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Murray, Robert, Jr. "Buddy" oral history interview

Greg Beam

Interview with Robert "Buddy" Murray, Jr. by Greg Beam

Summary Sheet and Transcript

Interviewee
Murray, Robert, Jr. "Buddy"

Interviewer
Beam, Greg

Date
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Place
Bangor, Maine

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Biographical Note

Robert E. "Buddy" Murray, Jr. was born on June 29, 1959 in Bangor, Maine into a politically active family. Buddy's father, Robert Sr., worked at Sears Roebuck in various positions. Laura, his mother, was employed by several financial institutions. Buddy's parents were both active in state politics. Buddy's younger brother, Frank Murray, and sister, Cynthia Murray-Beliveau (wife of Severin Beliveau), have been involved in the state legislature. As a child, Buddy met President Carter and Maine governors Kenneth M. Curtis and Edmund S. Muskie. He attended John Bapst High School and Boston College, where he majored in Political Science and Theology. He worked for a year at Eastern Maine Development District, a governmental agency, then ran and was elected to the Maine State House of Representatives in 1982. After serving one term, he enrolled in law school. He joined the law firm Rudman and Winchell in Bangor, where he has been an attorney since 1989. He was elected to the Maine State Senate in 1996.

Scope and Content Note

Interview includes discussions of: personal and family background; Bangor community background; Boston College years; Maine Legislature; law school; legislative and law career;

State representatives and legislators; Buddy's family's political involvement; Joseph Brennan; Kenneth Curtis; and the story of President Carter staying overnight with the Murray family.

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Transcript

Greg Beam: If it's alright, the way we usually do this is start with some background information and then try to segue into more pertinent issues. So we'll start. This is Greg Beam, and I am at the law offices of Rudman & Winchell in Bangor, Maine. It's 1:30 P.M. on, what's the date today, July the 18th, 2000, and I'm here with Robert E. Murray. To begin, could you please state your full name and spell it?

Robert Murray: It's Robert Emmett Murray, Jr. Everyone knows me as Buddy, and has ever since day one as far as I know. The spelling is Robert, and the Emmett is E-M-M-E-T-T, which is a historical story in and of itself; and Murray is M-U-R-R-A-Y.

GB: And where does the Emmett come from?

RM: Robert Emmet was a great Irish patriot, and I am Robert Emmett, Jr., and so obviously my father is named Robert Emmett Murray as well. And he was born on Robert Emmet's Day, and so I always often ask myself what he or I may have been named had he been born one day early or late because I'm sure his name came almost exclusively from the fact that he happened to be born on March 4th. But Robert Emmet is a fascinating character in Irish history, and so it's kind of a neat bit of history in and of itself. And the anomaly is that my father's parents, I assumed, spelled it on my father's birth certificate E-M-M-E-T-T, and the historical figure Robert Emmet is E-M-M-E-T. So he never changed it back to the historical figure. But that's clearly who he was named for.

GB: I see. So do you come from a strong Irish background?

RM: Quite strong, yeah. My father's parents and grandparents all came from Ireland on all sides of his family, so that branch of my family is Irish. The Irish heritage has always been a strong component of our family as we grew up. It's a great history and the Irish influence in this city was always very strong. So that became kind of a neat thing that was always kind of present as we grew up.

GB: And when and where were you born?

RM: I was born right here in Bangor, June 29th, 1959.

GB: And you grew up here in Bangor?

RM: Yup.

GB: And what was your mother's name?

RM: Laura Guité Murray, G-U-I-T-É, *accent aigu*.

GB: And what were your parents' occupations?

RM: My father worked for Sears almost all of his adult life; that was thirty odd years before his retirement. And he worked in a variety of positions with Sears before he retired in, probably around 1982 I would think he retired. My mother worked in a variety of positions mostly in financial institutions. She worked for a couple of different credit unions, managed the University Credit Union at that facility at the University of Maine, and worked at a couple of different banks here in town. I think the last place she worked before she retired was with People's, what's now People's Heritage Bank, it was the Penobscot Bank back at that time.

GB: I see. And what are your memories of the Bangor community from growing up? Does anything stick out in your mind?

RM: It was a great place to grow up. I have very fond memories of growing up as a kid. The neighborhood was always a fun place to be. The kids played well in the neighborhood. Our family still owns the home where I grew up on Maple Street in Bangor. And I went to parochial school from the time I was in first grade up, and so that was a fairly close-knit community from the school as well. And a lot of the kids, not all of the kids we played with in the neighborhood, but a lot of them that we played with in the neighborhood were also kids you went to school with. So I have very good memories of growing up.

We'd often talk about how different it is as far as just the way kids grow up now, although Bangor I think is still a great place to raise kids and raise a family, and there's the closeness is still an element of growing up here. The structure is very different as far as how kids are now much more into particular routines and programs and things of that, formalized camps whereas everybody my age remembers growing up as basically being, at least in the summer time, you get out, and you go outside, you come back for dinner. And we would get some friends together in very informal gatherings and who knows what the day may bring, but in that sense it's quite different. And that's not just this community; I think that's fairly typical of everywhere now where kids are more involved in the organized camps and organizations and even park that they grow up with.

GB: You mentioned you went to parochial school, so was your family Catholic?

RM: Yes.

GB: Was your neighborhood predominantly Irish Catholic?

RM: There was a pretty strong element of that in our neighborhood. Not as much as in my father's day in his neighborhood. I mean he could go down literally the neighborhood where he grew up, and every house was an Irish Catholic house. And that wasn't the case in our particular immediate neighborhood although there were quite a few of my friends, who were also kids I went to school with at the St. John's School, were also Irish heritage as well. That presence was always around, but it wasn't exclusively that, it wasn't identified as an Irish neighborhood when I was growing up as a kid.

GB: Were there other, what were some other visible ethnicities?

RM: There was a fairly well defined Jewish community in Bangor. You know, we always played with, I remember the kids down the street, the Weiner kids down the street were good friends of ours, Jewish friends, and kids that I grew up with and played with. In fact I recall going to, they had a Jewish, what did they call it, the Jewish day school or day center or something like that, Jewish community center day program or something like that. And I'd go with Jimmy Weiner every once in a while. You know, we'd go down there to the Jewish center. They'd have days where you'd make model airplanes or something like that. So, and there were, as I say, four or five houses down the same street that we lived on and there was a fairly well

defined Jewish community that you grew up with. And other, it wasn't as strong a, there were kids with French ancestry but not as much as some of the other cities where it was much more predominant than there is in Bangor. Never so much as a defined French community here in the city where I grew up, but there were obviously kids that were of French ancestry that you did go to school with.

GB: And, do you recall how your parents were involved in the Bangor community when you were growing up?

RM: My parents were very involved with the church, organizations at the church, the CYO and the, Dad was a member of the Knights of Columbus, not an active member but involved with different groups in the church. And my mother was with the Women's Council, it was called, and very active in the running of the, not the running but the maintaining of the St. John's School as she was called, too. And my folks were always interested, involved, active in politics as well. I recall that growing up.

GB: How were they involved in politics? Did they get involved in campaigns?

RM: Yup, they were involved in campaigns. My father served for a time as the city chair of the party and also the county chair of the party for a period of time when I was growing up. He never held elective office himself. And my mother obviously did do a lot of work, nuts and bolts work involved with campaigning both for races that my brother and I were involved with, but also for others and always was just very much interested in and involved in, heavily connected with Democratic Party politics. And it was just something that was constantly a part of our life growing up as kids. Dad was in particular interested in, you know, I recall him reading the paper every day. It was just part of his routine, and so he was on top of issues and had a fascination and an interest with it. And he was a fascinating individual himself. And it just became something that we were inculcated with, I think, as we were growing up.

GB: And would you say that that influenced you over the years?

RM: Oh yeah, unquestionably, his influence was, and my mother's influence. My mother was clearly a woman who was, with regard to politics, behind the scenes but very much involved and in fact did a lot more of the work than Dad did in many respects. You know, he was more in the forefront I guess. But both of their influences in that regard were something that motivated me as well.

GB: Did you get to meet other figures in the Democratic Party when you were a kid?

RM: Yup, yeah, as a kid often times we would host gatherings at the house or elsewhere where individuals would come. I recall Ken Curtis, for example, came to the house on one occasion when I was fairly young. I can't recall if it was before he was elected governor or when he was running the first time. I think he, no, he was already governor in fact, now that I remember, he had the car and the state trooper accompanying him, so he must have been governor at the time. He was at the house for a reception or some function that was going on. And Ed Muskie, I think, had been at the house, too. It wasn't that particular occasion, but he'd been by on occasion; and

other folks over time. Governor Brennan came by on several occasions. He used to, used to use the house for a shaving stop. If he was on the trail and needed to freshen up, he'd come by and use the place often times. In fact, he joked I recall. The president came to the house on one occasion, and obviously that was a big thing for all of us. And Brennan contacted my folks shortly after that. And he made the call, or actually I think he made the call initially before the president arrived to ask if we knew the president was coming, and was trying to give my mother a hard time saying, "Is my room going to be ready that night?" Of course my mother was upset because she couldn't have them both, of course.

GB: Which president was that?

RM: President Carter came and stayed with us in 1978, part of his, during that time when he would hold town meetings he would often stay with a family in, wherever he was visiting. And he stayed with us one night overnight and had breakfast with us the next day at the house. Obviously that was a big event for us.

GB: Could you tell me a little bit about your impressions or your recollections of each of those figures from when you were a kid? I guess we'll start with Ken Curtis; what do you remember of him?

RM: I was quite young at that point in time. I do remember he was, I remember Dad talking a lot about him, and obviously he was one of the few Democratic governors that had surfaced in Maine for quite some time. I mean, I recall Dad talking about Louis Brann, which was a Democratic governor from the thirties I think. And after that there was no Democratic governor until Muskie. And then after Muskie, Ken Curtis. So it was a, it was exciting to have a governor who was a Democrat first of all. And obviously at that time Ken Curtis was a young man, an energetic fellow, and he engendered a lot of enthusiasm. So as a kid I don't recall a lot about him as far as the specifics, but I do recall there was a general enthusiasm about him. And I know Dad was excited about the fact that we were going to have another Democratic governor, which was a bit of a rarity in his lifetime, you know.

As far as Muskie, again I recall, you know, the thing you are first struck by is his stature physically. He was an imposing character and one that obviously left an impression, when you're a young person especially. And he obviously was a dynasty, an icon, all of those things himself when you, when you look back clearly, but even as you were experiencing him. He made an impression and justifiably so. I mean he was a bright man, and he was a leader, one that had character and obviously very effective. A lot of those qualities, you became very aware of right off, really.

GB: Now he must have visited when he was in the Senate?

RM: Yup, yup. I don't, I can't, I don't know when he may have first had any kind of connection with our family. But I can recall the days when he was in the senate, and that's when I remember having whatever brief contacts I personally had. As far as President Carter, I mean, he was very impressive as well. I mean that was obviously a big honor for our family. And he was a very warm and engaging fellow himself. I mean, he came to the house after he had a

public town meeting, as he called it, at the auditorium on the Friday night he arrived. In fact, he came into town and was at a reception for Bill Hathaway, who was running for the senate that year. And after that he went to the town meeting, and went from the town meeting, he came to our house for the evening. And as soon as he, you know, came into the house he set everyone at ease. And we're obviously, we're not used to hosting the president. So it was a tad intimidating, and became, just, you know, all of the things I think that he became known for and, his warmth and down to earth qualities were something that were very apparent very quickly with him. And he stayed up with us for a few hours and chatted, and we just had a very nice evening with him. So, and he was a very bright man, that's also something that quickly came to the forefront when you're dealing with him, as well as being engaging and friendly. He clearly had a lot of candle power as well.

GB: So, do you think that being in such, you know, close proximity and having contact with these political figures had an impact on you, got you more interested in politics or influenced your particular views?

RM: I suspect so, I mean I, I don't know whether one followed the other or whether there was some [*sic*]. There was obviously a link though to, you know, the closeness we as a family felt to politics in general and the process. My brother ran and served in the legislature himself in the early 1970s, and I was relatively young at that point as well. I mean, when he was first elected, I think I was probably, you know, ten or eleven years old. And so I kind of grew up with the idea of not only having some exposure to other people who were in office but somebody from my own house who was in office himself and the idea of public service in that means, you know, became relatively natural and something that I was interested in as well. And so I looked to him as a source as well as these individuals who were more well-known to the public.

GB: So through high school were you interested in law or government academically?

RM: Not law. When I was in high school, in fact part of my high school years, Frank was in the legislature, so I had a fairly close connection to it. I mean, I on occasion would go down and visit while he was in session and so had some exposure to it there and some familiarity with the process, and obviously he would share with us his experiences and what that was like. And so in that regard the interest in government was there in relatively early years and definitely through high school years. But at that point in time, I did not know that I would myself either try to run or I certainly didn't have any sense of a legal career at that point in time. That didn't occur until really beyond college years.

GB: So did you go to Bangor High School?

RM: No, I went to John Bapst.

GB: John Bapst?

RM: Which at the time was a Catholic high school in town. It's still, it's now John Bapst Memorial High School, and it's still a private school, but it's not a Catholic school at this point in time.

GB: And what were your activities and academic interests in high school?

RM: In high school I was a pretty good student and had a fairly active involvement in several clubs and played some sports. I played basketball freshman year and was on the golf team I think all four years. But I was in student government and year book and Key Club and all that stuff.

GB: And after graduation did you go directly to college?

RM: Yup, I went to Boston College from high school.

GB: And what was college like?

RM: Oh, college was a great experience. I wasn't, I lived on campus all four years and met great friends, some of which I still consider my dearest friends. And it was a wonderful school, I mean it was, from my perspective at least, it had the best of all worlds. I mean, it was in a city, and you had the great cosmopolitan aspects of being in a big city, especially from the perspective of a Maine kid. And yet the campus of Boston College is not right directly in the city so that you had some sense of being, as opposed to BU or Northeastern, which are clearly, are city campuses. You had the sense of a somewhat separate community that had some green on the campus. So that was very nice, and you'd just literally hop on the 'T' and be in the middle of Boston in fifteen minutes by getting a trolley ride. So that was a great experience for a kid growing up in a fairly rural state, even though Bangor's not rural.

And the people that I encountered were just wonderful people, both fellow students and the teachers that I had. Boston College is a Jesuit school, and Jesuits, although they make up, I don't know, probably a fifth of the full faculty at most, so you didn't have all Jesuits by any means. And many of the other teachers that I had that weren't Jesuit were great quality teachers. The Jesuits themselves were really brilliant teachers. I mean they, regardless of what the field is, becoming a Jesuit requires a considerable amount of intellectual discipline. And that becomes fairly apparent when you have them as teachers. They're just gifted in that regard. And so growing up in, I mean going to school in that type of community, that was clearly intellectually challenging as well as a community that maintained a sense of a Catholic community as well, was I found to be very beneficial. And I just have wonderful memories from my college years.

GB: What did you study?

RM: I went as a math major actually. I was in the honors math program, and I was accepted there. And survived four or five semesters in math until I butted up against linear algebra, which was my demise in math and opened my eyes to the fact that I guess I wasn't going to be a math scholar after all. So I had been taking some political science courses as well and shifted my major to political science at that point. And also had been taking some theology courses as part of, initially as part of the core curriculum that you had to take. And I found it interesting and challenging, and so I had continued to take theology courses to the point where I had decided I might as well get a major in that as well. And so I had, my majors are in political science and theology with a close second in math, not quite.

GB: And did your theological studies reinforce your religious background, or?

RM: Well I, you know, I think so. I mean I, my study in theology was clearly much more focused on the academic in college, although it complemented my upbringing and faith as well. I mean there wasn't anything that I took as an academic theology course that I felt challenged what I believed from my faith experience. So in that sense I guess it reinforced it. But it was, it was clearly an academic endeavor, the theology. And as I say, the teachers that I had in that regard were intellectually challenging to a degree as much as any other course I've had, regardless of the subject matter. And so for that, I'm grateful. They're great teachers, and, as I say, I enjoyed that course of study.

GB: So toward the end of your college years studying political science and theology, what did you see yourself doing after graduation?

RM: Well, I faced the same dilemma ninety percent of the students do I guess at that point is, now what? And fortunately, I was able to get a job out of college with a local agency, governmental agency back here. Eastern Maine Development District, it was called at that point in time, which was a six county governmental economic development type agency in this area. And I got a job working for them as kind of a governmental affairs type position.

GB: What were your duties in that job?

RM: I did a fair amount of research as well as kind of a liaison with, the agency was a five or six, five or six counties we had under, under its wing. And at that time was an EDA, Economic Development Administration funded agency in part, also funded by the counties in part. And would get grants from different private and public agencies. So part of what I did was kind of be a liaison just to the some of the county officers and municipal officers that we had particular programs with. And also deal with state government when we had to deal with state government. And sometimes on occasion we had to go to Washington to deal with our EDA funding and stuff like that. So it was an interesting job for somebody right out of college.

And I wasn't there a great deal of time because, I started there in, right after I graduated, which would have been in '81 in May. And I decided to run myself for the legislature the first time in '82. So, [*sic*] and because part of our funding was EDA, I was hatched. As soon as I made the decision and announcement that I was going to run, I had to quit my job. So that happened the following whatever it was, May. So I was only in that job for a year when I ran for the legislature for the first time.

GB: Could you tell me about your candidacy in '82?

RM: Yeah, I ran for the house, Maine House of Representatives for the first time in 1982. And I ran from the district that included the east side of town where I grew up, and at that point was still living in the same house where I grew up, and it was a great experience. I mean, as I say, it was, it was obviously a challenge to do that but it wasn't quite so intimidating because Frank in a sense had paved the way in that he had at least done that himself as well. And so I had some

familiarity with what was involved in the process. But, I mean, it was a lot of work and a lot of door to door literally. Meeting as many folks as you could, reinforcing those contacts that you knew and friends that you knew from whatever avenue, whether it was school or your parents' friends or your siblings' friends or people you'd worked with. And it was a good experience. We were fortunately successful and I began my legislative career in '82.

GB: And what were your impressions of the legislature when you first entered? As a fairly young man?

RM: Yeah, I mean, I was treated very well as far as, you know, I felt that those people were my colleagues, and I hoped and believed that they felt the same way about me, and I felt I was treated with respect. And there's something very unique and special about serving in the legislature regardless of the age you are when you undertake that effort. There is a bond among people who serve and that's something you come to know and appreciate fairly quickly once you're there. So, the impressions that I quickly made when I began my legislative service is that fortunately, I can think of very, very, very few people that I didn't enjoy working with in the legislature. And that's a nice thing to be able to say regardless of what you're doing for work. You know, the people that served there, both when I first started and currently as a legislator [*sic*], I can say without hesitation are there for the right reason. Their hearts are in the right place, they're doing the best job they think they can, and that's reassuring. And that's something, as I say, I was at least comfortable and confident of fairly quickly. And it was one of my first impressions once getting there.

I love the committee work in the legislature. You're assigned to a particular committee or committees when you become a member and that's really where the nuts and bolts of the legislative work happens in my opinion. And I got on a committee where I was very fortunate to have a chairman who was, I think, very talented, and I tried very hard to learn as much as I could from him. And I credit him with being, whether he knew it or not, a teacher of mine in that respect.

GB: Who's that?

RM: Joe Brannigan was his name. He was a legislator from Portland and just a very talented guy in that not only was he a bright fellow, but he had great people skills as far as his ability to lead in a quiet but effective way; in both the committee setting and as a leader of the committee in the full house. So that was a very positive experience and as I say, I think on the committee level you can effectuate things well if you understand. You know, one thing, and you also learn quickly, or at least the impression I had and I think it's true is; if you do your homework and if you do, if you understand and learn the rules and the process well, it will serve you well. And so I tried to do that as quickly as I could, and I think, or I hope at least, I was perceived as being a good legislator.

GB: Who else do you remember working with in the house?

RM: Oh, all kinds of people. I mean part of what I suggested to you a few minutes ago about the uniqueness and the ties that you make with the legislature. I, just this past year took a trip to

Ireland for the first time. And there were eleven of us that went, eleven guys that went on this trip. And of the eleven that went, eight of us served together my first year in the legislature. Eight-, whatever that would have been, that would have been eighteen years previously. So I mean that gives you a sense of the closeness that can develop in a setting like that. And some of those individuals are clearly my dearest friends to this day, and, you know, we've maintained that friendship. And it's part of the process.

I mean, you are in some respects, thrust into situations where you work very closely with individuals on very important issues and sometimes not so important issues, but you're still in that process where it works. It serves you well if you have the abilities and the people skills to be able to work well with people like that. But if you do so, you develop these fairly close relationships that survive your passing and leaving the legislature. I mean, during that trip last year I was the only individual who was still in the legislature. I mean, I had a significant gap in my service between those times, but obviously despite the fact that none of us were colleagues at the current time, we still, we still were close enough to go on a trip like that and have a great time. I mean, that trip was a wonderful trip.

GB: Well, who were the major players in the house back in the early eighties?

RM: Back then? Well, clearly John Martin was. I mean, John was still the speaker during those years and he, his presence was clear. And John's, I always got along well with John and found him and consider him still to be a good, effective legislator. And I was always treated fairly by John. I mean, John's got this reputation of having ruled with the iron hand; the "Czar of Eagle Lake" they call him. But I, you know, I always found him to be a fair and reasonable leader as well as, clearly somebody who knew how to be a leader and was effective and, was not afraid to exercise his authority when he thought it was appropriate. But I never thought he exercised it in an inappropriate way. That's my impression of him. So clearly he was a leader at the time. Libby Mitchell was a leader back in those days. She was a very effective legislator and a good speaker from the floor. Ed Kelleher was a fellow legislator from Bangor who was in the house at the time.

GB: What was his last name?

RM: Kelleher, K-E-L-L-E-H-E-R, he was a rep from Bangor as well who had served a number of years. And in my opinion, at least, he was the best extemporaneous floor speaker down there at the time. I mean he could, he was gifted enough so that he could get up and speak upon any subject and speak well on any subject. I remember people down there who didn't have qualms about getting up and speaking on every subject, but not quite as effectively as Ed could do it. Who else that I can remember, I mean there were a lot of great people I served with back then who were, who are still in many respects in the picture in different ways these days. Jim Tierney was a fellow who was a good floor speaker. He was a legislative leader back in those days. And I have a number of friends who were colleagues of mine, who are still on different functions. Pat McGowan is a guy who was a good legislator who I served with during those two terms. Paul Jacques, another guy, a legislator from Waterville who was subsequently, after I left anyway, in a legislative leadership position. And Paul was a good extemporaneous speaker, too, from the floor. Paul, much more so the folksy kind of guy when he'd get up, but spoke well from his

heart.

GB: Were, was everyone you mentioned, were they all Democrats?

RM: Those were all Democrats, yeah. On the other side of the aisle there was, Tom Murphy was a floor leader back in those days, who is currently floor leader again. And Tom was good, Tom was effective. There were other Republicans on the committee that I worked well with, on my own committee. They weren't, I don't think, perceived as leaders from a, in the house at large, but I enjoyed working with them. I remember one Republican that I, in the senate back then, who I worked well with. Oh, Tom [McIntyre?], what's his name? The senator from Hancock County, geez, now it's gone; ran a pharmacy down in Blue Hill. God, I can picture him, and I can't think of his last name. That's awful, my aging process. He was a good fellow, he'd been down there a number of years and a, had been an, effective legislator in my opinion.

GB: So was there a pretty friendly dynamic between the parties at that time?

RM: I think so. I mean there's always a friendly rivalry, but people got along well. I mean it was, I wasn't in the legislature during what everyone talks about as the real difficult years, during the early McKernan years and the budget problems, and luckily didn't have to experience what I guess was very difficult times. No, when I was there in the early eighties, I recall it being congenial, people had respect for each other. You often times would do, you know, I, at the time, was single, and during the session I would live down there, and so you had an opportunity to, on a social level, interact with people from both parties. And that was healthy and I think served the process well as well. But I, you know, I think people for the most part worked well together, and it was a positive experience.

GB: One second, I'm going to flip the tape over.

End of Side A
Side B

GB: We're now on side B of the tape of the interview with Buddy Murray. Okay, so did you get a sense at all of, or were there partisan agendas? Did the Democratic Party have an agenda versus the Republican agenda at all?

RM: Oh yeah, sure, that was, you know, clearly that rivalry was there. I think it probably always has been and that's part of the process and probably always will be. And, you know, that sense of the politics of it is something that was there. You didn't tend to see it on the committee level as much if at all, quite frankly, on a lot of committees. I mean, there are some committees that have historically, and I think to this day, still been committees where partisan positions are taken and are often difficult to overcome like labor type, labor committee issues where you've got worker's comp. type questions. Or minimum wage or whatever the issues may be where the partisan positions are fairly clear and fairly divergent and partisanship, or not partisanship, but a partisan position is fairly clear. On other issues, again especially on a committee level, there aren't as many partisan issues.

I mean, it's ironic in one sense when you get somebody from the outside who comes into the process and sees it working and is presented with the reality that, you know, ninety to ninety-five percent of the legislation that one actually deals with is dealt with in a non-partisan way and that it's a fairly small minority of the actual total number of things that you deal with as legislation that either become or are perceived as partisan. That obviously gets the greater exposure and coverage in the press, and that's why the perception I think in the public is that everything we therefore deal with is something that's dealt with in a partisan manner, and voted upon in a partisan manner, and that's clearly not the truth. I mean, if that were the truth we would never get through anything, and you could not physically get through a legislative session in the time frame that's allowed. But that isn't the reality. The reality is, you know, ninety percent of the stuff you deal with is dealt with in a unanimous way, let alone a non-partisan way, so. And people, like, for example in the last four years when I've been in the senate, in my committee where I was the chairman, which was the criminal justice committee of the however many hundred bills we've had over the last four years, I never had a committee vote that split along party lines in four years.

GB: Wow.

RM: That's the reality. If you were to say that to anyone in the public I suspect the reaction would be similar to yours.

GB: Yeah, very surprised, yeah.

RM: But that's the truth.

GB: What committees have you served on?

RM: When I was back in the house, I served on what was, my first year it was called, I think, the Committee on Business Legislation. It got a name change my second term to banking and commerce, or banking and insurance, or something like that. But for all intents and purposes the subject matter was the same, which was basically banking issues, insurance issues, professional regulation type issues, licensing, that sort of thing. I served on that committee my whole tenure in the house. When I went back and served in the senate, I was chairman of the criminal justice committee both terms in the senate. And I also served on, my first year in the senate, served on the banking and insurance committee as a second senator. And this past year I served on the education committee as a second senator, not the chair.

GB: What are some major legislation that you've dealt with in committee or on the floor that you remember from either tenure in the legislature?

RM: That I was particularly involved with or just in general?

GB: That you were involved with or in general, either way.

RM: Oh, we're going way back. Well, I remember one bill I had in the house when I served in the house. I sponsored a, the first legislation that became enacted as the living will laws back in

the; I don't know what year that would have been, probably '84 or something. Prior to that, there were no living will legislations. I don't know if you know what living wills are but...

GB: Could you, yeah, could you give a little explanation?

RM: Living wills allow an individual to designate in advance their ability to make choices about not having extraordinary treatment at end of life. So that was a statutory creature; there was no ability to do that prior to the law that allowed for somebody to designate that intention and to have it enforced, be enforceable. So that was an interesting, I mean that, it's now accepted as a fairly foregone conclusion that that ought to be something that can be done; and there have been changes and improvements to that law since that time. But that was something I had sponsored and was very proud to get through in my house days.

Oh boy, there were, I don't know, all kinds of stuff that we dealt with, the Rivers Bill back then, the first Land for Man's Future legislation went through back in those years. So there was all kinds of interesting stuff, you know. But that's the fascination of being in the legislative process directly is: regardless of what your intent is or what you think you may be able to accomplish or how quiet you may think a year will be, there will always be fascinating issues to pop up and occupy your time and fortunately have the opportunity to provide some positive results sometimes.

These past years, I guess I have become, this last session I ended up becoming involved in this fingerprinting issue more than I would have anticipated or expected. But it had become, it became a fascinating legislative experience even aside from the merits of the issue, which I ended up kind of being a spokesperson on one side of the issue this time around, which was kind of fun.

GB: Which side was that?

RM: I was not supportive of the idea of fingerprinting everybody and had proposed an alternative, which would have just fingerprinted new hires to the teaching profession or people who are transferring from one area to some new location where you wouldn't necessarily know as much about them. And that, the bill went to the education committee that I served on and it went through. It was kind of an unusual posture that it came to us in that the law had been enacted the previous session. I wasn't on the committee at the time, but it went through the process, and it went through the process relatively; it literally had no debate the first time it went through because in the committee process, things were hammered out among the stakeholders to the point where the committee unanimously endorsed that effort and so, and we had a unanimous committee report that kind of just flew through the process and never was debated, literally, in either the house or the senate. So that went into effect and became law. And it was structured so that it didn't take effect until a few years down the road when things could be put in place. So it wasn't literally until things actually started taking effect and you started having teachers being subjected to the process of the background checks and the fingerprinting that the reality struck and the issue became such a hot bed issue.

So it was at that point that this last year it was presented again to the legislature as, you know, it

was literally a concept draft legislation, which is a fairly unique thing but basically says, "Here's the issue, committee; deal with it, make some recommendations." So that process began, and we had public hearings where there was clearly not a consensus from the public anyway and literally several hundred people showed up at the public hearing.

And anyway, but the committee process was interesting in that it ended up becoming a vote that was eleven that supported the current law basically, that would require the fingerprinting of everybody existing, and new teachers and all school personnel. And I was the only vote that said let's just focus on new hires, and then there was one other committee member that voted to do away with fingerprinting altogether. So the report was a very strong committee report, eleven to one to one. And so it was a senate bill so it came to the senate first and those of us on the side I supported prevailed in supporting my version, the minority report of one that said let's just focus on new people. So I was obviously pleased about that. And then it went down to the house, which was a real challenge because there were no house members on my report. Obviously, I was the sole member so that I had nobody from the committee that I could rely on. And usually, typically, committee members on both sides of the issue kind of take the lead on the debate. So we had to do some work in trying to line up some people in the house in advance, not on the committee who might, who were inclined to support the position I was supporting. And obviously, I had the whole rest of the committee against me on that particular issue.

And we, anyway, to make a long story short, we prevailed in the house as well by three votes, I think. Four or five votes the first time it went through the house. And obviously, the committee members were not pleased with that in the house, who were strongly on the other side. And the speaker was on the other side, and the house Democratic floor leader was on the other side, so it was a strange alliance in that sense. I worked very closely with the Republican floor leader who was aligned with my position on that issue. And anyway, we, they flipped it once when it came back for another vote, and so they prevailed, and so then we were in non-concurrence.

Anyway, the long and short of it was we ultimately prevailed getting it passed, the version I supported, in the senate and the house, and it was enacted to basically just be new hires.

And then the governor vetoed it. And I only survived the house vote by two votes. And so I clearly did not have enough to override his veto, although we did in the senate. That was my last bit of (*unintelligible word*). We were able to take up the veto, and overrode it in the senate handily. I think the vote was twenty-something-to-five to override the veto in the senate. But then it went down in flames in the house.

So anyway, it was an issue that was very much in the, in the news at the time. Clearly people were, obviously felt passionately about it, and I ended up kind of being a poster child for one of the sides of a position just because I ended up being the one vote. And, you know, it was a fun experience, and it didn't end up prevailing ultimately because of the governor's veto. But I was pleased with at least getting it through the legislature. And it was a, I felt somewhat torn in that, in my eight years as a legislator, that was the only time I have ever voted as an individual on a committee. That was the only time I had ever voted as the lone person on the committee vote so, and I had mixed emotions about doing that; but I felt fairly strongly about the issue and that we shouldn't be doing what we ended up ultimately doing. But, so I guess that was kind of one of

the issues that, this time around as a senator, that took up an enormous amount of time anyway. But it was interesting.

GB: Now, let's back up a little bit so we can complete our time line. You served two sessions in the house?

RM: Yes.

GB: Right, and after that where did you go? Did you go to law school?

RM: I started law school, yeah. My last year in the house was my first year in law school.

GB: And where did you go to law school?

RM: At Maine.

GB: Okay, and what was law school like?

RM: I didn't really enjoy law school, you know, I just, if I could have done it as a purely academic exercise, it might have been interesting. But at that stage in my life I was not privileged enough to be able to do that. I was more concerned with, quite frankly, getting the ticket so I could start practicing law. And I found it, at least in my opinion, a fairly inefficient way to teach people about what you needed to know, you know, from my perspective. I mean it was, it's kind of an interesting, with the whole Socratic type method of teaching and, is interesting if you were, had the luxury of taking what needed to be imparted by way of a body of knowledge and getting it to somebody. But I found it fairly inefficient as far as getting what you needed to know. And so in that sense it was a bit frustrating to have to go through the exercise of that three-year process of law school to learn what was basically both a body of knowledge and a way of thinking. And I think you can, you know, in a way of analyzing things, and my perspective, I guess, was there should have been a better way to do that. But, I mean, I suppose if I went back in my retirement years, I mean, I wouldn't mind going through that kind of an exercise. It could be kind of fun. But, you know, I don't have any regrets about doing it; and the teachers at the school were obviously very intelligent and qualified; and I don't have any qualms about that. And I certainly feel the school is a good law school, but I basically just wanted to get that process over with as quickly as I could.

GB: What had propelled you into the field of law?

RM: Actually, I didn't decide until I was in the legislature. You know, at that point in time, I guess going through the legislative process and seeing how i- it could be effective in that regard, it made it much more intriguing to me. And I guess I saw at that point the benefit of going that route. And decided at that point in time, at some time, you know, of my second or third year of legislative experience, that I'd like to have a law degree as well.

GB: And what was your career path following law school?

RM: After, and as I say my first year at law school I was still in the legislature, and it wasn't, it wasn't until sometime in that first year of law school that I realized it would not be possible, at least from my perspective, to do both the legislature and, or to continue to do both the legislature and the law school and to do either well. So I kind of, at that point, I made the decision that I would not run again for the legislature at that time, and focus on getting through law school and starting a legal career at some point after that. And that's what I did. I focused my last two years of law school exclusively on law, other than just some part time work, summer time work. And then I graduated in 1988, and started working here at Rudman & Winchell.

GB: And what type of law do you practice here?

RM: A bit of a hodgepodge. For the most part, I do employment related law. But I also have a practice in probate law that's related to either the guardianship type proceedings or adoption proceedings. And I have a bit of a debtor-creditor collection type practice; it's kind of a hodgepodge. The firm is a, by Bangor standards certainly, and by Maine standards even, a big firm. And so the firm itself does virtually everything; which is nice to be in that kind of a practice where you've got good people, and you can be exposed to all kinds of different work opportunities, legal work opportunities. But that's basically my focus.

GB: Do you know a lot of the major figures in the legal community around the state?

RM: Oh, I know some, I don't know how many. Certainly, I feel like I know more probably up in this part of the world than in Portland. But through both actually, exposures through law and the legislature, you are exposed to a number of the members of the bar.

GB: What made you decide to run for the senate, in '96 was it?

RM: Ninety-six, yeah. Well, when I left the legislature in the house, it's something that I had always kind of, in the back of my mind thought I might return to at some point in time, because I truly enjoyed it and found it rewarding, fascinating, and all that stuff. So the idea of coming back was appealing to me, although you never; much of what ends up focusing you or motivating you is happenstance a lot of time. And that very much was the case in '96. I mean, the seat became open, and it's something that happened relatively quickly, as I say, although I thought about it in the past. The seat came open. It came at a time where I thought I might be able to take a shot at it, and balance things in such a way that I could maintain a practice, and give it a good shot. And I spoke a lot to people to try get a sense of the timing that would be involved if I were successful and, what would be involved, because I obviously hadn't served in the senate and, wanted a sense of what that would be like as far as time commitments were. And I was encouraged to do so. And I started talking to a few people, so that was reassuring. And my family was willing to stand by me and give it a shot as well, because it's obviously very demanding on them, as well. So when all those things came together we decided to give it a go.

GB: Is it difficult balancing your career with your service in the senate?

RM: Yeah, in fact that's why I'm not running again. It's, you know, the same kind of enlightenment that dawned when I was a first year law student, has struck again. As far as the

recognition that, in my position where I certainly need to be earning an income to maintain my family that's more than a legislative income. And the realization of what's involved in maintaining a law practice where, you know; I have a duty to my fellow partners here as well. It is very difficult to maintain both an ongoing legal practice, as well as being an effective legislator. And I found, being in the senate was a significantly greater time commitment than, being a rank and file house member. As a senate, in the senate, especially the majority party of the senate, you have the chairmanship of a committee. And there's a certain responsibility involved with that that requires a time commitment. And you're also serving on a second committee. And so that, there's not a lot of down time as a senate member, so. And you're representing a district that's four and a half times the size of the house district. So you've got that much more constituent work that you have to deal with as well. And my kids are eight and ten years old now, and so I, you know, I found my typical routine would be; I'd be either in here early in the morning and going to Augusta. Getting back whatever, seven thirty at night. So I'd be missing supper, and get home just in time to do the homework with them and put them, to bed. And come back in here for the night shift at the office here. It's kind of a drag after a while.

GB: Do you know how other legislators manage to handle it?

RM: I'm sure some are better at it than I, that's part of the issue probably. But quite frankly, a lot of the legislators now are; a significant proportion are retired. A significant proportion are either independently wealthy enough so that they don't have the pressures of having to have another income to do that. A certain proportion are fortunate, or at least in a position where their spouses are working and can support them in such a way that that pressure doesn't exist. And there's quite a number that are, you know, young like I was the first time around. You know, and it's easier to be a single person that doesn't have a mortgage or something else, or kids that are growing up that need certain requirements. And so they, there's that percentage of the legislature that allows them to serve. And that, you know, that's a problem with the legislature, although I don't know what the solution is.

You know, we've got a quote, unquote "part-time legislature", that likes to maintain the idea of having the average citizen be able to respond to the public call, the call of public service. Come do legislative service and then return home and maintain their business or whatever they're involved with. But the reality is, that that is very difficult to do because the quote, "part-time legislature", is in many respects, part-time in name only. When you are there, it is very much so a full time commitment, and that leaves little time for the other demands of life. So, as I say, I don't know what the answer to that is because there's clearly a benefit in not having a full time professional legislature, but there's this definite struggle there.

GB: Did you see, witness any changes in the legislature from your first experience there until, what was it, twelve years later when you entered again?

RM: Yeah, I left in '85 and went back in '96 or '97, whatever. Well, a lot of the faces were different obviously. And, being in the senate as opposed to the house was a different experience. But as far as the process and the people in general, and as I indicated to you earlier, the reassurance that it was, you know; virtually all the people that were down there were good people and down there for the right reasons. And fortunately that was very much the same. It

seems like, I don't, I can't quantify it objectively. It seems like we are dealing with a lot more, I don't know if sophisticated is the right word, maybe complicated. Maybe that's not the right word, issues. Certainly a lot more issues, you know. The sheer numbers of bills, I think, has increased significantly from the time I served in the early eighties to now. There is a, I guess the structural, or the systematic change that is probably most significant, is the idea of term limits and the effect that's having from the earlier tenure to this experience, which I don't think is a positive thing, but I think it does have its effect. I guess those would be the most significant changes.

GB: Who are currently the preeminent legislators, in your opinion?

RM: Well, obviously the, you know, the current leaders in the legislature are Mark Lawrence, senate president, and Steve Rowe, the speaker, are good leaders and have done a good job in my opinion. There are a number of leaders in the senate, I think, and in the house that are very good legislators. And they lead on particular issues and are, you know, have come to be experts, if you will, in certain areas where, you know, I have a great deal of respect for them. You hesitate to start down the path because you know you're going to leave somebody off that you certainly wouldn't want to. But, I mean, people like Mike Michaud. In my opinion, Mike has done an incredible job as the appropriations committee chairman. I mean, he just has a great deal of skill in regard, and an incredible amount of knowledge of that whole process, as well as the minutia of the budget details. And, as well as an ability through his own people skills to work that process through. And that's one of the most arduous processes to put together, the budget and making it actually into a law. And he, I've just been very impressed with his ability to do that the four years I was in the senate with him.

Geez, I, there's all kinds of people on both sides of the aisle that I've worked with the last four years that I find to be very good leaders. John Nutting in agriculture is somebody that I respect a great deal. Judy Paradis is a woman who is par excellence as far as constituent work. And Chellie Pingree is a very effective leader in my opinion. A very bright woman, skilled at the process. And Bill O'Gara is somebody that I found a delight to work with. And Rick Bennett, I think, is somebody who is a talented leader, a bright fellow, is somebody that I worked well with. I enjoy working with Paul Davis, another Republican who is on my committee with me, my seatmate. You know, there's just a lot of good people.

GB: Is there anyone in particular who we should watch out for who you think might have a major impact in, on state politics in the years to come?

RM: I fully expect Chellie is going to be somebody who will be in the limelight in some capacity. I know she has expressed an interest in running for office again, and she's just a very skilled and talented woman. And I would expect that she's gonna be around. And Mark, obviously, is a very bright fellow as well, and has some good skills, and certainly got an uphill battle in his current efforts to unseat Olympia. But you know, stranger things have happened, you know. I wouldn't bet against it. So I mean, I would not at all be surprised to see that. Rick Bennett's a fellow, who is a young man, who I expect will be somebody that the Republican Party rallies behind in years to come, so.

GB: I guess time will tell if your words turn out to be prophetic.

RM: I haven't won the lottery or too many horse races so I wouldn't think that, I.

GB: Alright, finally, on a completely different vein, could you tell me about your siblings? First, how many siblings do you have?

RM: There are five of us.

GB: Five of you, okay.

RM: I'm the youngest of the clan. My oldest sister is Cynthia, Cynthia Murray-Beliveau. Frank is next in line. Kathy is my next sister, Kathleen Murray. And my sister, third sister is Winnie, Winnifred Murray-Higgins.

GB: Now, Cynthia Murray-Beliveau, she married into the Beliveau family obviously.

RM: Right, we have started to begin to forgive her for that. A long healing process.

GB: So do you know the Beliveaus fairly well?

RM: I do now obviously. We just like to tease Severin as much as we can.

GB: Could you tell me about Severin Beliveau?

RM: Oh, Severin's an interesting character, and if you've had the chance to meet him, I'm sure you'd find out yourself. He's a great guy, an engaging guy himself, has more war stories than probably anybody in the state with regard to politics in Maine over the last forty to fifty years. Yes, Cindy and Severin first met through politics back in the early seventies, were married in 1973. And obviously Severin's been a part of the family ever since and we've come to know him and his extended family throughout those years. It's been great for all of us.

GB: So has that had an impact on your perspective of being close to a family that was obviously not involved, or was it just kind of an extension of your own family's political interest?

RM: I don't know if it's had any impact as far as, I mean, certainly we were already fairly involved and interested ourselves before any of us met Severin, or before Cindy married Severin. So in that regard I don't think our attachment to the Beliveaus increased our interest or involvement any. But obviously having similar interests and involvements, I think it made life pretty interesting since then. And certainly it was compatible in that respect.

GB: What have been your siblings' political involvement? Have they been as interested in politics as you?

RM: Oh, I think so, yeah. I mean obviously, Frank served in the legislature himself back long

before I did, and ran for secretary of state himself back at the end of his house tenure. Was not successful, but that was a, he lost that vote by one vote back in '74, I guess that was. So I mean, he's obviously been very active and involved both formally back in those years, and really has kept up his interest and involvement ever since. And to this day, remains interested in the process and enjoys the process as well.

Cynthia obviously has been involved in her own right as well as through her involvement with Severin in politics, public service. She served as a member of the University Of Maine Board Of Trustees for a while back in the seventies as well I think that was.

And my other two sisters have, I think, always expressed the interest in the political process as well but not as much or as formally as maybe the others of us have. But you know, they've worked on our campaigns as well as been involved and on top of issues as they unfold. I mean, it's a great, if you'll permit me a divergence from humility, I think it's a great family and they're certainly a gift to me. I think they have helped make me whatever I have become, and whatever I've contributed, I owe very much to them.

GB: Well, with that I'm just about done with my questions, so do you have any final remarks you'd like to make, anything you'd like to add or emphasize?

RM: I can't think of anything; we've covered more than I would have expected.

GB: All right, great, well thank you very much.

End of Interview