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Interview with Harrison Richardson by Greg Beam

Summary Sheet and Transcript

Interviewee

Richardson, Harrison

Interviewer

Beam, Greg

Date

July 17, 2000

Place

Portland, Maine

ID Number

MOH 208

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Biographical Note

Harrison Lambert Richardson, Jr. was born in Bangor, Maine on January 26, 1930 to Janet (Lovejoy) and Harrison Lambert Richardson, Sr. He lived in Old Town until the age of 8, when the family moved to Delaware. Around 1941 or 1942, his family returned to Maine to operate a poultry farm in Kittery. He graduated from Traip Academy of Kittery, and spent a year at Kent's Hill in Readfield, Maine. He then went on to the University of Maine, where he excelled at football. After graduation, he spent several months in the U.S. Marine Corps, first in Korea, and then as an Executive Officer on the USS Oriskany. After discharge, he attended Hastings College of Law in the University of California system, graduating in 1959. He worked in Chicago from 1959 to 1963, and served as special assistant to the Chicago Crime Commission. In 1963, he returned to Maine to practice law. He also became active in Republican politics, serving in the Maine House of Representative from 1965 to 1970, as Majority Leader in 1967 and 1969. He served in the Maine Senate from 1974 to 1975, running for governor in 1975. His legislative accomplishments include environmental protection laws and the Maine income tax laws. He continues to practice law through his firm with offices in Portland and Bangor. He has also participated in an oral history project at the Cleaves Law Library.

Scope and Content Note

Interview includes discussions of: Orono, Maine in the 1930s; agriculture in the 1930s; Kittery, Maine in the 1940s; poultry farming; liberal Republican upbringing; voting for Franklin Roosevelt as a Republican; University of Maine in the 1950s; social class differences in Maine schools; Marine Corps; law school; the law profession; Richardson's law career; Maine elections of 1954; "Muskie Republicans"; election to the Maine House of Representatives; the rise of the Maine Democratic Party; Frank Coffin; moderate Republicans in Maine; radical conservatism; environmental legislation; Richardson's and Governor Ken Curtis' working relationship; election to the Maine Senate; Richardson running for Governor; Maine Maritime Academy; American University in Bulgaria; Margaret Chase Smith; Burton Cross; Horace Hildreth; John Reed; and Angus King.

Indexed Names

Agnew, Spiro
Brennan, Joseph E.
Brewster, Owen, 1888-1961
Bush, George W. (George Walker), 1946-
Chafee, John H., 1922-1999
Coffin, Frank Morey
Coffin, Ruth Ulrich
Cohen, William S.
Collins, Susan, 1952-
Cross, Burton
Curtis, Kenneth M., 1931-
Erwin, Jim
Goldwater, Barry M. (Barry Morris), 1909-1998
Hildreth, Horace
Hildreth, Horace, Jr.
Kennedy, John F. (John Fitzgerald), 1917-1963
King, Angus
Levesque, Emilien
Lick, Dale
Longley, James, Sr.
McCain, John, 1936-
McLaughry, Tuss
Moore, Robert E. "Bob"
Muskie, Edmund S., 1914-1996
Nixon, Richard M. (Richard Milhous), 1913-1994
Polansky, Sol
Reed, John H. (John Hathaway), 1921-
Richardson, Clement F.
Richardson, Edward T.
Richardson, Forrest E.
Richardson, Harrison
Richardson, Harrison Lambert, Sr.

Richardson, Harry, III
Richardson, James
Rockefeller, Nelson A. (Nelson Aldrich), 1908-1979
Roosevelt, Franklin D. (Franklin Delano), 1882-1945
Rudman, Warren B.
Smith, Margaret Chase, 1897-1995
Snodgrass, David E.
Snowe, Olympia J. (Olympia Jean), 1947-

Transcript

Greg Beam: This is Greg Beam at the law office of Harrison Richardson. The date is July 17th, 2000. It is 9:30 AM. To begin could you please state your full name and spell it?

Harrison Richardson: I'm not sure I can spell it. Harrison Lambert Richardson, Jr. My parents ran out of first names so they gave me all three of those. Harrison Lambert, L-A-M-B-E-R-T, Richardson, R-I-C-H-A-R-D-S-O-N, Richardson, Jr. Harrison is H-A-R-R-I-S-O-N, Harrison.

GB: And when and where were you born?

HR: I was born in Bangor, Maine, January 26, 1930. I am the fourth of four children. The only boy, and my father was Harrison Lambert Richardson, Sr.

GB: Did you grow up in Bangor?

HR: I grew up in Orono. My father was associated with the University of Maine initially as a county agent in the extension service of the University of Maine, and we lived in Orono. Then we moved to Delaware, where he was affiliated with the University of Delaware, and then we moved back to Maine.

GB: When did you move to Delaware?

HR: We moved to Delaware in 19-, you're testing me seriously here, I believe 1938. I was eight years old, seven or eight years old.

GB: So how much do you remember of Orono from your early childhood?

HR: Quite a lot. We lived on Peters Street. I remember going up the road toward the university campus, and watching my father coming back from campus. I remember, I've been to the house on Peters Street since. I remember watching my father kick a football and thinking that it went literally miles. Of course it was a (*unintelligible word*) probably a hundred feet, but, you know, everything looks larger than life when you're that young. So I remember quite a lot about it.

GB: Do you remember how your parents were involved in the Orono community?

HR: Well, they were in the extension service, and the extension service was then a much stronger component in Maine rural farm life. The message that was carried out for extension was to have healthy, healthy children, healthy eating habits, healthy livestock. My father was a poultry specialist. Advised poultry farmers on, you know, various aspects of raising poultry. He was in some sense at least a geneticist, having to do with the development of various breeds. My parents' first married home was in Machias, which is Down East and, so the extension service, and it's much less important now, obviously, Greg. You know, agriculture is not anywhere near what it was; there are more employees of the U.S. Department of Agriculture than there are farmers in the United States, I think. I think that's a fairly accurate, or if it's not accurate it's close enough to convey the message. So, you know, the number of farms in Maine is drastically fewer than it was back in those days.

But anyhow, that was, their involvement was in those sorts of things. My mother graduated from what was then called the Castine Normal School, which is now the Maine Maritime Academy in Castine. And that taught young ladies to cook and sew and do all the things that now, I'd be regarded as politically incorrect if I were to suggest are appropriate.

GB: I see. What was your mother's name?

HR: Janet Lovejoy.

GB: Janet Lovejoy, alright. And what did you say brought your family to Delaware?

HR: My father became affiliated with the University of Delaware, which is in Newark, Delaware.

GB: And what was, and you spent the rest of your childhood there?

HR: We came back to Maine, my father and mother got involved with a poultry farm in Kittery, Maine, and we came back to Maine in 1941 or '02, and my father operated a poultry farm there. And I graduated from Traip Academy in Kittery and later went to the University of Maine.

GB: And what was Kittery like when you were living there?

HR: Kittery, this was during the war. They were building submarines, and it was, you know, a small town that had a big Navy yard there. And a lot of people were there building ships, building submarines, and it was a great place to be brought up. Played football there, and did all those good things.

GB: Now what, do you recall you parents' political beliefs or affiliations?

HR: It would be, it would be interesting if I really knew. I knew a little bit about it. They were common sense Republicans. They were not wedded to these ideological litmus tests that are

now imposed on people, you know. I have no hesitation believing that both of my parents would, if they were alive today, tell you that a woman's right to choose is a fundamental right. They don't need an opinion from the Supreme Court to say that. That no one has a right to tell a woman that she has to bear a child that's the product of rape, incest or an unwanted pregnancy. So they would be moderate, common sense, I would say. Not, as I've indicated, not wedded to ideological shibboleths of any kind. Very much concerned about the environment. My dad said something to me once that was very interesting. He said, "You know, if we keep doing what we're doing to ground water supplies, someday we're going to be selling drinking water." Frankly, Greg, I thought the old boy was losing it. Then a couple of summers ago I defended Poland Spring in a lawsuit involving the tip over of a loaded tractor trailer which was full of bottled Poland Spring water. They pump up there at Poland Spring a million gallons a day and can't keep up with the demand. They're opening, I don't know if you know this, but they're opening additional wells.

GB: I did not know that.

HR: So do we, do we, have we done enough to our drinking water? You better believe it. And they would, particularly my dad, would say, you know, this is insanity. We can't keep on polluting our environment. So my very strong environmental views come basically from my parents.

GB: I see. What other beliefs or values did they instill in you, political, social, personal, or religious values?

HR: Political, common sense Republicans. My father voted for Franklin D. Roosevelt and as a result his father, my grandfather, Eldridge Oliver Richardson of Surrey, Maine, and my father did not speak for a number of years. My grandfather regarded Roosevelt as a, well whatever would be worse than a Communist. I don't know what it would be but I mean he regarded Roosevelt as a work of the devil. And my dad by his vote for Franklin Roosevelt obviously, at that point in his life he was traveling in rural Maine. He saw what the Depression was doing and wanted to break through. So politically I think I've covered their views. Religious, I think they were, uh, perhaps uneasy agnostics. I'm either an atheist or an agnostic, and it depends on what my courage is. You know, an agnostic, Greg, is an atheist that doesn't have any courage, okay? So, that's basically their religious views. We, I was raised in the Methodist church but didn't believe that they had a corner on morality. They, my mother very much, very much a compassionate person and revered all living things. That pretty much covers it.

GB: Now you said you went to Traip Academy in Kittery?

HR: Yes.

GB: What were your interests back then? You said you played football?

HR: Yeah.

GB: What were some other interests, perhaps academic interests?

HR: I would say zero academic interest. I'm being honest. I'm expected to be honest in this interview, right?

GB: Of course, of course.

HR: Now, you're not kidding me are you?

GB: I am not kidding you.

HR: You're smiling and you're trying to goad me into being truthful, right?

GB: This is wonderful, of course.

HR: Okay, well, I'm being honest. I had no academic interest. I'd say that my two principal concerns were that I had a bad complexion. Working on a poultry farm, we had twelve thousand laying hens. Working on a poultry farm I'd get zits. I don't know if they're still called zits?

GB: Oh yes, definitely.

HR: You have a nice complexion, so you wouldn't know but -

GB: Oh, I know, believe me.

HR: Well, that was a major concern of mine. And I think football. Basically it; really, really enjoyed football. I worked on a farm, raised squash and corn and lived out in the country and worked all the time I was in high school, on the farm.

GB: What, was there a large, were there a lot of farmers around Kittery at that time?

HR: Not really, it was not a farming community. It's essentially a bedroom and service community for the Navy yard. We had a very large poultry farm, twelve thousand laying hens. That's a lot of chickens if you don't know that. And that was basically what we did.

GB: So what did you do when you graduated from high school?

HR: I was sent to Kent's Hill School. My uncle Forrest E. Richardson was a lawyer here in Portland and had had a long association with Kent's Hill School, which is in Readfield, Maine. I was sent away for a year post graduate work. Are we okay recording wise? I was sent away for a year of p.g. work to get my grades up because Tuss McLaughry who was the football coach at Dartmouth had evidenced some interest in my vicious, deceitful and aggressive personality. Thought I might be able to contribute something to Big Green football. And I went to Kent's Hill and took essentially the same courses I had had at Traip Academy, got essentially the same grades. Was not given an opportunity to go to Dartmouth, and was accepted at the University of Maine at Orono. That's where I went to college. So after a year of p.g. I went to Orono.

GB: And what was UMO like at that time?

HR: I must correct you, as a trustee and former board chairman, the correct name is the University of Maine.

GB: The University of Maine. What was the University of Maine -?

HR: You're forgiven because my son Harry who graduated from the University of Maine refers to it as UMO when it's not UMO anymore. It's the University of Maine. The University of Maine then was a great school, five thousand students, there was a little brochure that they put out for freshmen that said "The Maine Hello," which means now "hey, how's it going" or "yo" or whatever, but it was the Maine Hello which meant, it was designed to encourage members of the student body to be nice to each other, speak to each other, be communicative. And it was a great school, a great place to go to school, small, half the size it is now; very understanding.

There was a panty raid while I was there, and this is a bit of absurd enthusiasm, and I was one of those who went up a fire escape at, I think it was Colvin Hall. I don't know why I'm telling you this, you just encourage me to be very candid. And I went up the fire escape and I looked in this window and there was some money on the desk. And the guy in front of me started to pick up the money. I turned around and came back down and the dean of students was standing down at the bottom, and he looked at me, and he said, "Harry, I'm ashamed of you." Devastated. I felt like a real jerk. I mean, I came back down, I didn't go in the dormitory, but I realized then that there's this group of guys that were just going bananas, right? There were no rapes, assaults, at least that I know of. It was a panty raid, big deal, you know. I mean that was the time when that sort of foolishness was sweeping university campuses. Later, of course, they got much more serious but, in terms of sit-ins and all the rest of it. Buy anyhow, I have many good memories of the University of Maine. There are those who say I'm a perennial alumnus. There's a football helmet up there that was given to me when I left the board of trustees, that tells you something. The locker room at the university, the football locker room has this plaque outside it.

GB: Ah, I see, ah, that's great.

HR: That's a prose poem that I wrote. And I don't claim any poetic ability. As you can see I certainly shouldn't. But anyhow, no, the university was an important factor in my life. I made some friends there who are still my friends. And there were great times. The state series was then in place when Maine played Bates, Bowdoin, and Colby, and back then these schools were of comparable size, or they weren't so far out of whack that it wasn't a good fight. And the University of Maine would come down and play Bowdoin in the Bowdoin Pines. And, a bunch of farmers from Orono, you know, coming down to the seat of wealth and privilege and rich kids from Connecticut and places like that. And on a fall day the smell of fine bourbon, and expensive perfume, and mink coats, would waft across the field from the Bowdoin stands, full of beautiful women. Nobody in Orono looked like that or smelled like that.

GB: I see.

HR: It was class warfare. The Maine-Bowdoin game back in those days was class warfare. It

was kids from, in large measure from rural Maine going down to, as I've indicated, the seat of wealth and privilege, and kicking the hell out of them.

GB: So it extended beyond the football field? There was a lot of, I guess, class based hostility, was there?

HR: There was, there was, I'm not sure it's hostility, and much of what I'm saying is tongue in cheek. But I mean there's a clear distinction. I mean the kids that go to Colby and the kids that go to Bowdoin, and many, a lot of the kids that go to Bates, with some significant exceptions at Bates perhaps, but are in large measure. I mean, Bates, Bowdoin, and Colby are among the finest liberal arts colleges in the country. I mean, any listing of the top twenty will have them in it. Probably the top ten. You know, they're up there with Amherst and other schools. And so there was a major difference between the type of kids who go there, including my second son James, who graduated from Colby, and those who went to University of Maine, which is very much a public university with all that entails.

GB: I see. So did your time at the university have an impact on your perspective or the path that you ended up taking in life?

HR: Certainly in the sense of my understanding of and affection for people who come from very modest backgrounds. I mean, I understand, I understand being, the expression being poor but clean, I understand that. And I think that's what's very important to me politically when I later became involved in politics.

GB: Now what did you study in college?

HR: Very little. I majored in government, history and government. My minor was in what would now be called political science. In those days it was called history and government, and I had a minor in English. And I graduated after four and a half years of desultory effort. Played football every year that I, every year that I could. The freshman year all the men at the University of Maine were headquartered over at the Brunswick Naval Air Station. This was right after the war, there wasn't enough room at Orono for all the freshman men. So they were all bunked out in Brunswick. And then when I went up to Orono, I played football for three falls, three seasons, which was what you could do then. That's what you were allowed.

GB: And where did you go following college?

HR: I went in the Marine Corps. I went to Korea as an infantry officer, had command of a infantry platoon, subsequently a company headquarters, headquarters company was in Korea for fourteen months. I took a regular commission when I was in Korea which means that I went from being a reserve officer to being a regular officer because I had decided I was going to make a career out of running up and down hills and sleeping in snow banks and that kind of thing. Very untypical, you know, there are very few young men today who regard military service as an honorable thing to do. I did. And most of my contemporaries did, regarded it as something you did, you did that for your country, you didn't, and I'm not, I'm not. You don't see any American flags waving around in here, but it's just something you did. That's, it's not that way anymore.

And after Korea I was aboard an aircraft carrier for a year and a half as executive officer of the marine detachment, and that's what I did. And I got bored. In the Marine Corps if they want you to have a wife, they'd issue you one, and they don't issue them. I decided to get out and pursue my long term ambition to become a lawyer.

GB: I see, and how did you decide that you would like to become a lawyer?

HR: I decided that a long time before that, but I had never been willing to make the intellectual commitment and effort to get the kind of grades that would get me into law school. And so I was still in active duty in the Marine Corps when the ship came in to San Francisco and I heard about a place called Hastings College of the University of California. And the dean of that school was a guy named David Snodgrass who didn't care what your grades were as long as you graduated. His idea was if you had a degree from an accredited college or university, we'll let you in, and two thirds of the class will flunk out. But those who make it will have passed through the best test process of all. And so that's what I did, I went to Hastings, University of California.

GB: And why did you want to become a lawyer?

HR: A great profession, it is a great profession. The law teaches, I believe, with some significant exceptions as in the case of the current president of the United States, law teaches the law, and I think it invests one with the respect for the law and the rights of individuals. And I think it's a great profession, and it doesn't make any difference whether you end up practicing law or not, I think it's a great profession. You know, it just, I can't imagine. When God created me, she decided that I ought to be a trial lawyer. And that's what I do, Greg. I'm an active trial lawyer, I'm seventy years old, and I try a lot of cases. I try cases in all over New England, Maine, New Hampshire, Vermont, Connecticut, you name it.

GB: So would you say you finally turned around and buckled down a little bit in law school?

HR: I worked my ass off in law school, okay? I hope no one of ultra sensitive hearing hears that, but I worked my ass off in law school because I, I had never, I had never really done anything. I mean, I tell people when I've been a commencement speaker or in stuff like that, I've told the audience that I graduated from the University of Maine as a result of an administrative oversight. They confused my performance with somebody who'd actually done something. No, I worked very hard in law school. The first year. And after I figured it out then I was okay. But I studied twelve hours a day, six, seven days a week that first year, really hit the books. Law school, that's the way they did it, and I think they still do. I mean they give you these impossible reading assignments. Knock off fifty, seventy-five pages in one course a night. A lot of reading. And I'm still a trial lawyer, and I love it, and it's very much a part of what I am.

GB: All right. And where did you end up after graduating from law school?

HR: I went to Chicago, Illinois. I went with a large Chicago law firm now more than four hundred lawyers. Then it was forty. Worked, it was a civil litigation firm, I worked with the Chicago crime commission, and then came back to Maine in 1963. I always wanted to come

home to Maine, and my plan was to come back to Maine and run for governor.

GB: Oh really? And where did you live in Maine when you returned?

HR: Portland, came back to Portland. We bought a farm in Cumberland, my first wife and I.

GB: And where were you employed when you came back to Portland?

HR: Richardson, Robinson, and Leddy was the name of the firm. None of the three were active at the time that I joined this little small firm. My cousin Clement F. Richardson and an unrelated Richardson named Edward T. Richardson and I were the firm in 1963. And that was my first association, well, the first time I ever knew anything about Ed Muskie was when I, and I don't remember what year it was and somebody who's a better historian than I will have to figure that out, but Burt Cross was the Republican candidate for governor, and I believe that that's the year that Muskie ran, and he beat Cross, right? Am I right?

GB: Nineteen fifty-four, yes.

HR: Okay, '54, it fits perfectly because I, I left Maine to go in the Marine Corps in January of '53, yes. I went on active duty, and the signs had started showing up then. "Across the state with Cross," I remember. Of course I later came to know Burt Cross, and Muskie was a breath of fresh air. When I came back to Maine in 1963, I attended a meeting of the Cumberland Republican town committee, and at that time they were looking for a candidate for the legislature. And I was planning, I had not registered to vote, hadn't lived here long enough to vote, to register to vote. And they were discussing this guy who they thought they ought to put up as the Republican candidate for the House of Representatives, whom they described as a "Muskie Republican." And I said, "What the hell's a Muskie Republican?" I mean, I didn't, you know, that's heresy. So I ended up being the candidate. I asked that question and that's how I got the nomination. They said, "Well are you a Republican?" And I said, "Yes, I think I am. It's a congenital, it's a birth defect. And my parents, just, I mean, what else would one be?" So when I asked the question, "What's a Muskie Republican?" That propelled me into public office.

GB: So did you say you weren't a fan of Muskie at the time, or -?

HR: I didn't know anything about him.

GB: You didn't know anything about him.

HR: I didn't know anything about Ed Muskie except he was a young lawyer from Waterville or wherever he's from. I didn't have any knowledge of who he was. I sensed that he was having a good impact on the Republican Party because he beat Burt Cross. I don't mean to speak ill of the governor but just, you know, he was a very conservative man. And that was the extent of my association with him at that point.

GB: I see. And so you ended up being elected to -?

HR: I was elected to the Maine house in the year of the Goldwater landslide. I was elected because I was unopposed. Had I been opposed I'm quite sure I would not have been elected. And the Republicans were in the minority in the house in that legislative session for the first time in a long time. And of course Muskie had rejuvenated the Democratic Party, and he had provided... And I, you know, it's so difficult, the labels of liberal and conservatives, but liberal Republicans and moderately conservative Democrats are, you can't make a distinction between them, okay? There is no valid basis to distinguish one from the other in my view. And I think that Muskie's success and bringing the people with him that he did. Or let me put it this way, the people who were affiliated with him like Frank Coffin and other people like that, gave the Democratic Party credibility. And it gave the Democratic Party, Muskie gave the Democratic party credibility that it never would have gotten otherwise because he was credible. He wasn't just some hack. And I think in that sense, this is kind of jumping ahead to what influence I think Muskie had on Maine and maybe the nation, I don't know, but certainly Maine, he projected an image which was consistent with what I think of as moderate Republicanism and that group includes, you know, Bill Cohen and, pardon me for being vain, Harry Richardson, Jock McKernan, until he got to be governor and he got very conservative when he was governor, but he was a moderate Republican, Olympia Snowe. The what I call "kukkaberry" element of the Republican party has never held sway here until recently, has never had any. I mean they still don't elect anybody but they make a lot of noise. And I think Muskie, Muskie's presence both in Maine and nationally was part of moderate Republicanism taking a good position in Maine, (*unintelligible phrase*) get elected.

GB: So do you think Muskie could have been a credible Republican with the same politics?

HR: Absolutely, no question about it.

GB: Wow, wow, great.

HR: That is a very good question that I hadn't thought of, but it's a good way to express it. It's a good way to express it. He, Muskie, I don't, I'm not, I'm not sure that I know enough about Ed Muskie to comment about his positions on things. Of course he's gotten a big boost out of his environmental stuff and, but he had a homely sincerity about him which I think is quintessential Maine.

Trying cases as I do, and I want to be sure to tell you this, I try cases in different jurisdictions all around New England, okay? Being from Maine carries with it, and this is, it's mystical, but there's some special credibility that goes with being from Maine. There really is. It's enormous. I mean, and it's instantaneous, it's not in, from New Hampshire you don't get it. Being from Maine carries with it some credibility. People, if, judges do it with me all the time. I get, I have a leg up every time I appear in a courtroom out of state, being from Maine. It's sort of a day's work for a dollar's pay, direct, candid, basic, honesty, common sense, all those things that we like to think of, and of course we secretly know we're not any more. We're not any more the beneficiaries of those attitudes than, or those qualities perhaps. But in a way I think we are.

So Muskie, sure, could Muskie have been a Republican? He sure could have. And I, the reason

that I went off on that digression is, I don't know what his position was with respect to organized labor, but Republicans don't get elected now without support from labor. Not in Maine they don't. So what the hell's the difference?

GB: Well, Muskie actually had the support of many figures within organized labor, so.

HR: Sure, sure, but my point is, you know, Republicans get support from organized labor too. Republicans get support from Franco-Americans, big time. But yet back in the Burt Cross and back in that era nobody who, no, quote, "real Republican," closed quote, thought a French Catholic would be smart enough to vote. I mean really. I mean, we're talking back in the Ku Klux Klan days; we're talking back in the halcyon days of Republican right wing jazz, you know, Ralph Owen Brewster, those folks. And that's what I mean. I think that Muskie helped validate moderate Republicans. Of course if you do that, you're going to get elected.

GB: Was any of that radical conservatism around when you were active in politics, or had it pretty much petered out?

HR: No, there were still these little vestiges. It's like the bubonic plague that hides in the ground, it's there. And it's surfaced now, big way, and you can see, I mean I don't have a party any more. No, no, I mean that. The Republican Party does not, I mean the philosophical litmus test, conservative, quote, "conservative family value issues" I think is baloney. But it's very much in sway now. I mean you've got to go through, both the principal candidates for the presidency, both Al Gore and George Bush are born again Christians. It's the name of the game. So they, but it wasn't there, it wasn't there to the extent certainly that it is now. When I was elected majority leader on two separate occasions in the house, I had conservative votes, but they didn't vote for me because I was a conservative spokesman.

GB: I see. Right, so could you tell me about your time in the house?

HR: Exciting.

GB: Exciting?

HR: Exciting.

GB: How so?

HR: Well, I gave you my resume because I sponsored a lot of environmental legislation, and I sponsored the bill establishing the land use regulation commission, I sponsored the oil conveyance petroleum law, which is as far as I'm concerned the most important thing I ever did. Supported the legislation creating the department of conservation. I was chair of the public, the special select committee on public lands, which led to, I had proposed a very simple sort of banana republic dictator scheme of expropriating, or taking back all the public lots by organizing them all. Which would have resulted in taking land away from paper companies and bought it for pennies an acre from the corrupt state land agent back in the eighteen hundreds. And all of this stuff was stuff that I did in conjunction with Governor Kenneth Curtis. I was the actual sponsor

of the state income tax. My name is not on the state income tax because as majority leader my caucus asked me not to put it there. So the name on the state income tax bill was Emilien Levesque of Madawaska who was the Democrat minority floor leader. So it was an exciting time.

GB: I see. So did you work closely with Ken Curtis?

HR: Yes.

GB: Could you tell me about him?

HR: Well, I should tell you that I as the Republican floor leader was the designated hit person. And so when there was going to be a disagreement over something, I was the one who suggested that Curtis wasn't smart enough to pour piss out of a boot and, but actually we worked very closely together. But it was me in his office with the door closed. We passed the state income tax. It was introduced on Monday and passed on Friday without a public hearing, which bespeaks a significant amount of cooperation between me and the governor. And later, and Ken and I are very friendly, you know. We relive the old days when I was the dreaded majority axe man and he was this poor young governor, which is crap. But I enjoyed him very much. I like Ken. He's not the smartest guy in the world, and he knows it. But he's dedicated to public service, and he's been a credit to the state. In all of this Muskie was the, was kind of the daddy-o for the Democratic Party. He was the guy that they went to. What else can I tell you?

GB: Was Ken Curtis the governor during -

HR: He was the governor when I was, when I was elected majority leader. My first term in the legislature John Reed was governor. John Reed was a potato farmer from Aroostook, Maine, Aroostook County, was beaten by Ken Curtis. So Ken Curtis was the youngest governor in office, and I was majority leader.

GB: I see.

HR: And we were together for four years. When I left for two years (*unintelligible phrase*) to the senate. What else can I tell you? I haven't told you very much about Muskie.

GB: Well, that's all right, we'll get to that. Where did you, okay, now you served in the house until 1971?

HR: No, I was in the house until, when did I leave the house? I was out for two years, and I went back into the senate. I went into the senate, one of the reasons I ran for the senate was that when I left the house, Governor Curtis had wanted me to be on the board of trustees in the University of Maine system. And I had voted for establishment of the system, you know, I was very pro public education. And he nominated me, and there was then a governor's council. And the governor's council from Cumberland was a guy named Dean Durgin, an ultraconservative. And I went to Dean and said, "Dean, Governor Curtis wants to put me on the board of trustees, you got a problem with that?" Because have to vote to confirm it. He said, "Oh no, Harry, not

by a damn sight, I don't have any problem, you'd be a dandy." Well, the lying sonofabitch, because he persuaded three other councilors of the total of seven to vote against my confirmation. And he was aided in all of that by a guy named Bob Moore who was the incumbent Republican senator from district seven, which is down here. And the governor wanted to repost me, and I think he did once, but anyhow the next time, I think that he posted me again, reposted me twice, or wanted to, and I said, "Ken, I don't, don't bother." So, you know. I think retribution is a vastly over criticized response, don't you? A painful stimuli? I think if you, you know. So I ran against Moore and knocked him off in the primary, and was elected to the state senate and I spent, you know, then I ran for governor.

GB: Could you tell me about running for governor?

HR: Exciting, exciting.

GB: As exciting as being in the house?

HR: Oh yeah, I enjoyed campaigning, I really enjoyed campaigning. I remember a comment that Muskie is quoted as having made was that, "Those bastids!" B-A-S-T-I-D-S is the Maine spelling of bastard, B-A-S-T-A-R-D. "Those bastids!" His campaign people who make him get up and do things he didn't want to do, right, when he was running for vice presidency. I liked campaigning, I like meeting people, and I lost by twelve hundred votes in the primary.

GB: And that was to?

HR: Jim Erwin.

GB: Jim Erwin.

HR: James S. Erwin, conservative Republican. Went on to finish third in a three-way race in which Longley beat Mitchell beat Erwin. There you have it.

GB: And what did your campaign consist of, what kind of campaigning did you do?

HR: I did a lot of door to door, I did a lot of television, I did a lot of all kinds of stuff. And our polling data showed that if the election had been held a week later I would have won it.

GB: Oh wow, wow.

HR: And, you know. It was a great experience. I think being governor of Maine is the only political office worth holding. I do, I mean that, I'm serious about that. The governor of Maine has an opportunity- I was going to say ability, and that's not always true. The governor of Maine has an opportunity to favorably affect the lives of roughly a million people and some of the most beautiful real estate in the world. And I'm not a world traveler, but I've seen a hell of a lot of it, okay. And the ability of the governor of a state the size of Maine to be a constructive force for good is unparalleled. I believe that. That sounds like a political speech, but I, that comes right from the old heart bone. I believe it. And that's the reason I wanted to be governor, and I

wouldn't take a seat in the house of representatives if you gave it to me, the national house. If you gave me a U.S. senate seat I'd consider it, if I didn't have to campaign for it. So I, as I say, I think being governor is a huge deal.

GB: Do you think the governor of Maine has opportunities that a governor of a larger state wouldn't?

HR: Oh, immensely greater. I mean, what are you going to do, how can you be the mayor of New York? What are you going to do for New York, really? If you were the mayor of New York, what could you do? The best proposal would be to pull up the anchor on that mess and let it float out. You can't, I mean, and I think it's true of other small states, except that I believe that the people of Maine again have that innate common sense. We have passed, I was one of the active sponsors of the bottle bill, the returnable container legislation. The effort of the beer barons, and the people that manufacture the tin cans or aluminum cans they wanted to throw all over the landscape. They mounted a very well financed campaign to repeal the bottle bill, and it failed. The people of Maine said, no, we want to do that. More importantly, as a sponsor of the income tax I took a direct interest in defeating the effort to repeal our state income tax. The people of this state voted to keep the income tax in place. That's extraordinary. It is, it's extraordinary. That's the reason it's exciting.

GB: Let's pause for a second, I'm going to flip the tape over.

End of Side A
Side B

GB: We are now on side two of the tape of the interview with Harry Richardson. All right. Okay. So after your time in the senate, where did you go from there?

HR: I went into the full time practice of law, after I ran for governor. And I had not, I spent all the money that I didn't have when I ran for governor, and it was not an option for me to get back in. And frankly, as much as I enjoyed it, I think that I did legislatively... And as you can tell I am intensely proud of my legislative record in terms of environmental stuff, okay? And in that Senator Muskie and I had common, commonly shared views. Or we had shared views, I'm not sure how common they were, but, among others. So I, I'd pretty much done my thing, Greg. I'd pretty much, I got a lot of kudos and awards and stuff, and it was fun. But I enjoy practicing law, I enjoy being a trial lawyer, and I was, I went through a marital adjustment, realignment, and I was happy doing what I was doing.

GB: I see. And did you end up at this firm here?

HR: In 1970 we formed the firm of Richardson, Hildreth, Tyler, and Troubh, that later became Richardson & Troubh, and then about five years ago the Richardson & Troubh firm, which was then I believe around thirty-five lawyers divided, and the litigators. The trial lawyers went with me, and the other people stayed in the other group. So we now have offices in Portland and in Bangor, and we have four trial, we have four lawyers in Bangor and nine here. Want to know what the firm's motto is?

GB: What is it?

HR: “Big enough to screw you and small enough to do it.” I’m kidding.

GB: Yeah, of course.

HR: We’re trial lawyers, we go to court. One of my partners left me an E-mail a few minutes ago. We tried, in 1999 we tried nineteen cases; we won them all.

GB: Wow.

HR: We win a lot of cases. And of course, well, I think we work hard. So, anyhow.

GB: Do any cases that you’ve tried stand out in your mind?

HR: Well, they’re like Chinese food, you know. I just finished a case in the United States district court in Connecticut, and I do a lot of product liability defense work. I don’t know if that means anything to you or not, but I do a lot of product liability defense. My best client currently is Emerson, Emerson Electric out of St. Louis, and they own a lot of companies and manufacture a lot of different stuff like radial arm saws and miter saws and valves and solenoid switches and that sort of thing. We have a case going now where the solenoid failed, and the waste water treatment system that covers south Boston failed and flooded a whole bunch of basements in south Boston. They’re blaming us, can you imagine that? They’re blaming this little old, little old solenoid valve. And the damages are going to be around five or six million. Now, I mean, this is terrible. They need good country lawyers from Maine, right? That’s what I do. That’s what I do.

GB: So, over the years since you left the legislature have you remained politically active in any capacity?

HR: Not as an organization Republican but in terms of my personal relationships with people who hold office, yes.

GB: So you’ve supported various candidates?

HR: Yes, and I supported candidates who are not Republicans. I supported Joe Brennan when he ran for governor, and Angus King won the nomination and the result I temporarily lost Angus as a friend. We used to be pretty close. And I supported Joe Brennan. That was an outgrowth of dealing with Jim Longley, whom I thought was a disaster for the state. I thought he was a demagogue, and I don’t mind being quoted, I thought he was a demagogue. And I had just been burned by that experience, and I am the first to concede, confess that I was wrong about Angus King. I think he’s been a superb governor. He just reappointed me to the board of trustees of Maine Maritime, so I don’t think he’s mad at me any more. Or I guess I was, he didn’t need me. I don’t know what he feels about it, but he didn’t need me.

GB: Real quickly, could you tell me about your position on the board of trustees at Maine Maritime?

HR: It's a small school, it's max, it's got, well, twelve hundred. No, no, not twelve hundred, about eight hundred. It's a good deal easier to get your hands around it than it is when I was on the board of trustees of the University of Maine system with seven campuses. I don't know how many students there are now, fifty thousand maybe, forty-five, whatever the numbers are. And to understand that, the University of Maine system, I mean that is really, really tough because there are just so, there's just so much going on in so many different ways and so many issues. The Maine Maritime Academy is a smaller, friendlier, more easily digestible (*unintelligible phrase*) good board of trustees. It's fun, it's fun.

GB: I see here that you were on the board of directors and trustees of the American University in Bulgaria?

HR: Yes.

GB: Could you tell me about that?

HR: Exciting. Is that the third time I've used that word?

GB: Yes, yes, it is, yeah.

HR: Not that I'm counting, I just don't want to overuse the word, don't want to become trite. Contemporaneous with the fall of Communist governments in Eastern Europe, the people in Bulgaria began a petition campaign in Sofia, Bulgaria, the capitol, seeking the establishment of an American style liberal arts university. As a series of pure happenstance the then president of the University of Maine, Dale Lick, knew a fellow who was the second in command to the U.S. ambassador to Bulgaria, a guy named Saul Polansky. And the University of Maine had had exchange students from Bulgaria over the years so there was a kind of a relationship there. They, the petitioners, the people that mounted this campaign, wanted to have a small, relatively small land grant university as kind of their academic support group. The University of Maine, therefore, became the academic support and as a result of a vote of the board of trustees of the University of Maine system of which I was still a member, lent its academic accreditation to the American University in Bulgaria. Here now, that's my, that's one of my place name cards from one of our meetings. And it's been a marvelous experiment. The school started in 1990? And here's a brochure about it. I'll give it to you, you can take that with you.

GB: Oh, great.

HR: And get the absolute cream of the crop. The average entering SAT scores for our students have always been in the twelve to thirteen hundred bracket. We are training, I believe, a leadership elite committed to independence of thought, independence of judgment, democracy, all of the values that we associate with liberal arts education. I've been involved in a lot of educational stuff for a guy that's not really that much into education. But we, we've done a great job I think. I'm now sort of "of council" to them. The government of the Republic of Bulgaria

supported us, the good guys with the white hats that took over from the Communists, they've supported us. And Bulgaria's going through very difficult times trying to convert to a market economy and all that. U.S.A.I.D. has supported us. We need more money, and the school might, it might fail for want of funds.

All the professors, or most of the teachers are, they're all English speaking, most of them are Americans or from liberal arts backgrounds themselves. It's exciting stuff, what we're doing. And the latest dust up in Kosovo and all that, we have Kosovar students, with Serbian students, with students from all over Eastern Europe. And if those countries can ever get together and live together and not have these senseless wars against each other over God knows what, I think it will be because young people have been educated at the American University and places like it that will teach, you know, respect for the (*unintelligible word*) and tolerance.

GB: Wow, that's great.

HR: Why they want a country lawyer on the board, who the hell knows? I think I'm there for comic relief, Greg.

GB: I'd believe it. All right, how about we talk about Ed Muskie?

HR: Sure.

GB: How do you know, how did you know Ed Muskie?

HR: Largely from a distance. His effect on environmental legislation was important. He was kind of the, he was the name people invoked when they wanted to get a good response on environmental issues. And, so he applauded our efforts here in Maine, and he was very much a part of that movement nationally. And he, well that's, that's it. He was very much a part of what made that go. He was a credit to the state in every way, a classy guy, I enjoyed him. He was a little bit crotchety when I, in the dealings that I had with him. Impatient. I don't think he tolerated fools easily. And my associations with him were, you know, random meetings when he would come up to Maine and he'd go into the legislature.

I remember once sitting beside him in the senate chamber, and we were back in the gallery thing. I can't remember if I was a member of the senate then or not, either the senate or house. I remember looking down, he had the nicest looking pair of shoes I've ever seen, and I thought, geez, he's come a long way since Bates College and, you know, Rumford or wherever the hell he's from. Very polished guy. Margaret Chase Smith thought he was a phony.

GB: Really?

HR: Oh yes. There were those who thought that Ed Muskie was a phony.

GB: Did you know Margaret Chase Smith?

HR: Vaguely, I had no close working relationship with her. She was really cranky.

GB: I see. Do you remember when you first met Ed Muskie?

HR: No.

GB: No.

HR: No. I think I saw him campaigning in one of his campaigns after I came back to Maine. But by then he was an icon. I can't remember.

GB: Did you support him in his candidacies?

HR: No.

GB: You did not.

HR: No, I honestly, and I was thinking about that before we met today: who in the world did I vote for? I don't even remember who they were. There was one poor hapless soul, I did vote for Muskie. I can't remember the guy. And I didn't, you know, I didn't get visibly in support of Democrats until I voted for Joe Brennan, and I supported Joe when he ran for governor against Angus, and then I turned around and supported him when he ran against Susan Collins for the U.S. senate. And a lot of good it's done to either Joe or me, but (*unintelligible phrase*) he, I don't know, I just, you know, I like Joe, always have.

GB: Do you know Joe Brennan well?

HR: Very well, yes, sir.

GB: Could you tell me about him personally?

HR: Joe is kind of plodding in the way he comes across individually, kind of plodding. He has very, very strong liberal values, he really does. I mean, he really believes. And once in a while he does this Munjoy Hill Irish act of his, you know, 'I know the working people' and all this crap, and then he . . . And he does; I don't mean to be so irreverent. It's not necessary, I don't think, to start talking about your lunch bucket background in order to do that, all right? To be supported. But Joe's got good values, he has very good values. We were debating the ERA amendment in the state senate, and Joe was the minority leader of the state senate. And I, along with some other Republicans, wanted to get the Equal Rights Amendment through, and Joe and I were the tag team support group, back and forth. Good values.

GB: I see. Could you tell me about some of the other, some of the other politicians you know. You mentioned Burt Cross? How well did you know him?

HR: Cross supported me for governor when I ran for governor back when he had been long since out of office. He was very, extremely conservative. He didn't know how much money I wanted to spend, and the guy was. I supported bond issues for the University of Maine system

and all kinds of left wing nut stuff. And here, I'm sure that Burt didn't know that when he supported me for governor. But that's as well as I knew him. I didn't, you know, I didn't have any close association with him.

Former Governor Horace A. Hildreth, who was the father of my partner and friend Hardy Hildreth, former partner, still friend, Hoddy Hildreth, I knew him quite well. He was also very, very conservative.

In 1968 I was one of three co-chairs if you will of the Rockefeller-for-president group here in Maine, and then Rockefeller withdrew, and then he came back in, and so I was a delegate to the Republican National Convention in '68, which resulted in the nomination of Nixon and Spiro T. Agony. And, that's Agnew, and I remember calling Horace Hildreth, the governor, ambassador, former ambassador of Pakistan. I asked Governor Hildreth if in connection with the state convention, where the delegates to the national convention would be elected, if he would support me. In fact if he would nominate me because he had big, he had, you know, the conservatives all thought he was wonderful. He said, "Harry, I'm very fond of you. I've always been very fond of you, but since you daubed yourself with that Rockefeller I simply can't do that." So, I've known every Maine governor since, well, certainly John Reed. I mean I worked with John Reed, and he was, I have known them all.

GB: What was John Reed like?

HR: Very serious, very moral. Closed, but he was a good governor, he was a good governor. Maine's been blessed, by the way, I always, I always get cross when you start talking about all politicians are crooked. I don't believe that. I mean, I know it's not true. And we've been blessed; we've had good governors. We've had some mediocrities, no question about it, but we've had some good governors. Muskie was a great governor. Frank Coffin would have been a great governor. Angus is doing a great job. I thought Ken Curtis did a fine job as governor. He had an enormous amount of assistance from the majority of the house, however. Actually (*unintelligible phrase*), this should be on video, so that I can hold up Joe's... And I think we've been blessed in terms of being represented in the legislature in large measure by very, very good, strong people.

GB: I see. And you know Angus King as well, personally?

HR: Yes, I do.

GB: Could you tell me about him?

HR: Very bright. I think he's done a great job as governor. He is very realistic about his approach. He's been criticized by others including friends of mine as being too business, too pro-business. But he subscribes to the proposition that you don't have jobs unless you have businesses to employ them. Sort of a radical idea, but, you know, that's his, that's his I guess I'd say part of his defining philosophy as governor, and I think that he's, I think he's projected that very well.

I also think that, my reason for not voting for him as I've indicated, not supporting him was that I didn't think that an independent governor who had no political base in either house could avoid ending up the way Longley did, who governed by invective. That's a hell of a word, he governed by invective. And Angus King has proven me wrong; he's been able to enlist the support of people from both sides of the aisle, and that's important.

GB: I see. All right, now, there was something you mentioned a while ago which kind of caught my interest, you said, I'm not sure if I'll quote you exactly right, that you don't have a party any more, that the, I guess that the Republican party has changed over the years?

HR: The Republican Party has been in my view, certainly nationally, taken over by... I mean I thought John McCain was a winner. I guess it's been established that we don't have to have a president who can walk and chew gum at the same time. But I really, really have my doubts about George W. Bush. I just think that the Republican Party, when it became the party of southern Republicans, which it is now, I think. And people who are conservative, conservative ideologues, walked away from the things that make me a Republican. I mean I, I'm, what's the old bromide? I'm fiscally conservative and socially liberal. The anti-gay thing, I don't think the consenting relationships between consenting adults are any of the state's business, okay? And all of these so-called "family value" issues. I mean, you know, the people who espouse them are frequently in their second or third marriage and, I just don't, I don't, I don't think that they, they don't represent a brand of Republicans that I can endorse. So, and that doesn't do them any damage at all, the fact that Harry Richardson doesn't think that they're worth supporting. But I think there's been an enormous change in Republicans as we knew them. John Chaffey, you ever hear of him?

GB: No.

HR: John Chafee was the former governor of Rhode Island and a former U.S. senator and died, was in the U.S. senate, died here very recently; a quintessential liberal Republican in the best sense of the word. When John Chafee died, that left Susan Collins, Olympia Snowe in the moderate wing of the Republican Party. Those are the only, you know, I'm sure there are others. Warren Rudman from New Hampshire, he's, he retired from the senate. The Republican Party now is governed by ideological litmus paper tests.

GB: And have you witnessed a lot of the same changes in the state of Maine Republican Party?

HR: Yes, yes, absolutely.

GB: To the same degree?

HR: No, because we're still electing relatively moderate and still presenting relatively moderate candidates for public office. See, that's the real test. I mean, you can go to Republican town committee meetings and state conventions and preach the gospel with, you know, no woman's right to choose, none of this, none of that, none of that, a very negative deal, very intrusive form of social engineering sort of thing, but you won't get elected. And so it has not

been successful in that sense, but it's made being a Republican, I look at these guys and say, you know, what are you doing, because I am admittedly very liberal. I mean, I don't apologize for that.

GB: And so if you had to predict, what would you see as being the future of the Republican Party considering this current trend?

HR: It will swing. It will go back to the party that shared views with Ed Muskie and Frank Coffin, a name I keep bringing up and I hope that during your involvement in this project you learn what a great, great guy Frank Coffin has been and is.

GB: Well, could you tell me about him, did you know him personally?

HR: Yeah, I know him well, he's still alive.

GB: Oh, oh, I'm sorry, that's right, I know that.

HR: You should interview Frank Coffin because he, if he's not on the list, if Ed [*sic* Don] Nicoll doesn't have him on the list, Frank Coffin is an absolute must.

GB: He's been interviewed several times actually.

HR: Great, you ought to interview him ten times more and give up interviews with the likes of Harry Richardson. Frank Coffin is just a delightful guy. He is very, very bright. He was a member of the U.S. congress, he was candidate for governor against John Reed - John Reed beat him. He was I think the U.S.A.I.D. guy in Europe, nominated to the court of appeals for the first circuit, I believe by John Kennedy, and put on the court of appeals. I think that's right. He is still, he's on senior status now, he's a former chief judge of the court of appeals for the first circuit. Delightful guy, a person loved well.

GB: What kind of contact have you had with him over the years (*unintelligible word*)?

HR: Professional.

GB: Professional?

HR: As judge and lawyer.

GB: I see, so you've argued in front of him?

HR: Yes, yes, and I like him personally, I mean we see each other personally once in a while.

GB: And he conducts himself well professionally?

HR: Oh, he's gorgeous. He's very funny. He's exciting. He's exciting to be around.

GB: That's great.

HR: He's very bright and very witty. He's the best after dinner speaker there is. He really is.

GB: Do you recall any encounters that you've had with him, any, you know, humorous encounters or whatnot that spring to mind?

HR: I'm a fellow of the American College of Trial Lawyers, which is reserved to those who are regarded by their peers as being among the very best. Now, I got into the American College as I did graduate from the University of Maine as a result of an administrative oversight I guess. And I was, there are I think twelve fellows of the College in Maine and, seriously, the best trial lawyers in the state. It doesn't mean they're all fellows of the College, but the ones that are in there are the cream of the crop. And that's true nationally.

I was state chair, and the Maine Fellows to the College hosted the deal at the Black Point Inn for the New England fellows of the College and the maritime provinces, the three maritime provinces and so forth. No problem, a couple hundred lawyers there and wives it's a wonderful program. And I had made it very clear that I didn't want to have a big head table, okay? I don't want fifteen drones all getting up and delaying doing something interesting while they went through a speech where people were introduced, and this is the wife of the Right Honorable Lord who- who, the lord chief justice of the whatever and all that, I mean I didn't want that. So I had worked very hard with Frank Coffin's assistance that he was going to be the speaker. I did not want a big head table.

So when the head table came about there were like four people, the governor was there and Frank, maybe Mrs. Coffin was there, I don't recall. Frank began, introduced the thing by getting up in this very serious look and saying, "First of all I think that those of you fellows of the American College of Trial Lawyers should know that you have an incompetent chair who he has spent the better part of the last month convincing people that they should not be at the head speakers' table, at the head table." You know, just, just in his delightful way. And being called by, being called incompetent by Frank is a great tribute. But he's a sweetheart.

GB: Well, I'm just about done with my questions.

HR: Okay, well I'm, and I'm sorry I can't tell you more about Ed Muskie. He was a presence, he was a presence, so, and I think his major impact on the Republican Party was to be, was to make it possible for liberal and moderate Republicans to go out and say we can, we can keep this party going. And we're not going to keep it going if we retreat into Ralph Owen Brewster, Burt Cross, right-wing politics. Because, you know, the battle is defined by the people who are in it I think. All right?

GB: All right. That sounds like a good stopping point. All right.

End of Interview