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Smith, David C. oral history interview

Andrea L'Hommedieu

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Interview with David C. Smith by Andrea L'Hommedieu

Summary Sheet and Transcript

Interviewee

Smith, David C.

Interviewer

L'Hommedieu, Andrea

Date

October 23, 2003

Place

Orono, Maine

ID Number

MOH 414

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Biographical Note

David Clayton Smith was born November 14, 1929 in Lewiston, Maine. His mother, Ella Churchill Smith, was a worker in a florist shop during World War II. His father, originally from Norway, died when he was quite young. Smith grew up in South Paris, Maine, until he joined the Navy in 1948 during the Korean War. He earned his bachelor's degree from the University of Maine at Farmington, where he was mentored by Gwil Roberts, and attended Cornell for his doctorate. Smith developed an interest in history when he was in the Navy and spent a lot of time reading from the libraries on the ships. He became involved in local politics as a city chairman, and as a historian knew a good deal about Maine politics. He hosted a fundraiser breakfast for Jimmy Carter when he was the Democratic nominee for president in 1974. He has been a professor of History at the University of Maine in Orono for about thirty years.

Scope and Content Note

Interview includes discussions of: personal and family background; University of Maine at Farmington; connection to Edmund Muskie; getting involved in Maine politics; hosting a fundraiser breakfast for Jimmy Carter; Bangor politics; various Maine politicians; and Brooks Quimby.

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Transcript

Andrea L'Hommedieu: This is an interview with David C. Smith in the conference room at the Global Science Building, and the date is October 23rd, the year 2003, and this is Andrea

L'Hommedieu. Could you start first by giving me your full name?

David Smith: My name is David Clayton Smith.

AL: And where and when were you born?

DS: I was born in Lewiston, Maine, in Central Maine General Hospital, but I lived until I went away in the Navy in South Paris and Norway in Oxford County.

AL: So that's the area that you grew up in.

DS: Yes.

AL: What year was that?

DS: I was born in 1929.

AL: And what was that community like when you were growing up, South Paris?

DS: It was a typical small town, and both bad and good in the sense that everybody knew everything about everybody else. But at the same time, sometimes, that was used for the benefit of the people they knew. Sometimes it wasn't for the benefit of people they knew. But it was a town in which there were, I suppose, powerful people is the word, local bankers, the people who ran the newspaper, that kind of thing, and you might look up to them but for most people, they worked. They worked in the woods, they worked in the factory, as I did as soon as I was old enough to do that, because it was WWII and they needed boys, what they ever could get. By the time I was fourteen, I was making my own living in the Paris Manufacturing Company, working there, working at odd jobs until I went in the service myself.

AL: And did the paper industry have an influence on that community?

DS: It certainly did, because we cut, people cut pulp wood, they trucked it to the mills they. All of the various aspects of the harvesting were done in that area. And so, as a result, virtually everyone had some contact with the paper mills. Maybe indirect, maybe you're working in a store, but basically the ties between those establishments and the people who were going to come along each year and fill out the new jobs, it was very close. And in the Paris Manufacturing Company, for instance, you called the people by their first name. Maybe the president of the company, you might say mister, but everybody else, you just called them by Dick or Jerry or whatever their name was. Now, that wasn't being rude. It was just that sense that you knew them in that context.

AL: And you were born right as the great Depression was

DS: I certainly was, November 14th, 1929 which is, what, two weeks after Black, three weeks after Black Friday.

AL: And do you, were you, did the Depression last long enough for you to have memories of the effects, or do you remember your family talking about what you went through during those years?

DS: I was the oldest child, and I can remember, I have memories which are driven by the Depression, from 1936 when I was about seven, because there wasn't money enough one year for Christmas. And we were told that, my two brothers and I, my youngest brother was only a year so he wouldn't have known it, but we were told that and I can remember it and this was the way it was, times were tough and we had to deal with it. The night before Christmas there's a knock on the door, which I can remember, I can see the people coming through the door, half a dozen maybe as many as eight men and women from my father's and mother's social group, and they had come with presents and food and all the rest of that so we could in fact have a Christmas. My dad was sick. He'd been in the hospital so there was no money, and these people took care of us. And that had a, it had a profound effect on me. The whole business of working together, making things do, working it out. And that's in fact what that area was like.

AL: What were your parents' names and their occupations?

DS: My mother's name was Ella Churchill Smith, and she was the daughter of a farmer in North Paris. During WWII she worked in the florist shop between Norway and South Paris, Lola's Florist, and then after my father died she was a house mother here at the university for fifteen years, and then she retired. My father, originally from Norway, he was actually born in Nova Scotia. And when he was about nine or ten or thereabouts his father and mother and one older sister, two older sisters, moved to Maine. My grandfather answered an advertisement because he could shoe oxen. He was a blacksmith, that's what he did all his life, he was a blacksmith. But he came down because there was no one in that area who could shoe oxen, and there were still enough oxen around so that that was a specialty trade. And then in the early thirties, he began as an itinerant, carried on as an itinerant blacksmith, but with the horse races, and so until he died he followed the harness horse races and was a blacksmith, and my memories of him are very strong.

And his son was my father, and he was a meat cutter, he was a paper hanger, he was a painter, an external painter, he worked at stores and kept books, and the woods. He did whatever came to mind. And he learned some of that because he was employed for a while in the CCC, which was a New Deal thing, and he was the clerk of the works for a while in building the West Paris High School, and I can remember him going off to that job. I don't think he, we didn't have a car then so he must have been going with someone else. But that's what they were. They were working people, and their people had always been working people. On my father's side there had been blacksmiths for at least five generations, and my father was the first one that wasn't, but I understand what being a blacksmith was all about because I was around the forge, as it were, all this time.

AL: And after, you said you went to the Navy after working in the factories as a teenager.

DS: I went in the Navy in 1948. And when the Korean War broke out in 1950 Harry Truman extended everyone like me an extra year so that we would have trained people to carry on

whatever the war was. And so I was in the Navy for four years, and when I got out in 1952 the first thing that, it was a question would I stay in the Navy, because I liked it and I had a brother, in fact, who spent twenty-five years in the Navy. But the other alternative was I was eligible for the G.I. Bill of Rights. And I took that route because buddies of mine, friends of mine, and I never stopped. I went to Farmington and did a degree, then I came to Maine and I did two degrees, then I went to Cornell and did my doctorate. And Ed Muskie and I used to talk a little bit about, because he was in the law school when I was there. I didn't know him, but -

AL: But you were there at the same time.

DS: And we had, we shared that Cornell experience. Yeah. The G.I. Bill, there are thousands of people who were, like me, who were able to elevate themselves, pole vault as it were, out of the working class into the intellectual class. And I think we changed what teaching was about. I think we changed what people taught in classes, what they learned, because we were a different kind of people, these vets. That's what I think anyway.

AL: What was your experience like at UMF, which was then Farmington State Teachers College?

DS: It was absolutely wonderful, could not have been better. Because here is a person who is fairly sophisticated in the sense of the Navy and all that, but I didn't know anything about the intellectual life. Except I had read all my life, but it was whatever came to mind. And I met some extraordinary people at Farmington; Will Roberts is still over there, William, this is what a mentor is all about; and Myron Starbird, who's dead. The whole faculty. And I met Sylvia, my wife, over there. So that three years was perfect. It was wonderful. And, because it was small, they took Maine kids mainly and they took us and turned us into something that could be useful to the community. And Errol (*name*), who was the president of Farmington, used to say that in chapel, we had compulsive chapel in those days, and he used to say that the taxpayers of the state of Maine are paying very good money to give you an education, and you have an obligation to return it, to the state, and to elsewhere, and that means finding a teaching job in Maine or coming back to Maine. In any case, you have a responsibility to pay back, that's what life is about. That was the first time I'd heard that kind of contextual flavor, but that's, you talk to anybody from Farmington in those years, or even now, you go over and see Theo Kalikow who is the current president, probably tell you the same thing.

AL: It has a wonderful reputation even today.

DS: It's a great school. It is a great school. It's like this institute, where we're sitting right now; the man you're going to interview next [Harold Borns] is the man who got me involved in this twenty-five years ago. And he had two rules: one of them was, there are no dumb questions. If you need to know the answer, we need to find it for you. And the second rule that he had was that when you're in a position of authority, and you're going to hire somebody, make sure you hire better than the people you have now. Always improve what you're doing every time (*unintelligible phrase*). Well, Farmington was like that, too. I've been surrounded all my, Cornell was like that, too, I mean, maybe every place is like that, but the ones that I went to, these are the kinds of things that I found out. I'm one of the luckiest people you can imagine,

really, you know.

AL: Now, what interested you in history specifically? Do you have a sense of what put you in that direction? Because you said you were a reader, but you were a pretty broad reader.

DS: Yeah, I think probably it was that reading who drove me in that position. I was at sea for, on a ship, for almost four years, three and a half years before I was discharged. And we had a good library on the ship. And people, I was in the radio gang which was a, well like electronics technician and that stuff, and I think we were probably quicker and brighter than people swabbing decks. And I'm not putting them down; I'm just saying what was what. And we all read, and we exchanged books, and so I suppose that I was driven. I can remember reading through Shakespeare at sea, as an example, and a colleague of mine here said, you were so interested when I first met you because you knew so much about so many things, and then there'd be complete blanks. And I said, "Yeah, I hadn't read about that." And that's still true. I read today as much as I can cram in, and unfortunately I'm beginning to run out of time.

AL: Tell me about your first experience knowing who Senator Muskie was or meeting him or about that.

DS: I remember it vividly. I was, you know, I was a good Democrat in the sense that I went in and marked my ballot, the one time I had voted. I was about twenty, I was twenty three or something like that, and I had voted. And the election before, he was on the ballot for the first time, so I just knew who his name was. And there was a marvelous, interesting woman in Brewer called Madelin Kiah, K-I-A-H, her kids, her daughter and her son-in-law are still, I think, fairly active in the party, or around it in any case. And she called me up and said, "What are you doing election day?" And I said, "Oh, well, I don't know. Go vote." And she said, "Can you help me?" And I said, "Sure, what can I do for you?" She said, "I need somebody to carry my father," who was a judge in Millinocket, eighty-odd years old, "I need someone so he can testify as a known Republican with these people that we're going to their houses so they can vote absentee. And that's what we're going to do all day." Well, I don't drive and I didn't drive then, but my wife did, and she was thrilled about this. So we picked up the judge and spent the day voting absentee people. And Sylvia was not old enough to vote, she was only, she was just going on, you know, whatever the age was.

AL: Yeah, it might have still been twenty-one then [I'm referring to the voting age].

DS: Oh, I'm sure it was, if not earlier. And she, as she said to me this morning, she said, I wasn't old enough to vote, but I was old enough to drive. And we did, and he, the judge talked about his life, and as a small boy in Millinocket he could remember the bonfires that were built when Grover Cleveland became president the second time in 1888, he could remember this, okay? So I (*unintelligible word*) this sense of, well Madelin watched that kind of thing. She made sure I got invitations to places, and most importantly she got an invitation for Sylvia and I to go to the Blaine House for a luncheon with Ed and Jane and about fifty other people my own age. And he, this is when I first met him, and he, "Where did you go to school? What are you doing? What are you going to do with your life?" That was all that he was asking. And I said, "Well, it isn't Bates." And I said, "It's too bad, it's Farmington." And so we got into this little

kind of rivalry between Bates and Farmington, and until he died, when I saw him he would always mention the Bates-Farmington thing, it was, you know. And he called me, in those days my hair was red and he called me "Red". He was the only person who ever did call me Red. I was city chairman and county chairman up here in the Democratic Party, but I was Red to him because that's how he remembered me.

Well, that was a wonderful thing, it was a wonderful experience to be in a small group, to be in the Blaine House. Stephen was still around, Jane was pregnant, my wife was pregnant, in fact they had children within a month of each other. And we just never, whenever they wanted us we went, wherever they wanted us we went. Went to Washington, went to New Hampshire, we'd have gone anywhere with him, you know, he was just a particu-. By that time one of my students, and a very close friend of mine, Clyde MacDonald, of course we had known each other, see, Clyde was here as a student probably when you were a student. And, you know, we talked about the senator, and we talked about, you know, we were interested in political theory, political power, that kind of thing. And we had a chance to look at it in action. And he didn't mind that, I mean, he wanted to tell his stories and that was great because his stories were useful, and funny sometimes.

AL: Who are others in the Bangor area that you got to know and involved with in the Democratic politics?

DS: Bill Cohen's wife when she was a Democrat, the first one. She was I'd say, was a good Democrat, and that's by way of a joke, but it isn't a joke, you know, there are others there. Bob Murray and his wife. I was odd man out, that is I was from the university, not many university people were in the Bangor party or active in it. I have no religion at all; most of the Bangor party were Catholic. I was the first non-Catholic to be a city chairman as far as I know since the eighteen fif--, almost a century. And there was, this was the way it was. But they didn't care about that, and I found this thing about really good politicians. They don't care about trivial things like that. What they do care about is whether or not you can bring the votes in and whether you can get people elected, because you can talk all you want to, until you've got the majority of voters you ain't going anywhere. So I knew, I knew them. And Frank [Murray], their oldest, not their oldest child, Cynthia [Murray Beliveau], Severin Beliveau's wife, and I knew all the whole family. Frank was a student, again a student of mine. I knew him well. I knew Jay McCloskey. They were all in that same group of people. And I was, in fact when Frank was ordained I went and stood with the receiving line in Bangor, because he and his father and mother wanted me there. And you learned an awful lot from people like this, people who are innately good.

I was trying to think, there was a guy in the post office, and I haven't thought of him for years. He died about fifteen years ago, but he was an important, there were people like this and they were scattered through the town. And the local party, the caucus and all that, (*unintelligible phrase*). I was a delegate to the state convention for twenty years, and I was a delegate to the national convention in 1972, 1974, which was an interim one in Kansas City, and then in 1976 when Jimmy Carter was our nominee. I was a delegate to New York at that convention. So I was active, and I met all these various people, you know, who are great people, wonderful people. I always said, and people don't believe me but nevertheless is true, that I'd rather, in most times, be

in company with a professional politician than necessarily with an academic. And the reason is, the academics don't have to go before the voters and go before the students, go before anything, they can just do what they want to do. And when they're good, they're wonderful. If you're a politician, you go every so often, but mandated by law, and if you haven't lived up to your promises you're not going to get elected. And a politician can't afford to be a liar. He can't afford to say, or she can't afford to say to somebody, "Oh no, I'll do that. I'll take care of that. I'll do that next week" You better do it next week. That's the way I look at it, or at least when I was involved.

There was a wonderful man called Ray. He was a union man, and he served on the labor committee and was one of these people who had in fact drafted many of those, that sort of law. I was in the union, too, because I was working nights probably when, well, certainly around the time that you were my student, I was working nights in Nissan's, and I was in the bakers and confectionary workers union. Not really active in the union, oh, Bob Toole is a person whose name comes to my mind. Now I can produce all the names; I can see their faces.

AL: What about Ken Hayes?

DS: Oh yeah, I knew Ken very well, very well indeed.

AL: So he was one, another one of those professors who went into the community and -?

DS: Yeah, he and Bud Schoenberger and Maralyn, did you know them?

AL: I'm interviewing Maralyn later today.

DS: Give her my love.

AL: I will.

DS: She's a great, great person. And her husband, who is now gone, he was a super person. We shared, he and I shared an office. When I was a graduate student writing my thesis, and he was just hired, his first job here, and we were in the same office for a year. Super people, wonderful people. And above all there was Clyde and Bill Hathaway and Norman, lives over in Orrington, Norman, Norman Drew, do you know that name?

AL: No, I don't.

DS: He was Bill's, he ran Bill Hathaway's office. One of those people, you learned a lot about people. I was, he read all the time but he read only novels or autobiographies or biographies of political people. He was a total political animal. And Eddie Kelleher is the other one, do you know that name?

AL: Geez, that sounds familiar but I don't know him.

DS: Well, Eddie grew up in Bangor, and he sat in the legislature in those years in which we

were sort of in control, which is what Ed Muskie did for us, you know. I mean he made the Democratic Party so that you could be a real thing; there was some chance of getting elected. When I became city chairman, and I ran for the office against one of the old time Catholic bosses here.

AL: Do you remember who?

DS: I may as I keep on going. Anyway, we were standing looking down at the crowd at a place that had a balcony, maybe the old high school, and he looked at me and he said, "Dave, I don't know if we even need a vote." I'm looking down and thinking, 'Oh, my God'. He said, "No, no," he said, "you've got well over a majority, let's." And he said, "I'm going to go down and tell them that all my voters are going to vote for you." And he said, "You'll make a great city chairman. You'll make a great city chairman." His name was, oh, hasn't come up yet. These are people who have been dead for, you know, they were in their late sixties or seventies thirty years ago and so I, you know, they're not in my mind as much as they are today. There were a lot of people. Oh, Terry Brennan, you know Terry? Terry was the registrar of voters here in Bangor, but she was an active party person all the time I was city chairman and before and after, and you had to do it by the way the law read but within that boundary she would help you as much as she possibly could. And she was a, she was a wonderful person, knew everybody. And we could turn out the vote. When Jimmy Carter ran for office a second time, he did run twice, didn't he? Yes.

AL: Yes, he did.

DS: The second time we came within forty-two votes of carrying Bangor. It's never been carried by the Democrats other than freakish things, but we came that close. And part of it was because Jimmy Carter came up here a couple times and campaigned in Bangor. I chaired the state committee, state convention that year it was in Bangor, what year would it have been, '74 maybe? Anyway, I was the chair of this and he came, the state party had brought him here. He was governor of Georgia, or just had been, and he gave a lovely speech. And we went out to dinner, you know, the twenty-five or so people who thought they would do this, and he said at that thing, he said, "I'm going to run for president next year, and I hope you can support me." And, I remember that.

I used to run a monthly breakfast, anybody could come, and we moved from restaurant to restaurant, for about two and a half years. And we'd always have a politician in to talk because it gave him an audience, gave us an audience, and we could plan strategy and so on, that sort of thing. And I thought to myself, well, why not be brave, so I wrote to Carter just before Thanksgiving, that first time he ran, so that would have been '75, and said that I had this thing and I can't guarantee you a big crowd but I can put fifty people in a room if you can come here. And he wrote back and said, yes, and he'd be on such and such a plane. And we took him to the thing, and the restaurant that we had that, (*unintelligible phrase*), was Sing's Chinese Restaurant.

So we had a political breakfast in a Chinese restaurant. Well, they were the Democrats; I mean all of the Orientals in this town were great Democrats. And he had a great speech and a great talk; he loved it. We had a hundred or more people there, and as he left he wrote me a little note

that said, "Thanks so much," it gave him a great boost, and, "If I get elected I'll come back." Well I kept that, too. And in a couple years he had been elected, and then they had said there were no, he would not going to any place unless there was a minimum of \$500 a plate. And I wrote back and said, "No, I'm sorry but these are working people, you know. They're probably taking the morning off work to come see you. Thanks anyway." And he wrote back and said, "I'll come." And his aides, one of his aides wrote back and said, "I'll come if you can get a good crowd." And we had it at Husson, had it in that big thing over there, and I had at one time, we had five hundred people there. Not \$500 but five hundred people, and the state took fifty of the tickets and maybe another ten or so went out to national people. I had all the others, and what we did was make sure that everybody who had worked the polls, everybody who had carried voters, everything that they'd done, that they could go to this breakfast with the president. And boy, was that something. We're sitting talking, here's this great crowd of people, I've got a special F.B.I. pin on because I was F.B.I. for the day, I mean, he knew how to do this stuff up right. And I got to be a college professor, but I was getting my kicks out of that stuff. Then all over there was a little hush, and somebody who I didn't know came out and put the presidential seal in front of the podium and he came out behind it. And I thought, "My God, was that ever something!" And people still come up and talk to me about that, who got tickets, who, because I gave them to a lot of the students who were, anybody I could find got tickets, and that's what we went to do was go and see the president.

This all came from Ed Muskie; this all came directly one right after another. And I suspect it was because, you know, we became friends, we were not great friends, I didn't go see him when he came to Maine, but when he needed me I went, or if there was a political rally I went, and I knew him to be a marvelous person. He brought John Glenn here for me at a, and we gave, had a spaghetti supper, one of the ones the Baldaccis do now. Those started when I was chairman, and the Baldaccis were still in the old restaurant. And we got out and we had baked beans and we had, I'm the only per-, I advertised kosher baked beans. That's right, I did, because we could somebody to make it, and people would come and pay a couple bucks. And then we brought people like Bill Hathaway, and John Glenn, and people like that, and they loved it because they were meeting real people and for them, I think, they don't always meet real people. Real people with an axe to grind or this or that and the other thing. I had a wonderful time being city chairman; I had, when it came time to go I went. I haven't been to a meeting since. I talk to people, they call me up, I carry voters, I work at the polls, I do all that, but it was time, I was beginning to repeat myself and we needed somebody else. And I think I was probably writing another book and, you know, that sort of thing.

AL: Were there issues that came up in Bangor politics that you can recall?

DS: You betcha. I can recall two, you remind me one is state income tax. But the other one, for me at least, tells you more than all you could possibly need to know about Bangor. Because, that must have been '72, it must have been '72 but whatever it was, we had, there were five legislative seats in Bangor and people were dying or getting old and not going or giving it up, but we had been reorganized so the lines were a little different. And what we did was go around and get people to run for office. I ran in the most Republican district in this end of Penobscot county, because then I could be on the ballot in case we needed it if something happened to somebody, but at the same time I'd have to put the effort in. My daughter ran for the same seat

ten years later and she got more votes than I did.

Anyway, among the people who were in that group, there was a woman, she was a registered nurse, her name was Dorothy, starts with a 'D', it's like Davis or something like that, and I asked her if she would run. She was active, she'd been in the, you know, with our group of people. But her issue, as a good Catholic, was abortion, except it was on the right side from my point of view which is that a woman's right to do this is her own, and there ain't anybody else ought to interfere. We had a big split in the party. The Murrays were on the other side, not Frank although he hadn't become a priest yet, but Bob Murray, and we agreed that we would never mention it. He would go and vote his way and I'd go vote mine. Anyway, this was the way we set it up. Dotty was elected to the legislature and she put in the first bill dealing with abortion ever in this state, as a Catholic, ex-nun, registered nurse, and she put in a bill, put the bill in that established that women have these rights, other people don't. And for me, that's one of the great things, because I had something to do with it, I asked her to run. I live in a family in which my wife is a union person, she taught school for thirty-five years. She organized the bus drivers and the cooks as part of their union. And, you know, I couldn't have done otherwise. And Dotty was happy to do that.

The income tax, we had one but it wasn't very fair. It basically, the people at the top, we had one in the state, but it wasn't fair at all. We had a guy named Phil, it's like Silverman but I don't think that's quite it. I'm, in my, I can't do second names very well, I just forget them. They'll come to me at times, but not right now. Anyway, he rewrote that bill so that it was a guided one like this so that the people at the top paid the highest percentages and so forth and so on. And was able to get that through, he was in the state senate, was able to get that through. And both of these people served in one term and then they went away, but what they did was change Maine and make it better, I think. One last joke, story about Louis Jalbert.

AL: You met Louis, huh?

DS: Oh, I knew him very well. That year that I was chairman of the committee I was in charge of where everybody sat and where they held their caucuses and so on. And Louis came up to me and he said, you know, "It's traditional that Androscoggin county always be all together, all the towns, all the cities all together. What do you think of that?" And I said, "Far as I'm concerned, it's a wonderful idea." And he said, "Can you, they put us down in two different places, (*unintelligible word*) county is here, (*unintelligible phrase*)?" I said, "Oh well, we'll take care of that." And so we did and he could get what he wanted, which meant that he could get all of the people he wanted so he, I'm right where he wants. Hell, I didn't mind that. I mean, he was electing Democrats. And just as we were setting up shop somebody from (*unintelligible phrase*) showed up with two cases of beer. The boss says you need this, set them in back of us.

Well, about, he had another thing that he wanted about six or eight months later, and he came up here to talk, and Bud Schoenberger got him to come up here and talk, but he was on a different side than Bud. And so he comes in and sits down, and Bud is saying, you know, "We're here to convert Louis," and all of this. And Louis said, "Have a cigar." He looked out into the audience, you know, he says, "Bud, you ain't got the horses, you ain't got the horses." Isn't that wonderful? I mean, that's the way he was. And the thing, people didn't care. They cared that you turned out

the vote, that you supported the party, that you worked hard to get, make Maine and whatever the better, and it was a lot of fun, it was a lot of fun, God, was it fun.

AL: I want to hop back to the, you mentioned before we started the interview Ed Muskie's time at Bates College and the influence of Brook Quimby.

DS: Yes.

AL: Tell me what you know about Brook Quimby, did you know him at all?

DS: I met him twice, once after, but the first time I met him he was the graduation speaker at South Paris High School the year I graduated, 1947. I graduated (*unintelligible word*) because as seniors, there were only twenty-seven of us or something like that, and we all got a chance to meet with him. I don't, I can't remember whether we had a meal or just talked or whatever, but he gave a speech on life and how you ought to live it. Of course he was a wonderful forensic speaker, and that's how, I mean that's why Muskie was such a good speaker because he just taught him one on one every, you know. Anyway, in his, in Brook Quimby's speech he said he was going to talk as though we were going to a football game. And he said, "I'll tell you we're starting now in the first quarter, and then we come to this half," and he did this (*unintelligible phrase*) at the end of the fourth quarter, last two minutes in a two minute drill. And he put all of this business about how to live your life and how to make life better, and that one had an obligation to do that, all within that context. I didn't have to see him again; he'd already made his impact on me. And I told Muskie this a couple times, and he said, "Oh, I know that," he said, "That's exactly what he did. He could make you really think about what you were doing." That's exactly right. And so the second time I met him was just, I think I was with Frank Coffin and, I don't know, even know when Quimby died, but anyway, I'd met him another time at a cocktail party or something. But, and I didn't talk about this high school speech because it wasn't appropriate or whatever at that time, but you can see I still remember it.

AL: You mentioned Frank Coffin. Do you have recollections of him and his political activities?

DS: All I know, he was the kind of, he was one of the few lawyers I ever met in my life that I liked. And I mean that, because I did like him, and he would have made an extraordinary person if he'd been elected that time. And I worked for him in that campaign, in fact I gave one speech for him when he couldn't booked to the two places because I was by that time over here coming back, and I'd just gotten my doctorate, and I was just beginning to teach in the year. And I thought of him as remarkably fair and honest and decent, all of those things. He would have made a great U.S. Senator. Of course they won, not just Frank, because there was that other guy who died so (*unintelligible word*) he was about the same time, maybe it was like, maybe two years before. Much of the stuff like that is in my thesis, because my master's thesis at Maine is on Maine politics 1950-56.

AL: Oh, really?

DS: Yes. And it's, it bears the marks of a very young person.

AL: Were there particular issues that Muskie was tackling as he was in the Senate that crossed with some of your interests perhaps in the environmental issue?

DS: Yeah, now this is, this is, yes, and I will talk about that because in particular, he was supportive of the, this movement, before people knew there was a movement in that sense. And he knew that we had to work together and put together a coalition that could win it. And he did something which I hope that the people who write this biography can take advantage of: when they had the hearings in the U.S. Senate on the EPA bill, environmental and the air quality part of it, it is my understanding that all of the negotiations with the automobile companies, most of them, is on tape. In other words they, all of them, so who gave what and who didn't. And I was told twenty years ago that that is in his papers, those are in his papers, and if they are that story will be the first time they've ever looked at one of these. The only thing like it is a book called, The Fight To Save the Redwoods, and she was able to get some of it. But Muskie knew this, and knew that this stuff had to be saved, had to be preserved. He had a, another thing that I think that needs to be said about him is that he could change his mind. Didn't do it easily, pretty bloody stubborn in fact, but he could do some things and one of the things he did is change his mind on the Vietnam War. And if you ever talk to Clyde, you ought to talk to him again, or talk, you know. Have you talked to him?

AL: I've done two interviews with him.

DS: Okay, maybe he didn't tell you this story.

End of Side A
Side B

AL: We are now on Side B.

DS: Okay, Clyde was driving him back from Eastport (*unintelligible phrase*), Muskie used to (*unintelligible word*) after he'd been down there to make a talk. It's a long drive from Eastport back to Bangor or wherever he was staying. And he would lean back in the car, and Clyde always had a big car so it would be, he bought a big one so that Muskie would have room enough to lie down in it. And he started to talk this time to Clyde, and Clyde told me within a week or so afterwards. He conducted a soliloquy all the way back to Bangor in which he was talking about, he couldn't understand why as a young person everyone knew that they had to go in the military, everyone knew that we were fighting Nazism, Fascism, dictatorship. And the same people who did this then, who fought that way then, many of them don't do this now on the Vietnam War; they don't see it as the same sort of thing. And he said, for years I've been looking at this and finding out why did that happen, what is the change. And the more I read about it and the more I thought about it, the more I thought that they were probably right, that the Vietnam War was not about Fascism, it was not about Nazism. It was about who's going to control all those riches in the Pacific rim. I wasn't there, I wasn't in the car. I know that, though, within a week, he had hammered Clyde. And Clyde was a pacifist, and he wrote his thesis, his dissertation on pacifism, and so he was already on the opposite side anyway, and he said listening to him, Muskie, in a sense, create or recreate, these thought patterns was pretty

wonderful. And I think it's a great story because it tells us a lot about him. And I'm glad Clyde was driving that night rather than, you know, whoever. If you didn't get that story from him, you know, I'm sure he'll tell it to you. Can I just ramble two or three -?

AL: Absolutely.

DS: My mother-in-law had never voted for anybody but a Republican in her life. She used to say to me that Warren G. Harding was the handsomest man she'd ever seen, he was a Republican, and so she voted for him. And I'm not sure ordered to meet Muskie, or just having him around, but anyway, she voted for him. And that's why, she came up, and she said to me, she said, "Did you know that Ed Muskie is a Catholic?" And I said, "Yes, I do." And she said, "I didn't know that." I said, "Would it have made any difference?" She said, "No." But there were a lot of people who woke up that morning, because there were a lot of people in Maine who wanted a different world and they saw Muskie, and quite frankly probably a hell of a lot of other people who got out of the military in 1945 and '46 and knew that they could do something to change the world.

I'm convinced that's one of the great books, is the class of '46. What did they do when they got to Congress? What did they do in the state legislatures? I'm never going to write that book, but it's potentially that will let us know more about them. So, I wanted to tell that story. I wanted also to, I knew Jane in some ways better than I did him, I suspect, because we were on the state, we were together on the state Human, not Human, that's something else, the state Historic Preservation Commission, Jane and I were both, in fact I was its president. And going to those meetings and voting on those things and listening to her and listening to other people talk, why this building ought to be on the National Register, why we've got to preserve it, and so forth and so on. And you could tell immediately that she was a woman with a long ability to look at the future, but she was also vulnerable, and so forth and so on. And Ed knew that.

When he finally retired from all of the stuff in Washington, he was interviewed in the *Boston Globe*, and I don't know who wrote the story, but in the *Globe*, and they asked him about where they were going to live. And Ed told them that they were going to, they were in the process of buying a house in Washington, and this person in the *Globe* said, "But you're from Maine. You're a New Englander." He said, "Yeah," but, he said, "Jane's a lot younger than I am, and when I'm gone she's going to want to be with her friends, and she's lived so much in Washington, and this is where her friends are. And so that's why I'm doing that." I thought to myself, you know, if you could only be like that and think like that. This is what he said in the paper. Yeah.

AL: Did you work closely with Bob Baldacci?

DS: Not as much. I knew John better than I did Bob. Or are you talking about the father?

AL: The father, yeah, John's father, Bob.

DS: Oh yes, I did, and he was very important here and he quit, and his brother who you -

AL: Vasco, one of the great people in the world. After I was city chairman in that ten years,

Vasco was living in Belfast or someplace, election day he would appear at about six thirty in the morning and would work for me, work the polls in Bangor because they knew Bangor. And so he would, and then get back in his car and go down there. But each year for about ten years one of my workers in Bangor, on the polls and doing all of it, was Vasco. And he could, and I loved Vasco, he was funny.

AL: What was he like, I don't have a description?

DS: Very outgoing, very brilliant (*unintelligible phrase*), and very much a Democrat.

AL: How was Bob similar or different from his brother?

DS: Much more straightforward. And when you think of them, in fact, when you think of Vasco, whether he did this or not you would still think of him as having a flannel shirt and jeans or something like that. And with Bob, what you think of is a man in a black suit and, you know, with a pin stripe maybe and very, shoes polished. Both of those may be false, but they're the psychological memory I have of those two people. I had Ray's name, the guy in labor, no, it hasn't come yet. I took some notes last night and that, oh yeah, I've got a story that you won't have. I have two stories that you won't have because nobody else knows them but me.

One of my students over the years is a woman named Judy Barrett Litoff, and she did a dissertation for me here, and assisted me and taught the first womens history course. And her dissertation was on the history of midwifery in the United States, and I was her director because nobody else would do it, and so I learned a hell of a lot about being a midwife. And we have since that time written six books and about thirty articles together, and almost all in womens history. And a person who knew us came to us at a conference in Atlanta and said, "If I can set it up, would you, how would you feel about going down and conducting an interview with former Senator Herman Talmadge?" And Judy looked at me, and I said, "Yeah, let's try it," figuring our politics were totally different than his. Well, they weren't, when we got there. He was a southerner and he had to be elected in southern terms, but he was not a black hater, he didn't hate black people. He was nothing like his cousin or brother, the one with axe handles and all of that stuff. He was a real person, and when I was introduced to him and he gave us, we sat down and so forth, and he said, "How is my dear friend, Ed Muskie?" First words out of his mouth. And he talked about Muskie and being in the Senate with Muskie and how, that everyone revered Muskie because you could trust him, he was so honest and there was nothing fake about him. He didn't have to do that. And quite frankly, I came away from it thinking that Hummin, as he was called, Hummin was that kind of a man, too. And the reason, and they did like each other. They were not close, but they liked each other because they trusted each other. So, there's that story. And then, when we were trying to get the papers, the Muskie papers here -

AL: Well, mention that a little bit because we didn't have that on tape.

DS: We were competitive, or not competitive, that's the wrong word. We were interested in making sure that the Muskie papers were saved and preserved. And at that time I thought, and many of us thought here on the campus, that we could build those facilities easier. There was more money then, and so forth and so on, and Bates didn't seem to have what I thought of as an

appropriate facility. That, just forget all that, but that's, you know, that's the way we treated it. And eventually when it came time for, to get the papers, he came to Maine and he said to Clyde, "I'm going to go tell Red that he's not going to get the papers." Because I had written a formal proposal and in this proposal I had this thing I had said to you before, that I think of him as the equivalent of Dan Webster and Henry Clay and John C. Calhoun, the great senators of their time, great figures, great Americans, and they never were president. Lesser people were elected president, and I think of Ed Muskie as this, he would have made an astonishingly good president, but lesser people were there at that time. Anyway, so he, I didn't know that he was going to tell me that, but I did know that he was coming, and we had a little money, somebody had a little money, I didn't have any, but somebody had some money. And so we set up a meeting when he could talk to the honor students, Muskie could meet with the honor students. Dale Rick was president, do you know Dale?

AL: Well, I knew who he was.

DS: You knew who he was, yeah. Dale and I, Dale was a very good president, much better than a lot of people think, but he also had a view of the world that was different in some ways, and he thought that Muskie was a has been, okay? He'd done all this stuff, but that was, hell, he's not there now, somebody else is in the power now. And so when his secretary, when the president's secretary here got the room, she got a big room in Wells Commons, and so we could put up a hundred and fifty or two hundred chairs in there. And Clyde and I and he went down to take him down and be introduced, and Dale was down there, and the place was jammed with kids. Every honors kid in the state was there, which Carol knew that, I knew that, but Rick didn't understand what it was like, what Muskie was like. And they were all there, and he was fussing around, and I said, "Oh, well, we'll find another place." And we found a bigger place and put them all over there (*unintelligible phrase*) five minutes to do that, set up some chairs, just automatically do it.

And when Dale came to introduce him, he was still flustered by the whole thing and so his introduction was spastic. Muskie took care of that as he stood up, and he said, "Oh, thank you so much." He said, "What you really need to do is follow Dave Smith," and everybody is looking at me. He said, "Oh yes," he said, "Dave will tell you that it is much easier, much easier, much better to give a talk in a small room which is all filled, to a large room that's half filled." And then he gave a speech. He administered a little (*sound effect*) on the president, he told a little, it was how does politics work, and then he thanked me for in a sense being Dave Smith, all in that one, two, three. I always figured that was Brooks Quimby talking, you know, knowing how to do that sort of thing. I really meant that. Yeah, I wish he were here, I wish he'd been president.

AL: What I have, I know that Clyde had mentioned something to me when I interviewed him, and it was a couple years ago so I apologize if this is fuzzy, but he said that you took a trip with Senator Muskie along the coast. It was either in a car or in a boat, I don't know.

DS: In a car.

AL: Along the coastal areas.

DS: Yeah, up Route 1.

AL: That probably was it.

DS: Yeah, I think so.

AL: Do you remember what the reason was, or do you remember the trip?

DS: I think it's a follow up to this one that Clyde tells about coming from Eastport. I think it was another trip within the next couple of months, probably something I asked him (*unintelligible phrase*). Well, I know what it was - we were talking about how when Muskie went to the Senate there were all these ex Mainers in the Senate, Willy (*name*) from Alaska, who has been the editor of the *Portland Telegram*, lived in Maine for the last ten years before he went to Alaska. And Paul Douglas, the great senator from Illinois; he was born and raised in Newport. And he used to tell a story, Douglas did, used to tell the story that he, his father and one other person could hold a caucus in a telephone booth, because that's all there was. And then he went on, did his Ph.D. in economics, and Paul Douglas is the man who wrote the Social Security Act, and he was in the Senate when Muskie, so that there are. I think they joked a little bit that, you know, Maine actually had about four senators because there were these people who had these ties. And this is what we were talking about, his relationships with these people, and his relationship to Wayne Morse. Do you remember Wayne Morse, know that name? He was the first, he was the Jeffords of his time in the fifties. He was an independent, gave up his party, moved from being a Republican to an independent, and then when the Vietnam War came he was the first, he was more outspoken against it than anyone else in the country, from his position as that, he and Gaylord what's-his-name from Wisconsin, and Fred -

AL: Gaylord Nelson?

DS: Yeah, and Fred Harris from Oklahoma. We had wonderful people in the Senate when you think about them, extraordinary people. And virtually all of them were here one time or another in that twenty year period, and it was in great part because they could sort of pay a debt to Ed Muskie. They knew they would be among friends and among people who knew what they were doing, talking about, that sort of thing. This is one of the reasons why the university is such a good place to be, and it surely was. But that's the other one that he was talking about. I don't remember that there's a third one, but there may be.

AL: Yeah, I'm not certain.

DS: But we did, we did talk about these people who had those strong Maine ties. Quite frankly, Margaret Smith probably, circumstances were different for her, that is, when her husband Clyde died she could have done a lot of things, but she decided that she was, that his position in the party was such it needed to be protected. He was one of the two people who voted for Social Security in 1936, okay, Margaret Smith's husband, Clyde Smith. And then the other one, one of the other ones who did, I guess there were four or five, was in the first district, and he was a Republican in the thirties, but he changed his vote and was reelected to that seat 1948 or '49. So there were people like that. There was a liberal core, let's put it that way. In

Margaret Smith's point of view, near the end of her life when she was, I interviewed her once and a couple of other people interviewed her, she would talk about the fact that Eleanor Roosevelt was her heroine and that Franklin Roosevelt was a great man, and that things were different for her. And of course, she fought her own party. I mean, they tried to dump her, they put that creep in to run against her in the primary, Jones, and all that stuff. And that was trying, they were trying to kill their own party.

AL: Do you think it was because she was a woman, or for ideology?

DS: I think it was ideology, but I also think there's some of the other. I wrote a book, *Judy and I*, one of our books is called, and we wrote books based on letters written by American women in WWII, and one of them is called, *Since You Went Away*, and it's just women reporting. And then the other one is called, *We're In This War, Too*, and that's women in uniform, and in that she's a very important figure. She's the person who opened up the military for women in WWII. She's the one who created the, that women could be in the WAVES, the WACS and all those things. She was wonderful. She was on the Naval Finance Committee, and so, they were going to hold hearings in Norfolk, which is where the big Naval base is, and whoever the chairman of that committee was said, you know, "There's nothing for you here. I mean, why don't you stay in Washington. You don't have to, you know, we're just going to talk about the caliber of guns." So, she said, "No, I think I'd better go; I might find something."

She held a hearing in 1943, by herself, in Auburn about prostitutes and prostitution and how we can deal with these problems. Margaret Smith did that. I don't think anybody in Maine knows it except Greg Gallant and a few others. And in my book there is a picture of her in a, she's in a dress, a flowered colored dress I believe, and high heels. She's standing with the commandant of the Marine Corps, and she's firing a rifle on (*unintelligible phrase*). That's because she was (*unintelligible phrase*). And I think this is the way, most Democrats that I knew, when it came time to dedicate the post offices in Bangor and wherever the other one is, one's hers and one's his, it was appropriate. They were very similar, they were Mainers, they came, yeah, and I'll use that, they were Mainers; they came from the world that I grew up. You asked me about South Paris when I was a child, you know, I can recall those names just as easily, too. And I had an aunt who taught first and second grade for thirty-five years in West Paris, and when she died it was on a hellish day, a hellish ice storm, and they broadcast over the radio that the funeral was postponed so that people could still come. They were Mainers, that's all. And that's enough, I think it's enough. Hey, I've enjoyed this.

AL: Is there anything that I haven't asked you that you feel we should add to the picture before we end?

DS: I would say one thing, and it has really to do with the sort of question you asked anyway. I think that a lot of the presidents of, or high officials here who have been from away over these years, I don't think they've under-, I think it's very hard for them to understand what being a Mainer is about. I don't think they understand that when you're talking to people, you share the same kinds of backgrounds. Sandy Ives knows that very well, and Sandy's from away. But he wrote an essay about ten years ago on Maine folk humor, just captured it absolutely. And there are people, the guy who you're going to interview next is from Massachusetts, one of the great

people in the world, but I think of him as a Mainer because he understands that and understands what those things mean. And I think when we've had a president up here who was in that kind of situation, I think we have done well. This is one reason why I think that Jeff Mills such a good alumni person, now, because I think, yeah, they're my students so that I should have to say that, but these are people, they understand what they're doing, and so forth. And let's hope the next president is a Mainer.

AL: Thank you very much.

End of Interview