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Schlick, Edward C. oral history interview

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Interview with Edward C. Schlick by Stuart O'Brien and Rob Chavira

Summary Sheet and Transcript

Interviewee
Schlick, Edward C.

Interviewer
O'Brien, Stuart
Chavira, Rob

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Biographical Note

Edward Carl Schlick was born in Newark, New Jersey in 1928 and grew up in nearby Kearny, New Jersey. His parents were managers, his father with United States Rubber Company and his mother with Dupont. His early interest was in art, which he originally studied at Colby College. Halfway through Colby, Schlick joined the Army. After being stationed in Japan for two years, Schlick returned to the United States and got a bachelor's degree from the University of San Francisco. He did graduate work at Bates College and the University of Maine before becoming (briefly) a middle school teacher. In 1952, he became a radio news reporter for WHEB in Portsmouth, New Hampshire. This experience sharpened his interest in politics. After his brief stint on the radio, Schlick became a political and legislative reporter for the *Lewiston Sun Journal*. In 1960, he became the executive director of the Maine Democratic Party, a position from which he wrote speeches for Democratic candidates, raised funds, made arrangements for events, and coordinated media coverage of Democratic events and candidates. Afterwards, he became a freelance consultant on a wide range of media, political and journalistic topics, advising various groups within the state government, the Maine Democratic Party, and the AFL-CIO.

Scope and Content Note

Interview discusses Schlick's family history and personal background; his studies at Colby; meeting Don Nicoll as his college roommate at Colby; his time in the Army; working as a middle school teacher, radio reporter, and then at the *Lewiston Sun Journal;* his relationship with Ed Muskie; Democratic politics during the 1960s; and the 1972 Presidential campaign.

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Transcript

TOB: ... O’Brien and Rob Chavira, July 13, 1998 at 48 Front Street in Bath, Maine, interviewing Ed Schlick. Ed, if you will, please state and spell your name?

Ed Schlick: It’s Edward C., for Carl, Schlick. S- as in sugar, C-H-L-I-C-K.

TOB: Where were you born?

ES: Newark, New Jersey.

TOB: Did you grow up there?

ES: Well, close to it. I grew up in Kearny, New Jersey, and there's part of Kearny that's called Arlington, it's within a few miles of Newark. From my high school you could see the Statue of Liberty across the Jersey flats, and from my house at the end of the block there was a bus you could take into New York City, in forty five minutes you'd be in Times Square on the bus.

TOB: Was it a big town population wise?

ES: You mean where I lived, not New York. I don't really have any idea. My guess would be it might be ten thousand or something like that. But it was sort of surrounded, you'd go into Newark pretty much to shop on the bus or trolley car, you could go into New York City. My father worked every day in New York City.

TOB: What were your parents' occupations?

ES: My father worked for United States Rubber Company, he was sort of a mid level manager. My mother had worked for Dupont and she had charge of the billing department with about fifty women under her, which was unusual in those days, because I was born in 1928, and, but she didn't work after she got married.

TOB: What were your parents' political affiliation?

ES: Well, I think my father voted both ways. He was a Wendell Wilkie supporter, but I think prior to that he had voted for Roosevelt. It was, I think he, well, I don't know if he got disillusioned with Roosevelt, it was Roosevelt's third term, I can't remember what turned off it, but I know he supported Wilkie, but other than that I would say he probably voted for Roosevelt back in the Depression years.

RC: And your mother?

ES: Oh, I never heard her say anything. I'm not sure she even voted.

TOB: Do you have any brothers and sisters?

ES: No.

TOB: Where'd you go to school?

ES: Kearny, Arlington, graduated, I was valedictorian in my class in Kearny High School. I graduated when I was sixteen in February. I turned seventeen in March, and I went to Colby College in Maine.

TOB: What were your interests growing up, what were you into in Kearny?

ES: Oh, I was into painting and posters, I started out with the art course in high school, they had a four year art course, but I didn't finish with that. I took some Saturday classes in drawing and that sort of thing at Pratt Institute in New York City, I'd go over on Saturday with my father. Some interest in music, took piano lessons when I was in high school, still play the piano, I still paint pictures, I've got a little studio out back here. In fact I've got two displays of paintings along the coast here where I rent the walls across the river here, bookstore.

TOB: Did you have involvement with student government or anything political in high school whatsoever?

ES: Well, I have a vague feeling that I was some kind of a class officer but it wasn't, I'm pretty sure it wasn't president of the class. I can't really remember. I really wasn't into it that much. I was a lot younger than the kids in my class, so I went around with the kids in the class that graduated later than I did, so I was out of high school and into college before they were out of high school.

RC: Were you aspiring to be a painter?

ES: Yeah, I think I was. It was, interested, always sort of turned me off that my, I used to go see a commercial artist named Brigham who was a full time commercial artist. He would correct my drawings and sketches and things and so I was sort of aspiring to go to art school, four years of art school. But my father I think, and my mother, too, wanted me to go to college and so they sort of secretly got Brigham to persuade me from attending art school, which I always resented later when I found out about it, but as it turned out, I probably would have been a starving artist instead of a starving whatever I am today.

TOB: What brought you to Colby?

ES: Well, I had a high school teacher, I can't remember his name, was a civics teacher, and he made a point of picking out two or three or four people. There was a girl named Beauchamp, I can't remember her name, but he would urge them to go to Colby. And of course Colby then, I don't know if you've ever been to Colby, but a lot different than ...

TOB: It used to be in downtown Waterville.

ES: Oh yeah, when I went there it was surrounded by the river and the railroad tracks. Of course this was 1945, they had just moved out the, oh the military people, there was a V-12 or V-2 program for training officers there, they moved that out. So when I arrived there were fifty men and about seven or eight hundred women on the campus, and the only men were people like me that, I was sixteen, seventeen at the time, were too young to be in the service, or a few veterans had begun to come back, and that, or somebody that was deferred 4F, but that was the fifty guys that were there in '45. Of course that changed rapidly because the war ended in Europe that spring and then it ended in Japan that summer, so the war was over and immediately they began to pour into the college with the GI bill and everything.

TOB: You mentioned that your parents tried to persuade you away from art school. What were their expectations on you in college, career wise?

ES: Well, I think part of it was, my father was born in Berlin and he came to this country when he was about twenty years old. He was born in 1889 as I remember, and so he never went to college. And he, I think he felt that was quite important, and that you'd have trouble making a living or whatever as an artist. And he was probably right. You would have unless you were into commercial art of did something along that line.

TOB: What are your parents' names?

ES: Otto. Otto Schlick and Nettie, N-E-T-T-I-E Cunningham. She came from English and Scotch stock. I remember her telling me once, never forget that your, I think it was my great grandfather, your great grandfather was the station master at the Edinburgh station. Didn't mean a thing to me but it stuck in my mind, you know. And I suppose that was a big deal in those days, that we go back to Civil War days, being the station master of a big center like Edinburgh. My father never said too much. He had a sister Helen that came to this country and lived in Cleveland. I never met her, and, but he never, I never heard the man speak a word of German, not one word, and he never, we never spoke German in the house, he never lived with German people, he never went to Yonkers or whatever the German colony was or anything. He was very much sold on the country, you know. He left partly to avoid being drafted in the German army, but I guess he liked the idea of democracy and the freedom and so forth.

RC: The community you grew up in, was it composed of ethnic, was it mostly Anglos, or?

ES: Well, people didn't, they weren't into, at that time there wasn't the whole race thing, you know. It really wasn't. You're talking about the 1930s. I think people were more into economic problems than they were into whether people were Hispanic or Black or whatever. Of course if you were Black, maybe that isn't true. You had a different viewpoint, you know. But I can't remember where we lived that ever surfacing. It was like a lower middle class or middle class neighborhood.

RC: Religiously there wasn't any dissention between Protestants and Catholics or?

ES: Well if there was when I was growing up, I don't remember it. The people that lived across the street were like salesmen, a dentist down the street, oh, the guy next door was a salesman for some kind of like restaurant company. We did have an Italian family move in right next to us and I can remember they invited us over and we went over there and I remember them cooking the spaghetti in a big copper wash boiler, and the man, the Italian head of the family, saying that that was why you got poor spaghetti was they cooked it in a little thing without enough water. He had, of course he's cooking for three or four of his family and three of us, too, but he had the huge copper wash boiler. But there was no feeling about that that I was aware of, at least not in my family, and they lived right next door to us.

TOB: Were your parents religious at all?

ES: Yeah, they went to church but not every Sunday. Over the course of their lives they migrated to several different churches. They actually were Presbyterians when I was growing up and I joined the Presbyterian church, but it was sort of a nominal thing. Later on when they went to Florida they became Methodists and I think at one point they were either Baptists or Congrega-, you know, they just didn't, they went to church but they weren't really into it.

TOB: What was your major course of study at Colby?

ES: Gee, I, see I didn't finish there so I was sort of aiming at art, and I took a lot of course from a Professor Green who was teaching there at that time, Samuel Green. He later went to, I don't know, it's Colgate or someplace. Actually I ended up with enough credits in art to be an art major, I think I had thirty credits when I graduated, but as I went along I switched to government and, as a major, government and history. And English. I think my actual major was English and I had a minor in history or government.

TOB: Did your time at Colby interest you in Maine, is that why you came back to Maine? Did it help shape your later career?

ES: Well, I remember distinctly, in New Jersey of course the winter is sort of crappy, you know, it's damp and rains a lot and you don't get really much snow. We'd go sliding a few times with sleds in the winter. But I remember coming to Colby, and it was... Of course, I graduated, which was unusual, there were only like sixty or seventy in my graduating class, because it was in February. It was a mid year graduation. And I remember coming to Colby and going down in, the what was then, the women's union. I think it's now, it's near Mary Low but I don't know what they use it for now. But anyway, there were skis down in the basement, so I got a pair of these, couldn't ski at all, got a pair of these skis and climbed up this hill. I looked from the top of Mayflower Hill and I thought, this is just like something I never saw before. Here's like two feet of snow on the ground, little houses with the smoke coming up in the air, and the air is crisp and clean and clear, you know. It's not like this damp New Jersey where I grew up. I thought, boy, this is just great. And then we took a bus trip, for some reason part of the class went down to Wiscasset on the coast. Well, in New Jersey I might have gone into Atlantic City a few times when I was a kid but you just don't see any coast like you have here. And seeing the coast and the ocean and everything really made a big impression on me so basically I just never left. My kids all grew up here, I went in the Army, I graduated in San Francisco State College, which is now University of San Francisco I think, or something different. They changed the name.

TOB: You mentioned that you became increasingly interested in politics when you were an art major. Did you become involved in extra curricular political stuff at Colby at all?

ES: No, I can't remember I did a thing. I was interested in the drawing and I remember Professor Green took us to Boston a few times, so the first sketches I still have in my portfolio from when I started out. He encouraged me to switch from pencil, he said, well, pencil you don't make a definite statement, draw with pen and ink. It's either right or wrong. You can't go back and fudge around with it. So I still have that very first sketch in the portfolio in the other room that I did back in, I guess it was '45 if I remember correctly, because I started right in taking an

interest in what he was doing with, oh, etchings, drypoint, different kinds of printing things he was into.

RC: Even though you didn't have any involvement in politics at Colby, just thinking back, did you have any particular political inclinations or ideals at that age?

ES: I didn't even know who the congressmen were or didn't have a clue. Of course you, I'm still only seventeen at the time I started.

TOB: You met Don Nicoll at Colby?

ES: Yeah, he was my roommate. It was a funny situation, because when I went there we lived in, now what was the name of, can't remember, but anyway, during the war the fraternities had shut down and these buildings no longer stand. In fact, I think they tore the library down, but there was a library and there was like four really old brick frat houses that were something like you might still see at Bowdoin. They were four stories or so, four or five stories tall. And sort of long narrow type buildings. And they had little bitty rooms for the fraternity brothers, and then they would all sleep up on the top floor under the, sort of under the roof, a place they called the ram pasture. And there were windows there, but sort of like dormer windows. It wasn't all along the wall. There were a couple dormers sticking out in three or four places. But it was huge, it was the whole top of the building, and so I went there in '45, I came back in the fall of, now, am I getting this right? The dates? Anyway, I come back, I started in February and, yeah it must have been '45 because that's when the war ended. I come back in the fall of '45 and they put us in one of those little rooms. Well they jammed like two bunks and two desks into the room, you had to live in this little room where before they were sleeping upstairs, it was just for studying, and there was a guy named Carl Chelquist and myself were in one room and Don Nicoll and a guy named George Doud who was on a scholarship from LL Bean in Freeport was rooming with Don. And so the four of us got the idea, there was no heat up in this ram pasture, and so but we got the idea that if the college would let us move up there, we'd have this whole place to ourselves and enough heat would come up the stairs so that we could survive at least until spring. So along about the middle of the year we convinced the college, and they were tight on space so they said, sure, if you're willing to do it. So we moved our beds up there, we had four beds in a row, we had a ping pong table, we had bookcases, we had four desks, we had a living room, old couch and old sofa and, you know, it was big, I mean, half again as big as this whole room here, and probably further from there to there. So the four of us lived up there that spring.

TOB: How would you characterize what Don was like back at that age?

ES: Well he was very serious. He was studying, or, either studying or thinking of studying for the ministry. His wife Hilda was the son (*sic*)[daughter] of missionaries, and I don't know about Don's parents, but he was going around preaching in various churches at that time around Colby as I remember it, and he'd get pretty upset if you used some word that was not, you know, quite up to what he thought you should be using. But I think he... I don't know, see, I went in the Army in '46 so I was there in '45 in the fall, and then we moved up to the ram pasture. We were there that spring in '46, and then I went to Ann Arbor with a guy that was a sculptor and I did a

lot of sketches which I still have in Ann Arbor and, I can't remember. My wife Martha went with us, too, and I think the sculptor, he had a girlfriend or something, so we all went to Ann Arbor for the summer. I went to the University of Michigan. And then when I come back that fall I got married. And my father of course... Tuition at Colby then was only like two hundred fifty dollars a semester. I remember getting a check from my father for two fifty to pay the whole semester's bill, you know. So we, I went in the Army, I enlisted. My father said, well, that's another thing, see, he was German. If you look back at the history of the country, what happened in this country during WWI, very strong anti-German attitude. You got the Palmer raids on all kinds of supposed Communists, very much down on anybody with a German name. He never talked to me about that but I've read about it so I suppose he must have felt some of that, and he never went in the Army. He was married to his first wife at that time. So he felt I should go in the Army, so I enlisted in October of '46 and went to Japan for a year.

TOB: Were you already married at this point?

ES: Yeah, I got married and two weeks later I went in the Army.

TOB: How did you meet your wife?

ES: Well, she was going to the same Spanish that I was taking and I just asked her to go out and we started going around that spring.

TOB: Tell us about your time in the military and how you ended up in San Francisco.

ES: Well, in '46 following my father's advice, and also having no way to make a living, I enlisted in October of '46 and went to basic training at, I think it was Fort Jackson near Columbia, S.C.. And I got out, had a few weeks furlough December, and then by the early part of '47, January, I was in Japan. And I think I began to take more interest because at that time I was, what, I guess I was eighteen by then, I began to take a little more interest in history and what was going on because there was a lot of time. I was in special services doing sign painting and running the craft shop in Japan, and they had a pretty good library, so I started reading about Japanese history and what was going on with MacArthur. I always had a strong interest, still do to this day, in history.

TOB: How did that influence your still developing political ideals? Being over there?

ES: I don't know as that had any great impact. For some reason I've always had a strong sense of justice and injustice. It still bothers me to this day when you read about these things that are obviously unjust, particularly when they're committed by the government, you know. Because you have an expectation that the government's going to do things right, they're not going to let the, you know, the rocket going into orbit blow up because some guy won't report that the O-rings are failing, or, you know, you go right down the line with having the guys march through the atomic explosions and radiate themselves, not once but numerous atomic explosions. So you've got this whole sequence of things which are still coming up to this day, the medical experiments that Clinton has just announced that were conducted with people that never should have been conducted. People struggling with agent orange, whatever.

TOB: So you were in Japan and then where'd you go from there?

ES: Well, I got out almost exactly a year later in January of '48 and went to the nearest clothing store, took off my uniform, bought some bright colored civilian clothes, and the man said, what'll I do with this? And I said, I don't care. I just left it on the floor and walked away and went back to Colby. At that time they had something called 52-20, you could get $20 a week for fifty two weeks, until you found a job or something. And I got out of the Army three months early because they had a thing that if you could get, write to your school, you're going back to school and you wanted to get back in time to start the semester they'd let you out, I don't know, sixty days early or something. So I got off a little early on a year and a half enlistment and I was back in Colby at the start of the semester, February or whatever, in '48.

RC: Had you lost interest in studying art at that point?

ES: No, I always kept that. In fact, we had an apartment and I did a whole mural on the wall that ran around the bathroom, and I don't know if the people that owned the apartment liked it but, we liked Waterville. I just went around... Walls are fun because you've got no limit. It's not like you had a little thing like this, you know. Go right around the wall, putting and houses and stuff, trees.

TOB: So back to Colby. You're in Colby, it's 1948.

ES: Yup, and after we, well I was in the apartment a little while, but then when I started school I was eligible for a veteran, those are torn down now, but near the field house as you come around Colby, way off, there's a whole athletic complex. Right along that road, I don't think there's anything there now, there were veterans' apartments. They were sort of quick build wooden type things, two stories, apartment up and down. I think there were four apartments to each building or some such thing, so we were living in one of those.

RC: Do you feel as though you grew up a great deal because of your service before going back to school?

ES: That's an interesting question. I don't know as I've ever really grown up at all, but it, yeah, there was a definite shift because I started college technically when I was sixteen, and here I am, I'm eighteen and married. Probably shouldn't have got married, it's too young to make that commitment, but, and I didn't have a clue as to how to make a living or anything practical like that. We were all sort of focused on going to school. And so then, that semester, I don't know, I got very dissatisfied with school. I'm not sure if my wife was as dissatisfied or not, but ...

TOB: She was a Colby student as well?

ES: Yeah, yeah, she went during the time I was in the Army, she stayed at Colby and went.

TOB: And what's her name?

ES: Martha, Martha Roberts Schlick. She's dead now, but ...

TOB: How long were you married?

ES: Oh, we got married in '46 and we got divorced in '75 I would say, '76.

TOB: Twenty nine years.

ES: Yeah, something like that. More or less we stayed married because we had four kids and I couldn't see separating from the kids and, one of those things you go through. If you've got, if you don't have kids, well, you decide to split, you split. But if you've got four kids to think about, then it's something else. We separated after the youngest one went away to university.

TOB: How did you end up in San Francisco?

ES: Well, that spring, this was '46, no '48, spring of '48, I was very dissatisfied with Colby. I felt it was much too isolated. They didn't even know who was running the city of Waterville, you know. The professors, they're off in a world of their own. And one still runs into that I would say. So I had taken all the classes but I refused to take the finals so I lost a whole semester's credit. I think my wife did the same. And I sold my piano and we packed up and went West on the bus, so we landed in San Francisco, I think we had maybe ten bucks between us. But out there it was very different. You could go to college for nothing. You didn't even have to graduate from high school. You could go take an entrance exam, if you passed the exam, pay twenty five bucks, you're in college. And so for her that was great because there was no tuition involved at all. To me it didn't make any difference, we had the GI bill. It was a hundred... I think they went from ninety to a hundred and twenty dollars a month. We could live on it in San Francisco, a hundred and twenty bucks a month, at that time. So we went back, we landed out there, let's see, summer, fall, I don't think we started in the fall of '48 but we were, we had jobs. I worked in an insurance company as a map clerk, find the property and the underwriter comes along and underwrites, decides if he wants to insure that property. She had some kind of secretarial job. And we went back to school at San Francisco State College at that time, beginning of '49.

TOB: And how long before you finished?

ES: Fifty, graduated in June or whatever of 1950.

TOB: After you graduated, did you move back to Maine?

ES: Yeah. Her father owned, had a farm in Norway, real run down sort of a place and we flew back, visited my folks. They'd moved out of New Jersey pretty much be then and they were living in Florida. We visited them in Florida, went back to, lived at the farm. And I had, I worked as a desk clerk at the Hotel Stone, which is now torn down. That was, I think it was twenty two dollars a week, if I remember correctly. And I had to walk, I would say five miles along Lake Penessawassee from the farm, and then I'd get out one o'clock in the morning from

the desk job and have to walk back to the farm, so we were really scraping to get by. But then I lined up a job teaching in Kittery so we got off the farm after maybe a year, whatever and I started teaching down in Kittery, seventh and eighth grade literature, if you can imagine teaching literature to kids in the seventh and eighth grades.

TOB: Not much attention span, I imagine.

ES: It's a tough, you know, they're very tough years for them. They haven't really grown up but they're not little kids any more either. Their interest in literature is just about zero, plus the school had no books, no library. All they had was a beat up old text book which was full of stuff that I didn't even consider to be literature.

RC: When you went to San Francisco, did you have full intentions of finishing there and then coming back to Maine, or did that just sort of happen?

ES: Well, I anticipated graduating there but I never really felt that comfortable in California. But I did notice a big basic difference which I think is true to this day, that Maine is very negative. Even today, you bring up things in Maine and they say, oh, I don't think that's going to work or, you know, my grandfather tried that and it didn't work. It's just sort of, they're not into providing ...

TOB: This is in Maine now?

ES: Yeah, oh, for years Maine has exported its youth. You look, I did several studies in the past as part of my work and young people leave Maine. They don't stay here. The study that I did at one point showed average salary, you start out in Machias, your salary doubles when you hit Portland, average salary. It doubles again if you go to Hartford, Connecticut, so these people, ...

TOB: Cost of living goes up, too.

ES: They're doubling by moving to triple, well, double in Portland and drive right through Portland and go to Hartford, you double again, so. And that's true today. I mean, look at the ads in the paper, they want somebody with five years experience and four degrees and they're paying twenty seven thousand dollars. Well, somebody with equivalent experience is going outside of Maine and getting fifty seven thousand dollars. It hasn't changed that much, really.

TOB: While you were scraping by teaching seventh and eighth graders, did you just intend at that point on doing that indefinitely?

ES: No, I hated teaching. It was the worst job I ever had. It only paid thirty five dollars a week. I started in mid year. I filled in for a teacher that had gotten tuberculosis for half a year, but then I went over to the radio station and that's where I began to get into the kind of thing that really, I followed the rest of my life.

TOB: How'd you get that job?

ES: That's a good question. I don't really know whether I walked in or saw an ad, or what, but it was WHEB and ...

TOB: In Portsmouth, N.H.?

ES: Yeah, and I didn't have the, they tried me announcing for awhile, but I just didn't have the voice quality. You have to have a certain sort of deep timbre to your voice that comes across good on radio. My voice sounds terrible. Maybe it's not as terrible now on radio. I don't know. But anyway, I got writing radio commercials and that's where the background in English and writing and so forth, but. That's a weird thing, too. They're having a big fight now in Massachusetts because they tested the teachers in Massachusetts and sixty percent of them failed. Well, some of the questions are like, what's a preposition? I couldn't for the life of me tell you what any of the parts of speech are, and I made my living, for fifty years I've been making my living writing. That's what I do. I wrote speeches for Muskie, I wrote speeches for Ken Curtis, the governor, I wrote speeches in five congressional campaigns. I'm still writing speeches for the chief justice today, and I couldn't tell you what the parts of speech are or diagram a sentence. Hey, could you diagram a sentence?

TOB: No, I couldn't diagram a sentence, I remember doing that, though. My mother could, though, I'll tell you that.

ES: So, anyway, where were we?

TOB: Oh, okay. So you worked in Portsmouth for awhile, I'll assume you moved there, lived down there.

ES: Yeah, we lived in Kittery which is right across, uh, by that time we had one child, Karen. She was born in San Francisco late '49, November of '49, and then we moved and Carl was born in '52 in, actually in Portsmouth, but Kittery and Portsmouth are just across the state line.

TOB: What brought you to Auburn then, and the Sun Journal?

ES: Well, I always had the idea, of course I knew Don quite well and I left the radio station, I managed the ...

TOB: He was working in a radio station, too, right, at the time?

ES: I think, yeah, well, I think he was in television. Maybe he was in radio and then went into television, but he was in one of the television stations I think that folded up, it didn't last because they went into UHF instead of VHF or something. And we were still friendly. He was living in Buckfield at that time, if I remember correctly. So we'd drive up there from Kittery, up to Buckfield and visit. And I left the radio station, I managed a motion picture theater for a summer, and then in the fall, in Dover, N.H. for awhile. That was when TV was coming in, so when you have a three hundred seat theater and you look out and there's seven people sitting, you think well, there's not much future at least for now in this business.

So I wanted to get a job, but by then I'd found out that when you're looking for a job don't pay any attention to the ads in the paper. What you need to do is think about what kind of job you want, and then go find that kind of job. Not what jobs they're advertising, what does that have to do with anything. What you want to do is say, well, what would I really want to do. And so I thought about, I said, jeez, I wouldn't mind being a newspaper reporter, you know. So I just went in the Sun Journal. I was on a trip up to see Don in Buckfield actually, I stopped in, and they, at that time they had you type your own obituary. I couldn't type very well, actually, I never really took a typing course, but they had you type your own obituary and talked to you for awhile, and so they offered me a job at thirty eight dollars a week and I remember the guy called me up and said, the job's yours, thirty eight bucks a week. And I said, nope, I can't work for thirty eight bucks a week, I've got two kids, I've got to have at least forty. So I got them up two dollars a week for openers. So I stayed there from, well, '53 I guess, '53 until '61.

TOB: Did you report on politics of your own initiative or were you just sort of thrown into, this is what you're going to do?

ES: Well, I started out as a reporter. They start you writing obituaries and Boy Scout stories and that kind of stuff, and in those days, of course, there were no computers, you were all lined up next to each other. The guy sitting next to you is as close as this, and typewriters, and old sort of roll top wooden desks, and the phones right next to each other, and a whole mess of noise. So even to this day I can have all kinds of noise going on and it doesn't bother me. People can be talking, hollering and screaming and things, sirens going off, and you're writing your story, just focus on that one thing to the exclusion of everything else, which drives Ann crazy. She says, you're not listening to me. Oh, yeah, yeah, dear, I'm listening, what did you say? So, I don't know, I was there '53, I wasn't there very long. The editor was a young guy named Kent Foster and he sort of took a liking to me, I think because I was maybe more interested in not just doing what I was assigned to do, but starting to think about, well, what stories are around that you could go... You know, some guy comes in, he, well, one example is John Donovan who died about ten years ago. He was the party chairman, a big Muskie worker. He went to work for Muskie in Washington, I don't know if you've, if you picked up his name in your travels.

TOB: Who's this?

ES: John Donovan, John C. Donovan, John Chauncy Donovan. There's a room named after him down at Bowdoin, and he was the head of the government department I guess, either history or government. But he went to, well, I think he worked for Muskie in Augusta, and then he went to work for Muskie in Washington, and then he became an under secretary of labor. And at one point he was the chairman of the Democratic party. One convention I can remember, he was chairman. Anyway, he was... At that time he was at Bates, and he started some kind of a series in connection with a government class he was teaching, and I think it was about once a week he would invite somebody to come in like Coffin or Muskie or a senator or somebody from the practical world of politics and government. And they would sort of give a talk and then there would be a pretty free exchange of questions from the students that were there. And I used to go as a reporter. I volunteered to go to it and I'd write a story about whoever it was that spoke. And I also started covering-- well they had a lecture series, the people would come in and

lecture-- maybe they still do that-- in the chapel in those days. I'd go and cover that for the paper. So I began to get interested in things outside of just normal assignments. I never did fires or police beat or anything like that.

And then that summer, I guess it was the summer of '54 if I remember correctly, the summer Muskie got elected, the editor was interested in sort of promoting me I guess as a reporter. In that day, time, there was a Sun and a Journal, and they were competing, same ownership but they were supposedly competing with each other. So the editor asked me-- and Lewiston was thinking of changing its charter. Lewiston's always changing its charter. And they were, they had named a charter commission. So he asked me to write a series of thirteen stories on how the other cities in Maine govern themselves. And so I took like a day and went to Bangor and a day to Fayette and a day to Waterville, and some of these places were fairly large but technically they're not cities, but I did cover the dozen or thirteen cities and I guess that series is in the files someplace. But that sort of got me interested in the whole thing of government and how they govern, people govern themselves.

TOB: As you were reporting on all this, were you pretty much indifferent whether someone was a Democrat or Republican? Was it purely a reporter perspective or did you begin to develop sort of personal ...?

ES: I don't think I had any, I still wasn't thinking in terms of politics. Don was at that time because I can remember him talking, I think it was Brewster who was the senator, and I can remember him talking when I, way when I was still teaching down in Kittery or working at the radio station, I can remember him talking about I think it was Brewster and I wasn't even aware of who he was talking about, much less the guy's record or anything. And I wasn't like, of course TV didn't exist, or most of us then didn't have it, and I wasn't reading the daily newspaper, so.

TOB: When did you become acquainted with Ed Muskie?

ES: Well, I think the first time I ever saw the man that I can recall, see, I wasn't covering the legislature and I was going around the summer of '54, I was going around and I was up in Waterville writing the story on how Waterville governed itself, and he and I think Dick McMahon, who was a big Muskie supporter and later was, I think he was the treasurer in Muskie's early campaign, if I remember correctly. And I believe, I'm pretty sure he's dead now, but anyway, McMahon I think and Muskie, but I did recognize Muskie and they were, of course they didn't know who I was, they'd never seen me in their life, and they come out of the doorway, the office up toward the end of the street where Atkins Printing is now, and I thought to myself, jeez, that's Muskie. Because he's tall, you know, over six feet, and big, and so he stands right out. And I can remember to this day that they, I was walking along directly behind him and I thought, gee, they don't know who I am, you know, that I was a reporter, and they were engaged in some kind of earnest conversation. I remember Muskie had his hands behind him and he was twisting his hand, and I thought, well, there must be more sort of tension there than he's exhibiting to the people he's walking with, because he's sort of wringing his hands as he's walking along the street, behind him you know. Sort of one of those curious things that pops into your mind, but I think that's the first recollection I ever have of seeing him.

TOB: All right, well, I'm going to switch the tape.

End of Side One, Tape One
Side Two, Tape One

ES: ... in '84, Muskie and Coffin were the two principal speakers at Bowdoin in the chapel there at his[1] funeral, and a little voice came to me and said, Edward, if you want to go to Europe, go now. I was divorced at the time and I was living with Ann, who I've lived with for a long time, and so I went home and said, I'm going to Europe. You're out of your mind. I said, no, I'm going to quit my job, take all my money and go to Europe. So, I said, you can come with me or stay home. So I did, I quit my job and took five thousand dollars, packed a back pack and I thought, well, I can stay until the money's gone. So I kept pretty close track of everything. I could live then, of course the franc was different, but I could live on ten, twelve dollars a day. I had a book, college book called Let's Go or Go Europe, or Go France, I don't know.

TOB: Is it the one put out by Harvard?

ES: Yeah, and, plus one or two others that I picked up, and then I had some friends that I'd befriended who'd sailed across the ocean, ended up in Bath, and they lived over near Paris. So I called them up and I stayed there a few weeks, sort of taught me how to use the Metro. I didn't speak any French, so I learned how to get around. I had some other friends and we spent a winter in Mexico. I had some other friends in Holland near the German border, spent a little time with them. I went to Paris, I went to Amsterdam, I went to Nijmegen, I went to Venice, went to Barcelona for six or eight weeks, went to Majorca, went to Perpignon, went to Nice, went to, all over the place.

RC: Where we left off, you were saying you were following Muskie and he was wringing out his hands. What was your, being a nonpartisan reporter, what was your impression of Muskie? I guess the gubernatorial campaign had got rolling?

ES: Well, of course I think everybody's impression of him was favorable. He'd been in the legislature and had a good reputation as a legislator. Also you have to remember that the mission, that mission that Muskie and Coffin were trying to bring about then was the resurgence of the Democratic party in Maine, and when I started as a legislative reporter for the Sun Journal in '55 right after Muskie was elected, there was... Well there might have been two, or one, two or three senators, that was all the Democrats had in the Senate. In the House, it was a big breakthrough for them because they got enough votes in the House to demand a roll call vote. Well, that's, I think, twenty percent of the House, so they only had about thirty seats in the House out of a hundred and fifty one. And prior to that it was even worse. They were a disreputable party, they didn't pay their bills, they'd run candidates that were sort of a joke. You know, just, a lot of people that would become Democrats or would have become Democrats were enrolled as Republicans because their only chance to really vote was in the Republican primary, because after the Republican selection was made for Senate or Congress or governor, forget it.

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1 John C. Donovan's funeral

That was the person that's gonna get elected. It wasn't the Democrat. They hadn't had a Democratic governor, I think, since Louis Brann in the thirties, and that was a Roosevelt Depression kind of a fluke thing. So, there was no Democratic strength except in Biddeford and Lewiston. They ran the Democratic party and it was largely French Catholic oriented.

TOB: Now, when you started covering the legislature in '55, how would you say that Muskie differentiated himself from Burt Cross before him? What was different about Muskie's approach to being governor?

ES: Well I think the Republicans were sort of arrogant (*walks away from recorder - momentarily turned off*). They'd been in power so long that they couldn't conceive that Muskie would win, you know, and Cross didn't, Cross had made mistakes. Oh, I think there were comments like going to Washington county and saying they should lift themselves by their own bootstraps and, you know, they just felt they had it locked up. It was traditional then, it was a two year term for governor, not a four, and so you sort have to keep that in mind, and traditionally they governor would get elected to two two year terms and they controlled the legislature lock, stock and barrel. The lobbyists like Central Maine Power, the paper companies, they really sort of ran the legislature. They had suites at the Old Augusta House which is now Casco Bank or something on the corner there, and so they... Well, Bob Haskell. When Muskie became governor, Bob Haskell was president of Bangor Hydro and he was also president of the Senate, so, you know, how much more of a pie can you get. But it was common, you know, you look. Oh, there's a book called <u>The Paper Plantation</u>. One of Ralph Nader's groups wrote it, and it may have some exaggeration, but it still I think points to the role that the paper companies played in Maine politics in controlling Maine and so forth.

RC/TOB: (*Alternating in asking questions.*) What kind of, what do you think the people of Maine liked about Muskie, what do you think really brought him in, helped him win, especially Republicans given that Biddeford and Lewiston were the Democratic strongholds, how did he win over Republicans? What did you see that he did?

ES: Well, this was one of the first campaigns with a television impact, too. As I remember it, Muskie only spent fifty thousand dollars in the whole campaign, for everything.

TOB: Actually it was eighteen, that first one.

ES: Eighteen? Okay, well, I have no way of knowing. You know, in the back of my mind, I think, I've always thought, well, it wasn't over fifty, but if it was eighteen I've got to believe that, too. But I think by then, see, television was coming in about '52, because when I was down in Kittery at the radio station, there was a thing called Andrews Electric and they were offering free installation and free antenna and they were putting those sets in like there was no tomorrow, and this was about '52 so I'd say by '54 television had begun to have an impact. Well, if you ever met Cross, he's still around, I think he'd be more, he loves to talk politics and he's got a whole room full of mementoes. I don't know if there's pictures of Muskie, but I think he's gotten over that by now, but as far as I know he's still alive. Every once in awhile he turns up at the legislative opening day or something, you know. He'd be a good source to talk to about politics of that era because I've gone over there a few times to his house and always been

welcomed. He loves to chat about Ed Muskie this and Ed Muskie that. But, so where were we, coming back to what ...?

TOB: Talking about Muskie, what helped him win.

ES: Well, I think he had this sort of Kennedy type look on television and he's big and sort of shaggy and people that are sharp and sort of hard don't come across. It's the people that are sort of fuzzy and they're, they just look different, they come across good on TV. And he also, you know, he met people very well and fantastic mind for detail and stuff at that time. We always marveled at the press conferences. He practically had the whole budget memorized, I mean, you'd ask him about some obscure road project at Washington county, he could tell you right down to the dollar. There was one of the reporters names Len Cohen made highway thing, big thing of writing about, and Len would ask him these questions about the budget and the highway program and everything, and Muskie had that down. He could run circles around Len Cohen. So I think he, you know, he really focused on this. The understanding was that Muskie and Coffin, that they were running Muskie as sort of a sacrificial lamb, they didn't expect to win in '54. They were going to wait until Cross had gotten through his two terms, which meant that he wouldn't, nobody would be, quote, "entitled" to a second term, and then Frank Coffin would run for governor, and he would be the first Democratic governor. Well, Muskie, I don't know what the vote was, do you know how much he won by?

TOB: I don't know. And Coffin was running for, at the same time, ...?

ES: No, Coffin was chairman of the party, yeah. Coffin ran and won for Congress two years later. I worked with him on that campaign.

TOB: Now, for these seven years between '53 and '60 when you were covering for the Sun Journal, after that did you, how did you become executive director?

ES: Well, for me, the first year, year and a half on the paper was more or less normal reporting, but then the political writer, what happened? The editor of the Lewiston Journal died from a heart attack or something, and Lal Lemieux who was the political writer for a number of years in Augusta, he got the job as editor, and they were looking for somebody to become the political writer, and so through the auspices of my editor, I got the job, which roused some dissension because I'd only been there about a year, and people who had been there five or six years wanted the job. And anyway, I got the job and I went to Augusta and wrote politics, and I had to cover for both newspapers. And then when I went back I was working for the Sun only, against the Journal, when over there I was supposed to be working for both of them and dividing the stories equally. But I did that through the legislature in '55, '57, '59 and the beginning of '61 until I took the party job.

TOB: Now, getting back to the newspaper stuff, how did you see Muskie's chances in the '54 election? I mean, you were right there.

ES: Well, I wasn't working on politics, so I was writing those stories about Maine cities and I wasn't really focused much on Maine politics, and I think people were amazed. I can remember

being at the Lewiston polls and somebody was saying the returns were coming in and they couldn't believe it because Muskie was a Catholic, so not only the first Democrat but very unusual. He wasn't French Catholic, he was Polish Catholic, but they couldn't believe they were gonna, one, elect a Democrat, and two, they were going to elect a Catholic. So this was as big a turnaround for this state as like Kennedy being the first Catholic president.

TOB: How do you think he won?

ES: Well, I can't, I don't know. I didn't follow the campaign so it's hard to say. I think television must have had some impact, and also if you go and meet Burt Cross, here's Muskie standing six feet two or something, he's big, shaggy, congenial, funny, warm, you know. And here's Cross who's nice enough, but he's just not that kind of personality. And he'd made these mistakes, he'd alienated people in rural Maine, alienated people in Washington County. It was just sort of... He got caught, I think, by accumulation of years of Republican arrogance which helped to provide enough votes for Muskie to get in. But you'd have to look at the figures maybe to make a, where the votes came from, I mean, to make a better judgment as to, and you'd have to have some grasp as to how many people had television sets, of course. It had been coming in since maybe 1950, but this is still only '54, so... But there were other things going on, too. In those early days, people would all go, if a neighbor got a set, they were so proud that they had a set that they'd invite everybody in the neighborhood over, you know. It's like Mexico, maybe one guy's got a set but the whole neighborhood's going over to watch TV on his set. I think there was a lot of that going on, too.

TOB: So, '55 to '60, what were the major issues? What was going on in Maine politics? What... Did the Democratic Party continue its strong revival after Ed Muskie was elected governor, or did, was it kind of like a, did it stop for awhile (*unintelligible word*), there was a Republican resurgence?

ES: Well they tried right away to start knocking Muskie off. Willis Trafton I think was the first candidate, not very dynamic guy. I don't know if he's still alive or not. And Muskie realized that things had to be done in government, so I would say in those days he wasn't anywheres near a strong environment type. I don't know if he did anything on the environment particularly when he was governor. But there were other things, the mental hospitals were, as I remember, were run down, they had an executive council that hamstrung the governor. There were seven members of the executive council, and in this case they were all Republicans, so he had to figure out a way to work with them, because they had to approve every appointment he made, and practically everything else he did. And there were only two or maybe three states that had executive councils left. They were a hangover from colonial times. Interesting comparison. If you want to see what was going on, would be to go to the state library and get the Democratic platform for '54 and as I remembered it's one sheet of 8½ by 11 paper folded, that's it. There was abolish milk price controls, there was abolish the executive council, you know, and the, and then compare it with any of the platforms of the last ten years, they run to seventy five single spaced pages. Nobody, no, I defy, you go to any Democrat today, ask him what's in the Democratic platform, I don't think they could tell you even two or three planks in the platform. But that platform, every Democrat knew what was in that platform. And with Muskie as governor, hey, if there was a vote came up and you were a Democrat, you didn't vote for the

thing that was in the platform, Muskie would call them into his office and, you know: we're trying to build this party, you're a Democrat, we've got this in the platform, we approved the platform, you know, what the hell are you voting against this for? Read the riot act to them. So it was a big deal, if you're one of the thirty Democrats in the House, you gave the Republican the vote against the party platform, it had meaning. They did most of those things I think. Muskie was big on trying to reorganize government, make it more efficient. He invented the two, part two budget. Everyone nowadays does it. All the budgets are part one and part two, part one is to continue existing services, part two is something that's not being funded today. Never had that before Muskie. That put the pressure on the Republicans, he come up with two parts in the budget. He said, part one, that's the status quo. You want to keep on doing all these things, fine, that's part one. If you want to make any progress in this state, if you want progress in this state, you've got to support the part two budget, or at least most of it. They said, how are you going to fund it? That's up to you, you're the legislature, I'll suggest two or three ways. He had them in a box. I remember Bob Haskell speaking at a, I think it was a Republican caucus in the House and one of Muskie's big things was to get rid of the old Maine Development Commission which was a, oh, sort of a tourist promotion type thing, and get a real economic development thrust going. So this was a big thing, to get this moving, get a real good economic development director in there and do something to develop the state's economy. Haskell got up and said to the Republicans, he said, you can vote against it, but if you do, he said, every chicken that dies in Aroostook county, he said, they're going to blame it on you and not on Ed Muskie. He said, you gonna be responsible for the death of every chicken in the state, and he went down the line, they could see that Muskie was going to make great political capital, so again, what are they gonna do? They approved doing away with the Maine Development Commission, this worthless old fart, Everett Greaton, God rest his soul.

TOB: Did you ever have any, have any personal interaction with Muskie, or was it purely ...?

ES: Not very much. I was thinking after I knew you were coming over, but, see, I wasn't socially active with him, I didn't know him really socially. I'd run into him because I was setting up dinners in the '60s as a Democratic thing and what have you. I talked to people that were on his staff, or that associated with him, but I didn't see him very much. So there's not many Muskie, I do remember once though, I can't remember, it was sometime in the '60s and I was staying a day or so at Muskie's camp which he had on China Lake and he was speaking at the Tarantine Club in Bangor, and I can't remember what he spoke about, but afterwards the people all line up and shake hands: "Hi Ed," " Pleased to see you," "Hi Ed," and so forth. Some old guy came up and says, "I bet you don't remember me, Ed." Well, he didn't know who the hell this guy was, so he hemmed and hawed and finally it turned out it was somebody that had worked for him in the first campaign in '54. And this was... because I remember in '60 I predicted that Kennedy was going to carry Maine, and I was so far off that it was ridiculous. I predicted that Lucia Cormier was gonna beat Margaret Chase Smith.

TOB: Did you say Frank Coffin was going to win?

ES: Well, he was running for governor, I think I said he was gonna win, he got beat by John Reed, oh, that was a disaster in 1960.

TOB: So tell us about what the newspapers were like in Maine in the mid to late ‘50s, what, were they, in your opinion, quality papers? Did a lot of people read the newspapers?

ES: Yeah, I think, of course television was just coming and still wasn’t the big source. I can remember in the news conferences, very different than today, that the print reporters would sit right up front and the guys with the cameras would be pushed way to the back of the room if you let them in at all practically. But now, the TV people are all up front, and if you’re a print reporter, you’re lucky you can get in the room, you know. There’s six cameras there, and the politicians have learned how much more powerful the thing is, so... But in those days it was the written press and particularly people that wrote columns, like Pete Damborg writing for the Gannett papers. He’s dead now, but he’d be a great, would have been a great source. But he wrote a weekly political column in the Sunday paper and he reported politics and legislative events all during the late ‘50s and ‘60s. Well, for me, arriving there as a young reporter the same year that Muskie arrived, you sort of had to prove yourself, but there was Lorin Arnold from the Bangor News, Pete Damborg from the Portland Gannett papers, and myself. So actually the way it worked was, if the Associate Press got a story, we didn’t, you know. We just dropped the story, because when we’d get home they carried the Associated Press story instead of ours.

TOB: I noticed that a couple times that you would have an article in the, later in the paper, like in the Journal, and the Sun, or the Journal would have on the front page the same story, but just the one written by Associated Press.

ES: Yeah, well, see, they got this thing about the Associated Press and the power. It’s true today. The gateway to get in the newspapers, even today, is Associated Press. If the Associated Press carries it, it goes to all the radio stations and it goes to all the newspapers, and the editors look at it, it comes in over the wire, they put it in the newspaper. But to favor that reporting over the guy that you actually paid to go there and report on the thing, I remember Damborg got into a big fight with his paper. It was something at Bowdoin. Well, at Bowdoin they had a, instead of applauding they snapped their fingers or something and the Associated Press said somebody was hissed, because they weren’t there. They got it second hand or something. And Damborg said, I was there, he says, they weren’t hissing, they were snapping their fingers. The editor printed that they were hissed. They didn’t trust their own reporter, who was at the scene, as above what came over the wires. They call it the wire god, and they still have that complex today. But you know, it was a big challenge to go there as a young reporter, not very old, I’m in my twenties, and write up, you know, cover the legislature and what was going on. But I worked with those, with Damborg and Arnold. They were older, more experienced and the three of us sort of cooperated together, sort of feed each other stories or suggest stories, because we were really covering for different areas of the state so it wasn’t a conflict.

TOB: Now, was the Sun Journal a, or the Sun and the Journal, were they more important than the papers today? Did more people read it? Less people?

ES: Oh, I don’t know as there’s that much difference. The Journal of course has gone downhill and eventually disappeared in the last couple or three years.

TOB: Tell us about your weekly column that you had at the end of your tenure with the Sun Journal.

ES: Well, they never really, Lal Lemieux wrote a weekly column like Damborg did, but he just covered it for the Journal, he wasn't stuck with covering for the Sun and the Journal, and so that was something they hadn't done before. So if you went back to his columns you'd see one every Saturday, I guess, in the Journal. And then when I replaced him, I didn't have a weekly column. So as I went along, I can't remember how long I'd been there, but I suggested that I write something. So the editor said, fine, but they never called it a political column. It was always printed as some kind of a story or something, so if you were looking for it, you probably would look on a Saturday. I think, they used to have great big books upstairs. I don't know if they still have those. All the old newspapers? But they probably have microfilmed them all now for the state library so the easiest access, instead of getting these huge, you have to climb up on a ladder ...

TOB: Yeah, we read them on the microfilm.

ES: ... big book, you'd have to check them on the microfilm. But you'd be looking for the column on the, on politics, if you'd, my column, you'd be looking probably in the latter part of the '50s and probably Saturdays, Saturday papers.

TOB: I've read a bunch of them actually. Because we went over to the Sun Journal, looked in the file cards and they had your name and all the stories ...

ES: Yeah, they have this weird system, you can't be sure if it's going to be in the file cards or not, depending on whether they got around to writing it down.

TOB: So how did you become executive director in 1961?

ES: Well I wasn't too happy with the Sun. I'd gone in to get different raises and so by the time I left I was up to I think a hundred and ten or fifteen dollars a week. I was the highest paid person on the paper except for editors, the city editor and maybe editorial writers. And I'd had an offer from Portland, and I'd had another offer from the Worcester Telegram, but the good setup there in Lewiston was, you didn't go to work until six o'clock at night and frequently you're through at midnight. So you really weren't working an eight hour day. And the other papers, if you went to work for a morning paper, you had to go in about two or three in the afternoon. There was a big difference. I could eat supper at home at five o'clock and be to work by six and have the whole day, and I could get home at midnight or one o'clock, I'm up at eight or nine in the morning so I'd have the whole, every day practically to play golf, do whatever. Go sailing, do whatever the hell I wanted in the day time. So I, when it got right down to it... And Maine is great for family. We had a ski place, a little A-frame at Sugarloaf which I still have. We'd go down to Popham Beach in the summertime. We had four kids. You gonna bring up four kids in Washington? You gotta be kidding me. Or New York or someplace. So, it was a good life. I liked the reporting. It was interesting. I got to go to Republican and Democratic state committee meetings. I covered the Republican and Democratic state conventions. During the legislative session I was hardly in the office at all. I'd just go to Augusta every day. Then

one or two days a week I'd have off from the paper and I'd go to Augusta and hunt up some story or try to find out what's going on.

TOB: So, why did you leave the paper?

ES: Well, I could see that... Oh, one thing was I tried to bring the Guild into the paper. That's really what probably precipitated it. I could see that they, you know, they were paying, well at that time the Guild scale in Portland after five years was a hundred and fifty bucks a week. And a five year or more reporter in Lewiston was getting eighty five dollars a week. So they were paying just a little bit more than half the Guild scale. Mileage was similar, half. Not much in the way of pension or any other bennies. And so two of the society women, no, two of the photographers and one of the society women and myself called up a union organizer and he said, well, sign cards and technically they can't fire you. So we signed union cards and then I wrote up a list, I don't know, probably doesn't exist any more, but sixteen suggestions for improving things at the Lewiston Sun in my naive way. One of them was that they start a library for the people in the building of journalism books. I didn't know anything about journalism when I started, and Kent Foster had gone to BU and majored in journalism. He gave me all his college books to read, so that's how I learned how you structure the story. They'd hire kids right in off the street with no experience whatsoever, right out of high school. I think they probably still do, you know. Maybe they get ...

TOB: No, I tried to get a job there last week and there was nothing.

RC: Where, at the Sun Journal?

TOB: Yeah.

ES: But it's like a training ground. A person goes there, they're not going to stay. They stay a year or something, get a little background and they leave. So I thought, well, the least they could do is spend a few hundred bucks a year on books, have some shelves and, you know, if you want to educate yourself... I suggested they sponsor a lecture series at Bates College and that they bring in prominent people in the field of journalism, people who were columnists, editors, what have you. Sort of like the Lovejoy[2] thing at Colby, and they have a lecture and that they encourage their young reporters and everybody to go hear these people. There were sixteen things like that. Russell Costello nearly had a heart attack because he thought we were coming in to tell him that the union was after us and we were not going to join them and we were going to support the wonderful Lewiston Sun.

(*Unintelligible phrase - students to each other.*)

ES: You can go on longer, you don't have to end at twelve for me, I don't care.

STU: So you gave this list to the, he was the union guy, Costello?

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2 Elijah Parish Lovejoy lecture

ES: Costello was running the paper, Jimmy's father. Jimmy's there, runs it now I guess, and we went in to see him and said we had joined the union, which makes it, does make it harder for them technically to fire you. But you can prove that they knew that you were trying to organize the place. Then we had meetings at my house on one thing and another. We could only get roughly half the people to sign the cards. You can't go into a union election if only half of you sign cards because you're going to lose, and they put a lot of pressure on. So when that was over and it didn't succeed, I come back to my desk. Well I, this was, I started there in '53 writing obituaries, here I am the political reporter in 1960, '61, and here's a stack of obituaries. I'm back writing obituaries. They can't fire you but they say, well, we want to you write these obituaries. I hadn't written obituaries in about seven years or some such thing.

TOB: This was reprimanding you for the list?

ES: Well, for trying to bring the union in. They hate me to this day. If I go in there, Jimmy looks at me like I was some kind of bomb throwing Communist that walked through the door or something, you know. And they couldn't believe that where they were so good to me as to give me this job being the political reporter that I would turn around and try to bring the union, the Guild in. The same sort of thing goes on to some extent in Maine papers. They had a lawsuit in Waterville. They gave raises to everybody, this was within the last five years, gave raises to everybody except the people that were trying to bring the union in. They gave across the board raises to everybody but not these people. And so they sued them and they got an NLRB decision against the paper. And they fought the Guild. I don't know if the Guild to this day is in the Waterville, but it is in Portland, they got a good Guild unit in Portland. But, anyway I felt it was time to get out. And I always felt I could go someplace and do something else, but there were people there that had trouble going someplace and doing something else. And they told me afterwards they really made a big mistake when they couldn't bring the Guild in, because they're facing retirement without adequate pensions. They've lived at fifty or sixty percent of the Guild scale salary for years and years.

TOB: When did you become involved with the Democratic party?

ES: Well, I was interested in being the executive director at a meeting where Ed Pert was named. Ed was a young Democrat and he was in the legislature, and I was, I went to that meeting with Donovan as a matter of fact, and ...

TOB: What year is this?

ES: Well, I started with the party in '61 and so this must have been, I don't know, maybe '58 or '59, in that period. Because I was going to the state committee meeting and the job was open. This was when Ed Pert got the job, whatever year that was. And I said, you know, I'd be interested in that job. He said, gee, it's too bad you didn't say anything to me, because he said, Ed Pert's interested in it. And he said Ed knows a lot of Democrats, and one thing or another, and he said it's practically all sewed up. And he said if it comes up again, let me know. So that was maybe a couple years before '61 and Ed Pert took the job at that meeting and I was always friendly with Ed, still am for that matter, and so when it came up in '61 I guess, I don't know if

Ed was leaving because he got elected to the legislature or what, going to take another job with the March of Dimes or something. Anyway, it came up and so I took the job in '61.

TOB: Had you been voting Democratic throughout the '50s when you worked for the paper, were you a registered Democrat?

ES: That's a good question. I can't really remember. I would assume I was but I don't really remember registering and I don't really remember voting.

TOB: So your first real affiliation with the party is when you became the director of the party?

ES: Yeah, well, yeah, except I found over the years that the Democrats when they went to a convention had a lot more fun than the Republicans. And most of them are friends that I had, like Dick Dubord, who was a, later became national committee man for the Democrats, and people like that. I generally got along better with the Democrats, their thinking was ...

RC: So ideologically you were a Democrat.

ES: Yeah.

TOB: So you said you wanted the job, you got voted in or appointed at a convention?

ES: The state committee has to name the person I guess and so Alton Lessard was the chairman then and he nominated me or something. But I think it was pretty much lined up. I don't think anybody ran against me. I can't remember that there was any contest or anything.

TOB: Do you remember what month this was it?

ES: Well it was early in '61 because I remember the legislature had gone into session so my guess would be you're looking at maybe late January, middle of February of '61.

TOB: What were the major planks in the Maine Democratic platform at this point.

ES: Not a clue.

TOB: No clue?

ES: Except that it's gotten longer and longer. As their power increased it got longer and longer to the point where today I don't think the platform of either party has any value. Back in the Vietnam years they passed a platform that was for abortion, amnesty and legalization of drugs and all three candidates, one of whom was George Mitchell I guess at that point, I think it was George Mitchell, Spike Carey and somebody in the primary, they couldn't wait the next day to get out to, they repudiated the Democratic platform. So here's the party passing this platform or amnesty for people that didn't go to Vietnam and legalization of marijuana and abortion, and here's the three candidates running for office saying that's not our platform, we're not going to run on that damn platform.

TOB: Had you begun speech writing when you became executive director? Was that one of your immediate responsibilities, and what were some of your ...?

ES: Well I got involved with Frank Coffin, that was when I was still, Frank, Muskie got elected in '54, Frank ran in '56, and I was still political writer, but on the side I was giving Frank a little bit of help with his campaign. He had a contest against a French Canadian, Roger Dube, in the primary in '56 and he was concerned about that, so I was sort of giving Frank a little help on the side.

TOB: How'd you meet Frank?

ES: Well he was the chairman when Muskie ran and I was going to Donovan's, I knew Donovan and Donovan was close to Frank and I was going to Donovan's things and I was going to state committee meetings at the time he was chairman. There was a lot of socializing, I mean, everybody gets together before or afterwards and has drinks and you just get to know all these people.

TOB: That was probably pretty much the time period when you started to get into the Democratic party was when you started doing a little work with Coffin.

ES: Yeah. I thought up his slogan for that first campaign, a fair share for the second district, because if you analyze the statistics you could see that, there was three districts then in Maine instead of two and he was in the middle congressional district, and you could see that there wasn't a fair share of, oh, money for agriculture for instance, or money for poultry farmers. Take almost any segment of federal government spending and do it on a per capita basis and the second district, the man was getting screwed. So we had a slogan, a fair share for the second district, and I remember I cut up a thing for him because television was tough in those days, you had to, it was harder to tape things, they didn't have the equipment, but anyway he went on this thing live and I had developed, it was a cutout of a circle and then there was like a piece of pie for agriculture and one for military spending and one for environment or social welfare type thing and Frank was talking about the, and I had made this myself, cut it out with a saw, and Frank was there on live television and the, these pieces, well they did fit together but they weren't exactly that precise you know, and at one point I thought, oh, the whole thing is going to fall off and he thought it was, too. I just thought, oh, what a disaster, he's talking about a fair share for the second district and he's putting the third piece of pie in and all of a sudden this thing that I built falls apart on live television, but it didn't, he managed to hold it in one place.

TOB: So you were, so in '61, what was your relationship with Muskie? Did you have much interaction with him at this time?

RC: He had become a senator.

TOB: That's right.

ES: No, yeah, he was in the Senate. He got elected, he had two terms, '54 to '56 and '56 to '58. He got elected against Payne, Fred Payne I think, in '58. So in '61 he was in, what, his third year or something like that in the Senate. You'd never really see him much, you know. You'd get him to come to dinners and hear him speak at the dinner or something like that but there was no, between the Democratic executive director, or secretary it was called at that time, and Muskie, there wasn't much interaction. He didn't come in the office and ask us how we were doing. He was notorious for not knowing anybody's name. I remember in one campaign, Mary Jane Lesperance, she works in Lewiston now for one of the lawyers, she was on Muskie's staff and I was saying, well Muskie, you have to know all these county chairmen, call them up because they're important in the party machinery and call them all by name. By name, she says, "Christ, I worked for him for four years, he doesn't know my name." And Ann McPherson still tells the story, she worked on Muskie's staff and she was there with Elsie Bowen, and Muskie had to have some kind of a speech retyped, sort of an emergency thing came up and he was there on a Saturday or Sunday, he couldn't remember either one of their names to call them up to get them to come into the office on a weekend, he couldn't remember who the hell they were, and they both worked for him a couple of years on this thing, so, he was not big on remembering people's names.

TOB: Did he show a lot of interest in the party, in the development of the Maine Democratic party?

ES: Oh, yeah, I think he was really the head of the party in those years. I mean, nobody did anything unless Muskie, well, in my opinion ...

TOB: Including yourself?

ES: Well, it would depend on what you wanted to do. If it was, like, raise some money for the party, fine, but anything to do with policy or getting things in the party platform or something, he had sort of a ...

TOB: He was the filter.

ES: Yeah, he was the understood sort of veto power. Frank Coffin had a lot of power, too, in a way because he went to become a congressman and he was very highly respected and he went to Congress at a very early age, I think he was just somewhat over the minimum to become a congressman, and he got elected '56, two years after Muskie became governor, and stayed in Congress four years. So between the two of them they were sort of the powers, they were the ones who promoted this resurgence and what have you.

TOB: Did you stay in touch with Don during this time? Because he was working for both Frank in Washington and then Ed.

ES: To some extent. We sort of drifted apart because he had gotten through as Democratic secretary director, I think Ed Pert replaced him, and I replaced Ed. Don had gone to Washington after the, he'd worked for Coffin, went with Frank I think, and then when Coffin lost in '60 I think he went to work for Muskie if I remember correctly.

TOB: Yeah, executive administrator in '60.

RC: Well, I hate to say this but ...

TOB: Just stop the tape, I'll get the other one.

End of Side Two, Tape One
Side One, Tape Two

ES: ... Kilroy, George Mitchell, Victor Reuther (?) and I thought, you know Schlick, four out of those five people are dead, and I thought I gotta stop doing this, you know. Kids twenty five, they don't want to hear old times and all this stuff. They were polite, they won't say, well, ...

TOB: Well, it's interesting because I would agree, until you spend the time to actually learn about that time period, like, once Rob and I started like reading the newspaper articles and reading the names, you know, it's, you read the articles and then you go talk to the people that the article's about, and it's much, it's fascinating. There's a whole new element, like you're much more involved, it's much more personal than it would have been.

TOB: So did Muskie come around to help recruit candidates or help when people were campaigning for state jobs with the party?

ES: Well, it's funny, Bill Hathaway, he became, Owen Hancock was chairman for quite awhile and Hathaway became chairman, oh, it was after he lost for Congress, it was in the early '60s, probably about '63 I would guess, and we went down to Massachusetts, that's when we bought the party's printing press, and we were amazed. Right there in the Democratic headquarters there was a patronage office and, hey, if you wanted a job, you had to go report to the Democratic state apparatus and they would ask you, what have you done for the party, you know? Maine never had anything like that. And so there was always complaints that people were getting appointed to things that hadn't done anything for the party or hadn't been, quote, "true Democrats" and this kind of stuff. Big fight then over postmasterships, too, which I guess sort of came under Muskie's, it was Muskie and Margaret Chase Smith at that time were the senators, and the congressmen I'd have to think about who they were, but there was a lot more politics. I think they took the postmasterships out of politics, but that was a big thing because that was a good job in these little towns. A lot of fights about postmasterships. But, well there weren't, there wasn't, even though I was there for several years, you know, working every day with the party stuff, it was like Muskie's in Washington, unless it's some kind of policy matter of some kind or, they did have big fights about who was going to be the nominee for governor because, Muskie got elected in '58 to Congress, right? Okay, so there was a big fight, they didn't want Clinton Clauson who was a chiropractor, and so the, Louis Jalbert and the French Democratic old time party people, they got behind Clauson and Coffin and Muskie got behind Maynard Dolloff who was the head of the state grange, and so Louis and the old time Democrats in Biddeford and Lewiston, they knocked off Maynard Dolloff and they got Clinton Clauson the nomination. Here's a guy who's a friendly sort of a Santa Claus but, I mean, probably not qualified really to be governor. He'd get to the bottom of a page where it says 'more' and he'd

read right down and he'd say, more, turn the page over, you know. He really had no experience in politics. I don't think he'd ever been elected to anything. I don't know where he came from, but with the power that resided in the primary, then in Biddeford and Lewiston, they were able to beat Dolloff in the primary. He died after one year in office, he died in December of '59. That made John Reed, the president of the Senate, made him the governor, and then the next time around Reed got elected to two years of Dolloff's term, not a full four year term. Dolloff, Clauson was the first four year governor, but he only served one year, and then Reed filled in a year, 1960, for the election, and then he got elected to two, the remaining two years of Clauson's term. And so when it came up in the primary to pick somebody, the same people that had knocked Maynard Dolloff decided to get behind him and support him, and so he only lost to Reed, and he got the nomination, he only lost to Reed by four hundred and thirty five votes, so he had a, maybe it was four eighty five, in the four hundreds.

TOB: What was your role in that campaign? Because you had been working for Frank on the side writing some speeches for him and now he's running for governor against Reed in '60?

ES: I didn't do anything in that campaign to speak of. I was friendly with him but I was not involved in writing speeches or anything.

TOB: And you were still reporting at the time?

ES: Still reporting. I was very pro Coffin and anti Reed, though, which I probably shouldn't have been as a reporter.

TOB: Yeah, was that a conflict of interest?

ES: Oh, yeah, yeah, I would say. You know, if you felt that strongly, you probably have to stop being a political writer.

TOB: Did you ever use your column to give Frank a good word and bash Reed?

ES: Gee, I'd have to look back at the columns and read them over again. I don't think I went out of my way to do it consciously, but there's no question I was pro Democratic at that point.

TOB: Who was the national party chief when you were the Maine party chief?

ES: Well, I think part of the time it was Dick Dubord, Richard Dubord. He ran against Clauson, what am I talking about, he ran against Maynard Dolloff as I remember it, the second time when the French Canadians decided to switch over and support Dolloff, and they beat Dubord which was surprising because Dubord's father had been I think a congressman.

TOB: Now, Dubord was the, what was his title?

ES: National committee man for quite awhile.

TOB: From Maine?

ES: Yeah.

TOB: Who would have been the party secretary for the entire country?

ES: For, the national one?

TOB: Yeah.

ES: I don't know, no.

TOB: You ran for office in '64, is that right?

ES: Yuh, yuh, lost by a small number of votes to Rene Drouin I think it was.

TOB: What office was it?

ES: It was legislature.

TOB: Out of?

ES: Out of Auburn. I think at that time it wasn't city wide. I think you had to be in a certain ward or something.

TOB: What were the main issues of the campaign?

ES: Well, it was just a primary, there weren't, nothing came up really.

TOB: Why do you think you lost?

ES: Well, I didn't know about bullet voting and so, like if you can get, if you're voting for, they give you a list and it says vote for four, and that's the way it was at that time, and you can get your friend to vote just for you and nobody else goes up, you go up one but nobody else goes up. Whereas if they actually vote for four, then it's passed along and people go up, somebody ends up at the top but you get an extra boost if you get a bullet vote, so what you've to do in that case, you've got to go around and get all your friends to bullet for you, don't vote for these other guys, just vote for me. They're entitled to vote for four but they don't, they just vote for you so you go up and nobody else goes up at all. That's one reason. Plus, there still was a strong French Canadian fringe at that time.

TOB: What did you do afterwards?

ES: Oh, I was still executive director. I got permission to run for the legislature from the state committee and I was executive director.

TOB: Until when?

ES: Well, I took the job in ‘61 and I left to start my own business I think it was ‘66.

TOB: What was your role, what was a day in the life of the executive director of the Maine Democratic party?

ES: Well, we started a lot of things. Of course, you’ve got to remember there wasn’t the machinery that you have now, there weren’t even copiers. I can remember Muskie got one of the first copiers, it was a wet copier, the copies came of wringing wet and you had to hang them up to dry off the copier. But, well, raising money was one thing, they never had enough money. That’s one reason I got through there, they were only paying me I think it was twelve thousand, thirteen thousand at the time. You were responsible for raising your own money, you had to organize different dinners and fund raising events. We started something called The Five Hundred Club which was supposedly five hundred people who gave a hundred bucks a year and there’d be a big dinner with Muskie as the featured attraction. You didn’t get to go but you had a little pin and you were a Five Hundred Club member, so that was helpful. The Jefferson-Jackson Day dinner, we set up the people in the speaking arrangements and so forth for that, and I remember we were having one at the old Poland Spring House which burned down and we were trying through Muskie’s office to get a real good draw, good speaker so we’d get a good attendance and make some money. We had this meeting and Don was working at that time for Muskie. He said, have I got great news and I thought, oh boy, he’s got somebody like the president of the United States or the vice president or somebody signed up for the dinner, and I said who you got lined up. He says, Esther Peterson. I said, who? She was like a, I don’t know, assistant to the, somebody in agriculture or consumer protection or I can’t remember, but, Esther Peterson, how in the hell are we going to sell any tickets with Esther Peterson as the speaker? So that’s the kind of thing you did. Went to meetings, we put out newsletters for all the counties so they would send us some news, we’d type up a newsletter and then we’d fill in with stuff, and we’d print that for them and mail it for them, too. All they had to do was pay for the postage, that was something we started. I’d get a whole bunch of work reports in those days but I mentioned those are long disappeared over the years, but it was all the internal workings, fund raising. Actually in ‘62, ‘62 or ‘64, on one campaign I wrote all the releases for Maynard Dolloff, Bill Hathaway and Ronald Kellam, those were the two congressional candidates, and I think that must have been the ‘62 campaign, and so I had three hats because I couldn’t remember who I was writing for. And I had a file drawer for each one of them, but you get confused, you’re writing for one guy in the second district and another guy in the first district, and then the governor says something, so I got three funny little hats, the little, kind of sit on the top of your head, and I had like the part of a bumper sticker and I put on it Dolloff, and I put on it Hathaway, and I put on it Kellam and I’d, if I put on my Ronald Kellam hat I put it, and I had a mirror by the typewriter and when I was writing I could look in the mirror to remind me of who I was while I was writing the release.

TOB: So you did a good deal of speech writing?

ES: Yeah, releases and stuff. I still do to this day. There’s a knack to it, well, I go through like five newspapers a day and I keep a database, that’s what all this stuff is, it’s arranged, so if you ask me something about, oh, Health Maintenance Organization, I can pull out a thing, like all

that's on the minimum wage, and this is on council of senior citizen stuff, corporate welfare, corporations ripping off the government for millions of dollars while our taxes go up. So I go through the newspapers, but the Internet's fast making that up so we learn how to search the Internet, hey, I've gone and typed in something like minimum wage on the Internet and getting three hundred and fifty seven thousand hits. The problem is to narrow it down.

TOB: How did people's perception of Muskie change over the years, do you think? How did his increasing national prominence affect his relationship with the people of Maine? I mean, you paint a picture that he didn't actually have that much involvement with the party on the state level once he went to Washington.

ES: Except in high policy stuff that affected the reputation of the party, his reputation, anything like that. But I don't, he wasn't into like day to day things, but he did have a lot of control, because I can remember, well, shoot, it must, it was the first year that I was a Democratic director so it must have been after the election in '60 when Coffin lost. They had a meeting at Steckino's and this was before I took the party job, just before that. A guy named Louis Jalbert who didn't have a very good reputation but very smart guy, he was one of the powers behind getting the French Canadian vote in Biddeford and Lewiston to back Clauson, and then switching over the next time around and backing Dolloff, and so he wanted to become the floor leader in the House. And they didn't have many votes, even then, in the Senate. But the House they were getting stronger. He wanted to be the floor leader, and I went to the meeting at Steckino's and I had confidence that Louis was going to be the floor leader. And I came back, and the editor said, how'd Louis make out? I said, well, they picked a guy names Irving Fogg. And he said, Irving Fogg? Who the hell's Irving Fogg? He was a guy from Madison, had been in there once, and Muskie and Coffin got the votes together. They really controlled the House to make Irving Fogg the floor leader in the House, and so Louis got really teed off with this because I remember years later him telling me they had a meeting at Alton Lessard's basement afterwards to have a few drinks at Alton's bar. And Louis got drinking some and he really got teed off that they'd gotten, you know, engineered it so he didn't get to be floor leader. And he said, I said something to Muskie, this is what Louis told me, I said something to Muskie and I was getting, we were going up the stairs to go out the door and Muskie turned around, sitting at the bar, and he pointed to me and he says, I want you to remember, this isn't the party of Louis Jalbert. This is the party of Frank Coffin and Ed Muskie, etc., etc.. And he said, then, he said Muskie went back to the very first day that he ever met me, of course Muskie was in the legislature and Louis had been in the legislature for years, he said, he went back to the very first day that he ever met me and he remembered everything that I ever promised him and I didn't do. He said, he even remembered a raincoat that I had borrowed three years before and never returned. And Louis was a funny guy, you know. He had a very ebullient, you know, you talk to some people even today that knew Louis. But he said, Muskie gave me the worst dressing down, well in a way it was the best dressing down, that I ever had in my life. He said, he never forgot anything, he's like a goddamn elephant, he said. He said, even the raincoat that I didn't bring back, he remembered that, too.

TOB: But he couldn't remember people's names.

ES: I would say not very easily. Some of them had a real talent for that. Longley, I worked on Longley's staff, he was fantastic, never saw anything like it. He must have taken some memory training. Reed, John Reed, Republican governor, got in when Clauson died, he had a great memory for names.

TOB: Did Muskie's relationship with the people change, did you notice? Did he start to lose touch with the people of Maine or did he maintain a distance (*unintelligible phrase*) ...?

ES: Well, I think in watching him speak, I think he knew that his future was on the line. This is just my impression. He knew that his future was on the line when he first became governor, and so I think he really exerted himself to practically memorize the details of the job, the budget, the history that went with it, all this kind of thing. And in those days he was just an incredible speaker. And I've, it was sort of like he'd start talking, you know, and it was almost like his arms were reaching out, just sort of feeling how big is this audience, how well can they hear me. He'd be telling some little story and you could just sort of feel him bring in this audience, in to him, you know. And then he just, they'd be right there hanging on his every word. But then as he got into Washington, there was a period there when, oh, they used to kid him about it, he would be speaking too long and he'd be going on sort of listening to the sound of his own voice. There wasn't that feeling of him reaching out. I remember them telling one story, he went to some caucus in South Portland later on, and he wasn't even invited to this, and he got up and spoke for forty five minutes. And you ask George Mitchell, he'll admit in those days they used to kid him that, well, Ed's going to speak but we're trying to keep him down to an hour and a half, you know, and they were always sort of pressuring him not to speak too long, but I think that happens in Washington, you know, you get sort of enthralled with yourself or whatever you're doing, you know, and you lose some of that touch. But he never lost the respect of the people. I think he was, any contact that I had was widely respected for the quality of job that he did and that sort of thing.

TOB: Tell us about the company you started in '66.

ES: Oh, that one was names ARCO, Advertising Research Consultants and this was the idea that I had. If you wanted to communicate, you should be able to go to one source, and that source would do everything for you, so you didn't end up going to a printer and having him try to explain to you about halftones and color register, and you go someplace else and you have to get your release written but he can't get it printed and turned into a brochure, and you go someplace else and you gotta hire a photographer but the photographer can't write the caption for a picture, and it just goes on and on into the night. But you could go one place and like I'd tell you, we'll do that, and if I couldn't do it I'd find somebody who could, contract to somebody else, an artist or something. And so that's what I've done since then. You want a brochure, yeah, you want a tabloid, I can do that.

TOB: Who are your main clients?

ES: Oh, I worked twelve years with Maine AFL-CIO. I don't know, there's another resume here that listed some of the things that, I'll read you the resume because there's a list of stuff that, and, I worked for quite a few government agencies, Health and Welfare Dept., State

Library, I worked on, going around the state selling the bond issue, the cultural building, like a donation.

(*Telephone interruption.*)

TOB: So, you were just telling us about your company.

ES: Yeah, so that was the concept really, and in the last few years I got into video so in the other room I've got video decks and I've got three video cameras and when Michelle was working for me we'd go out and, it's not broadcast quality, but you're shooting like a training thing or sometimes they'll have a day long conference and they want a fifteen minute of what the conference was about so you shoot the speakers and edit it down into something. But that's changing now because you've got digital coming in and in fact digital's big now but it's getting bigger, so you reach the stage now where you can buy, in three to five thousand bucks, you can buy a camera that used to cost me, it'd be forty thousand or fifty thousand, and you're shooting digital and they can broadcast it. So you can do, you know, you can shoot digital and do a commercial and that's affected movie production tremendously. Before, to do your own movie was out of the question. At one point we had a movie studio, we were shooting 16mm film, and you look at the lab bills, drive you bankrupt in no time. But now, you shoot digital, you can edit it down and you can have a movie, actual low budget movie. The technology there is just astounding and it's still developing you know, with fire wire connections for the cameras pumping it right into your computer, off line editing on your computer where you can pick up a scene with your mouse and drop it in here. You're using for maybe, oh, I don't know, somewheres of twenty to forty thousand dollar range, you're using equipment that would have cost you close to a million. A million dollars it would have cost you twenty years, fifteen, twenty years ago. You couldn't even do it, they couldn't put their mouse down and pick up a scene and drop it ...

TOB: They just used scotch tape.

ES: Yeah, well, you had to edit in line. The guy wants something taken out of the middle, you've got to do the whole edit all over again, there's no way to collapse the middle, or find something that was the exact same length and put it in there. But when you do it on the computer, it's a whole different ball game.

RC: How do you think, speaking of how technology has changed over the years, how do you think the Maine Democratic party has changed over the years, since you first became involved?

ES: Well, I think the party is sort of powerless. I mean, you ask anybody what's in the platform, they don't know. Anybody in the legislature, I don't know of anybody that, like Muskie controlled the vote and made people heel to the party platform so it had meaning. I don't think today anybody even knows what's in the platform, much less anybody having the power to say, you know, this is in the platform, you've got to vote for it. They'd sort of laugh at them. They vote for whatever they want to vote for. There's some general things that come up, like minimum wage. Well, most of the Democrats are for it, but if you voted against it, they don't read you out of the party. People on the appropriations committee opposed to the increase in the

minimum wage last I heard. But I think the parties, generally speaking, are sort of, at the state level at least, what do they do? Nothing. I mean, they used to name the candidates and then they got into direct primaries, well, so the power of the party, and I think as much lip service as I think people give it, they know that there's no real power there. They don't control appointments so when you get to be governor you make your own appointments. So we've had, we're on our second independent governor so that when King gets reelected, that's sixteen years of independent governorship. The parties really can't tell you very much of what they stand for. If you say to somebody, well why are a Democrat, what, hard and fast, what are the things that the Democrats stand for? National level is a little different. They do make the selection for the president which is valuable, there's more power there and I think there's a clearer picture of, you can actually go down the federal list and say well, here's some of the things that generally the Democrats have supported and the Republicans don't and vice versa. It's the state level that's pretty tough to come up with a list that, you could list things and then go around to all the Republicans and half of them say, I don't support that. Take abortion, I mean, you've got Democrats both ways, you've got Republicans both ways.

TOB: What do you think Muskie's biggest contributions were to the state of Maine?

ES: To the state of Maine.

RC: In hindsight, in retrospect.

ES: Well, I think the biggest contribution was, probably was the resurgence of the Democratic party. Of course it resurged so far that it became sort of the dominant party, which I'm not sure it that's a, they got sort of arrogant, too, I think in keeping one person the speaker of the house for twenty five years when John Martin was there and so forth. But I think to make the system viable, where it is a two party system, you can't have one party just absolutely dominate the whole thing or your only vote is in the primary. So, and you don't get any chance to organize around a new theme or something. But I think if you, you can see the weakness in the parties in the election of two independent governors, people weren't comfortable, and they still think of themselves as belonging to a, quote, "independent party," there isn't any independent party. You're just an unenrolled voter is what you are. But a lot of people don't take to either party.

TOB: What do you remember about the presidential campaign of '72? What are your thoughts on what happened to Muskie in that campaign?

ES: Well, it seemed like, from what I could pick up, that the people were, they felt so sure that he was going to win that they were overconfident. There was a lot of arguing going on about position, and I think that's when Don Nicoll got through or eased out, or, I don't know what, you'd have to ask Don, I never asked him about that. But he did get through with Muskie at that point.

TOB: He tendered his letter, though, a month before the convention in '72. He stayed on until afterwards but he was ready to leave.

ES: Well, there was a lot of I think back biting and dissatisfaction in different, pretty hard to sort it all out. The only recollection, specific one, that I have is I went to Washington and they had Charlie Micoleau who was, since become national committee man, and he's a lawyer with the firm of Curtis, Thaxter. Charlie Micoleau and Peter Kyros, Jr. Peter Kyros was a congressman for awhile in the first district and Peter Kyros, Jr. is his son, so here's two bright young guys and I was down to Washington, went over to Muskie's headquarters, and these guys were working on answering letters, and they had like a computer form where you check something off. So I said to Charlie, I didn't see Peter, but I said to Charlie, I said, what are you doing? He said, oh, we take a bunch of these letters and we check off how we want them to be answered. And I said, how many do you do a day, and he said, oh, I do thirty or forty a day or something. I said, well how many are there? He said, oh, we've got a room, I mean, it's full and he said, they're coming in by the thousands. I said, jeez, a guy like you, he has to win, he has to get the votes to win. What the hell are you doing answering mail. He said, well, that's what they asked me to do. And I said, you know what you ought to do, he said, no, I said you ought to open every one of those as soon as they come in, hire a woman, open them, I shouldn't say woman, just hire a person, right, hire a person, if there's money in it take the money out and deposit it and burn the letter. He said, what do you mean? I said, it makes sense, I said, he's only got a few months to win the thing, what the hell you gonna do with a rooms full of mail, you gonna try to answer all of these? Thirty a day and they're coming in at three thousand a day. Well, I thought, jeez, this isn't, you know, something's wrong here. Well, that's what they ended up doing after he lost, they took the money out, deposited it and burned the mail because there was nobody there to answer it. I don't know what happened with Don. You'd have to ask him about that. There was feeling that there were a lot of problems with the way it was organized and the slogan was 'trust Muskie.' If you want to read a sort of a bitter commentary, I don't know how valuable it is, but Hunter Thompson ...

TOB: I am reading it, <u>Fear and Loathing on the Campaign Trail</u>.

ES: ... wrote <u>Fear and Loathing on the Campaign Trail</u> and there's a description of the Muskie train going through Florida. Have you read that one? And so that's his viewpoint, but ...

TOB: He wasn't a big fan of Muskie, Hunter Thompson.

ES: But the other thing you have to realize, it's difficult now, is like in the '50s the big issue I think for the American public in a way was McCarthy and here you had this guy conducting a witch hunt and you'd have to, I don't know if you studied that period or read about McCarthy and slandering of people and everything around, so Margaret Chase Smith, she did speak up and make a declaration of conscience, and she was one voice that helped to put an end to McCarthy. Well, in the '60s the big issue was the Vietnam War and here Muskie runs for vice president with Humphrey, right, in '68, and this is when the students are being knocked to pieces in Chicago, you look at the films, the tapes, the demonstrations, and you look at those years, in '68, so Muskie's running for vice president and then he turns around and runs in '72, well, if he was any kind of a voice against the war, I've never seen it or heard about it. He doesn't turn up in any, as one of the two or three or four senators. So I think in a way that this was his chance to shine nationally on a, well, a long scale voice in history, and I think he'll go down probably as a very good senator and contributed a lot to environmental legislation and this kind of thing, but

here's the crucial issue. Like, she's writing this book, right, and here's fifty thousand American kids killed. There's three hundred thousand wounded, many of whom are still in Veterans' Hospital, and at the end of this she calls it one example of American folly, and this went on for like twenty or thirty years that we were involved in Vietnam.

TOB: Who wrote, who was this?

ES: Barbara, Tuchman?

TOB: Oh, Tuchman, <u>The March of Folly</u>.

ES: <u>March of Folly</u> through Troy to Vietnam. She's a world renowned historian, so she ends up saying the longest war had come to an end and she goes on just summing up, but she said, (*reads*) "contemporary summing up was voiced by a congressman from Michigan, Donald Riegle, in talking to a couple from his constituency who had lost a son in Vietnam, he faced the stark recognition that he could find no words to justify the boy's death." And this is a quote, he says, "there was no way I could say that what had happened was in their interest or in the national interest or in anyone's interest." And so that's his assessment of Vietnam. People like McNamara, who was one of the big promoters of the war, so in the last two years he's written a book recanting that this was a huge mistake. So I think you have to look at, this tore the country apart, it helped to destroy confidence in government to this day. You know, you've got fifty thousand people, you've got the Vietnam War Memorial down there, we've got fifty thousand names on it, you've got people in veterans' hospitals, you've got half way destruction of the economy over a ten or fifteen year period, pouring billions into this thing. And so the final summary is that nobody can think of any really good reason what the hell we were doing there. She calls it a folly, massive historical folly and she tries to analyze the reasons. You have to look at the people, there were a few like Fulbright who began to refuse to appropriate the money and, but you wonder, where were the voices of the people that were close to this. Didn't they realize that this was what it was, or did they realize it and not have the courage to speak out against it? But that was the key issue of the '60s, without any question, and on into the '70s.

TOB: How do you think that affected Muskie, the campaign, after he didn't get the nomination?

ES: Well, I guess from several books I read about it, he was rather bitter. The media, there were several incidents there, in one book I was reading, where I guess Jane threw a cake at a guy or something, I can't remember ...

RC: And the Manchester incident.

ES: Yeah, something like that. I don't know, I didn't follow it that closely. I think he felt it was unfair that they judged the New Hampshire results the way that they did, because he won in New Hampshire but they expected him to sweep New Hampshire.

TOB: Just a couple questions going back. I know you've been working with the AFL-CIO. How did Muskie, and through your experience when you were working with the party, how did

Muskie deal with labor? What was his approach to the big labor centers in Lewiston and Biddeford?

TOB: Did he receive a lot of money, did the Democratic party receive a lot of money from the AFL-CIO?

ES: Well, most of the money like that didn't go through the party at all. The candidates would do their own fund raising, and that was one of the party's problems, you see, they wouldn't give to the party. They tried to change that over the last ten years, I guess, and have like a party fund and then the party would give money to the different candidates so they would take contributions to this fund. But in those days it was mostly done directly by the candidate, you would give to Muskie, and so the party was always struggling to pay its bills. Many times without too much success. And it was sort of like, well, they wanted to give money, they didn't want to give it to the Democratic party, what are they going to get out of that, nothing. They would, we didn't control any patronage or anything else, so they'd give it directly to the congressman. Give it to Peter Kyros, to Ed Muskie and what not.

TOB: Peter Kyros was a congressman?

ES: Yup.

TOB: Did you know him well?

ES: Yeah, he was one of the reasons I stopped being executive director. He was a complete pain in the ass as a party chairman. He was party chairman and then he got elected to Congress and finally got knocked off.

TOB: Now, did he work ...?

ES: I worked against him after I got through, I worked against him in two primaries. Brownie Carson in one and Jadine O'Brien in another part. We could never get rid of him, until we finally got beaten by the Republicans.

TOB: Now, did you have any kind of interaction with Denny Blais or Ben Dorsky through the years?

ES: Yeah, yeah, well, Denny Blais ran the textile union and those days I don't think the AFL had united with the CIO, I think that happened in the '50s was it?

TOB: In '57.

ES: And if they were united, it was sort of, at that point, an uneasy marriage. The CIO still looked at themselves as representing the real workers and the AFL-CIO was the elite workers or something, so there was this element of friction there. Denny was a CIO person. And he had a pretty good voice in, like when they were organizing the French people, Biddeford was still a textile center at that point. There was a guy down there named Mike Schoonjans who was

Denny's counterpart, and Mike and Denny had sort of the representation of labor in Biddeford and Lewiston, and as long as there weren't many Democrats in some of the places like Bangor and Portland, they had a lot of voice in the primary because they could really throw some weight around to pick the Democratic candidate. So labor was strong in that sense. I'm not so sure how strong it was statewide. They contributed some money ...

TOB: You don't know of any particular tie that Muskie had for labor. You don't recall any stories or anything?

ES: I don't think it was that strong. But he did, when he ran in '72, he had all the labor unions were lining up to endorse him. He had more endorsements in '72 than he knew what to do with, at the beginning at least. And a lot of those were labor endorsements.

TOB: All right.

End of Interview

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