get accomplished, you know. And so I guess it was great to be part of an era, especially a Democratic era when Democrat politicians, you know, on that Kennedy theme, ask not what you can do for your country. Or for what your country can do for you but for what you can do for your country. My generation grew up with that and really believed that, you know, and were looking to find ways to do things for community and country. And yet I'm not sure the political system that we're inheriting, or that we're passing on at least this year is that prism that they're looking through.

AL: From what you said it sounds like that it's starting to say what can it do for me.

FM: Right.

AL: Turning it around.

FM: Yeah, and I say that not in a judgmental way of casting stones. I say that with some sadness because I just think that it's not as much fun to be out there worried about yourself, or worried about a system, whether it's going to work for you or isn't going to work for you. That saddens me because I don't think people are going to get the exhilaration and receive the meaning in their life that community, commitment, and community service can offer. When it's somewhat watching out for self-interest or interests of my class or group, as I say, I don't think that returns much life and meaningfulness for people. And so, so that's what I'm saying. As I say, I'm not casting stones or being too negative, or sound like too much of an old fogey I hope. But I do say that, you know, what I've experienced in terms of the different things that we've talked about, I've really experienced a feeling of being able to get in there and make a difference and feel great satisfaction from doing that. And I just think that the political system the way it's working of recent doesn't even put the emphasis there so people tend to start looking from a different prism, through a different prism. And when you do you're obviously going to see things differently and you're going to react differently, and your priorities are going to change and so. So I guess that's what I'd like to conclude on, that it's (*unintelligible word*). It was a great era, that post Roosevelt into Kennedy, you know, in this state, you know, with the likes of Muskie and Curtis and Violette and those type of people that, you know, we've really experienced something great, and hoping, hoping for a resurgence of that, you know. We'll just have to give it some time, you know, to see that.

AL: Thank you very much for your time.

End of Interview