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## Thurston, Murray oral history interview

Nicholas Christie

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## **Interview with Murray Thurston by Nicholas Christie**

### *Summary Sheet and Transcript*

#### **Interviewee**

Thurston, Murray

#### **Interviewer**

Christie, Nicholas

#### **Date**

June 12, 2001

#### **Place**

Bethel, Maine

#### **ID Number**

MOH 277

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#### **Biographical Note**

Murray “Mike” Thurston was born March 6, 1921 in Bethel, Maine and graduated from Gould Academy and later Dartmouth College. He served in the Army from 1942 to 1946. Murray worked in his family’s wood turning mill. His father, Paul Thurston, ran against Louis Brann for Governor in the 1932 Democratic primary. In 1956 Murray ran unsuccessfully with Don Nicoll for the Maine Senate, and again in 1958 with Peter MacDonald and was elected. He helped found Sunday River Ski Resort. He is married to Constance Thurston.

#### **Scope and Content Note**

Interview includes discussions of: Cornell Law School; 1968 vice presidential campaign; environmental protection; Vietnam War; Republican Party in Maine; Democratic Party in Maine; Maine turnpike history; Sunday River Ski Resort; Les Otten; 1956 campaigns; 1958 campaigns; and William Bingham.

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## **Transcript**

**Nick Christie:** This is an interview with Murray Thurston at his home in Bethel, Maine on June 12th, 2001. The interviewer is Nick Christie. Mr. Thurston, could you state your full name and spell it for me?

**Murray Thurston:** Murray Thurston, M-U-R-R-A-Y, Thurston, T-H-U-R-S-T-O-N.

**NC:** And where and when were you born?

**MT:** Bethel, Maine, March 6, 1921.

**NC:** Okay, I'm going to start by asking a few questions about Bethel. When you were growing up, where did you go to early, your early schooling?

**MT:** Well, Gould Academy served as the local high school then, under one of the old New England academies where the town paid the tuition and many other town students came in on a

boarding basis.

**NC:** Okay, what was Bethel like when you were a kid?

**MT:** About the same. No, I take that back. It was very, very quiet. We were little off the beaten path and the economy was basically the same as it is now. Lumbering, long lumber, short lumber mills, dowel mills and tourism. The Bethel Inn was very famous as a very high class resort. And that was it. And Bethel practically closed up in the winter. All your inn employees went to Florida to work in the hotels. It was very quiet.

**NC:** And you grew up in Bethel, or around Bethel, as a child?

**MT:** Right. I lived in four different places in Bethel all of which were within a quarter mile circle, here and there were, a quarter mile circle would encompass them all.

**NC:** And you, I have information that says you grew up on a dairy farm?

**MT:** That wasn't what made the family living, that was just kind of a, a lot of small farms then.

**NC:** Can you tell me anything about what it was like to grow up in that setting?

**MT:** Oh, it was wonderful; you learned all about the birds and the bees and saw animal life, and had some chores to do. In the summer, helped with the hay, and believe it or not, I never milked a cow but we had up to a hundred head at one time. It was strictly a hobby for my father after I grew up.

**NC:** Now you went to Thurston Academy.

**MT:** Where?

**NC:** Thurston Academy?

**MT:** Gould Academy.

**NC:** Gould Academy. Okay, can you tell me a little about how did you first decide to get involved with Gould Academy?

**MT:** Well, you either had to go away to a boarding school or, it was much easier to stay home and just go to Gould.

**NC:** And you stayed there for four years?

**MT:** Right.

**NC:** And what was Gould Academy like in terms of education when you went there?

**MT:** I think they had a very good rating. Back then I really didn't know, but I assume it in many regards, most went on to college. In those days a lot of graduates didn't go to college.

**NC:** Now you ended up going to Dartmouth.

**MT:** Right.

**NC:** Was that directly after?

**MT:** Yes.

**NC:** And how did you decide to go to Dartmouth?

**MT:** I always liked the idea of Dartmouth.

**NC:** And what did you specialize in while you were there?

**MT:** That was the beginning of the war and all I did was just get through college. I took a liberal arts course, I think they call it a topical four major, specifically with democratic institutions: a combination of sociology, history, economics.

**NC:** And while you were there, just to skip ahead quickly, you ended up enlisting in the Army.

**MT:** Drafted.

**NC:** Okay.

**MT:** I tried to (*unintelligible phrase*) but nobody would even look at me. So actually I had to get out of college. At that point they had a system that if you completed seven semesters, came back one day on the eighth semester, they would consider you'd completed the course, and you had to take your final exam.

**NC:** You had to study in advance for what?

**MT:** Well, the exams, with all of us going to war. I'm not sure they even corrected them.

**NC:** Right. And you ended up going to Africa.

**MT:** That was the first place.

**NC:** Where in Africa did you go?

**MT:** Italy, Corsica, went through the Canal on a troop ship, ended up in the Philippines and Japan.

**NC:** And from what years did you serve to what years?

**MT:** Forty-two to '46 [1942-1946].

**NC:** Okay, now when you came back -

**MT:** Oh, I never got home. From the day I left I never came home one day for three and a half years.

**NC:** Did you return to Bethel when you were done with your service?

**MT:** Yes.

**NC:** And what did you begin doing then?

**MT:** We had the family business. And I guess I took the easy way out, I just had enough of the world, I wanted to come back to a comfortable surrounding. And the family business was, it supported the family and so I went into that.

**NC:** This was the wood turning mill?

**MT:** Yeah. Strictly speaking, wood turning, it doesn't make a difference. A dowel mill isn't wood turning. Your plain dowel is not turning. Minor difference, doesn't make any difference to anyone.

**NC:** And what was your job when you were working at the mill?

**MT:** Well I guess it, my brother-in-law was there, too, and between the two of us we ran the place.

**NC:** Okay, and you had how many people working there?

**MT:** I don't know, maybe twenty-five, maybe, then.

**NC:** And how long did you work at that, work for the mill?

**MT:** It's the only thing I ever did.

**NC:** Okay. Now, you mentioned earlier your father Paul.

**MT:** Right.

**NC:** Now he, in addition to working at the farm, he also was involved with banking?

**MT:** Yes. Well, see, working but the farm was strictly a hobby. And, yes, he was involved in politics somewhat. Then the woodworking business wasn't very good, and he was on the board of trustees at the bank, and they elected him president.

**NC:** Now this was a bank in Bethel?

**MT:** No, Rumford.

**NC:** Up in Rumford. Is that where he did most of his business?

**MT:** Yeah.

**NC:** Now, I was wondering if we could start with, just what kind of person, generally speaking, was your father? What was he like?

**MT:** Oh, very reserved. Did like to have a good time but he wasn't a hail fellow well met, he didn't go around slapping people on the back. And he was a very well thought of. Loved to travel. He was quite heavy, but he climbed mountains and played tennis. Oh, I don't know what else I can say about him.

**NC:** When you were growing up in Bethel, what sort of, how deeply did politics run in the family?

**MT:** Quite deeply.

**NC:** Could you tell me a little bit about your father's political philosophy?

**MT:** Oh, I'd say very conservative, even though he was a Democrat. In those days it was almost a disgrace to be a Democrat. I remember being ridiculed as a kid in grammar school.

**NC:** For your beliefs or for your parents' beliefs?

**MT:** Well, they're one and the same.

**NC:** Right. What was the situation locally in terms of the Democratic Party? Did it exist really?

**MT:** Not really. In name only, yes. But then about '32 it began to gather strength.

**NC:** How was that?

**MT:** Well this sounds democratic, but I guess I would say that the Republicans had been in power so long they became real arrogant, and I think resentment arose against that attitude. I'm sure the Republicans won't agree, but.

**NC:** Okay. So this, that sentiment was felt locally as well as on a state wide level you think?

**MT:** Oh yeah.

**NC:** Now your father was the first chairman of the Turnpike Authority.

**MT:** Oh no, not the first.

**NC:** Okay, but he was chairman?

**MT:** I think he was appointed on the Turnpike; he was chairman of the City Highway Commission first. He ran for governor in '32 against Louis Brann, and Brann beat him in the primaries. And as a consolation prize, Brann appointed him to the Highway Commission, and then he became chairman of that for two years.

**NC:** What sort of responsibilities did he have with that job?

**MT:** Oh, I think one day a week. It's an interesting concept on the birth of the turnpike which not too many people know, I don't think. Maine Good Roads Association, I don't think even exists now, that was a group of contractors and people who were interested in highways. And my father, as I say, traveled a lot and came back, he came on the Pennsylvania turnpike which had just been built. And he went to a Maine Good Roads banquet and he said he was sitting there fat and happy and the chairman said, "Now I'd like to have a word from Paul Thurston," and he said he (*unintelligible word*), he said the only thing that he could think of, he said, "I've just come back from traveling the Pennsylvania turnpike, and we traveled two hundred miles in two hundred minutes," or something like that. He said, "I would like to propose that the state build a turnpike from Kittery to Fort Kent." He was just talking off the top of his head. And they picked up on the idea, I'm not sure as anything that this is at all true, but they were going to put the bill in the legislature and, knowing my father was a Democrat, they figured that would be the kiss of death. So they let, oh, I can't think of his name, put it in. He was the first chairman. I can't think of his name. (*Unintelligible phrase*), probably never heard of them? I can't think of his name, he was down in, anyway, he was the first chairman. My father was a member of the commission, and I think he became chairman in '51.

**NC:** Did you get a feeling for how your father viewed the way that the Democratic Party began to advance in the thirties, in the forties and fifties?

**MT:** I think he was a little apprehensive with the reputation of irresponsible spending. I don't think he liked that. No, I can't tell you any more than that.

**NC:** Now I want to get to your political career, but I want to start before 1959, I want to go back to 1956 when Don Nicoll asked you to run with him. I was wondering if you could tell me about how that idea was planted.

**MT:** I can't remember at all.

**NC:** But can you tell me something about that campaign?

**MT:** Well, neither one of us knew much about it. We had a simple little flyer printed and, oh, one day a week or so we'd go and knock on doorbells and, ring doorbells, (*unintelligible word*)



in a gathering place. We'd travel along with Muskie and any other big boys that were, it was very crude, neither one of us knew what we were doing. Don't tell Don that, because he probably did, but I didn't. (*Unintelligible phrase*) agenda then, the way it worked then, there were two senators. Four people ran regardless of, and the one that got the most votes was senator, the one that got the second number was a senator, and the two low guys were out. The guy, this doesn't speak well for the value of an education, Don had a master's degree, he came in last; I had a B.A., came in third; and the next one up was a high school graduate; the guy who got the most votes graduated the seventh grade. Education didn't pay, so you might as well drop out now.

**NC:** I'll remember that. So was '56 the first time you made close contact with Muskie?

**MT:** Fifty-six or '54, I'm not sure. Depends on how you define close contact. Connie told you we had him in our house for a picnic once, and all the Democratic faithful. I was never very close to him. I did go down to a testimonial they had in Washington, and President Johnson was there, there was all the big, I just went down to represent Rumford. And just before the reception we went to Muskie's office for him to change his clothes and, you've heard the story about the Notre Dame football team and the other team said, "Don't be afraid of them, they put their pants on one leg at a time just like you do." That was Muskie for me. I felt the same thing. He was in the United States Senate, but he still puts his pants on one leg at a time.

**NC:** Did you get a feeling for what sort of expectations he had in his early career, in terms of '56 and '58 when you were politically side by side with him?

**MT:** I guess I didn't really, I don't know what year he got involved with this cleaning up the environment. That was a courageous thing to do with his home town; they all lived on polluting the environment.

**NC:** And to some degree you could say Rumford has been affected economically by, in terms of the mills.

**MT:** Well, the mills were Rumford. So many of them were afraid that his clean water efforts would make the mill shut down, but it didn't.

**NC:** From what I've heard, Rumford's considerably cleaner now than it was.

**MT:** Oh, much. It used to be when they'd blow the (*unintelligible phrase sounds like: digestors*) even on the main street you couldn't breathe, the fumes were so pungent. There was soot all over everything, snow would be black.

**NC:** Now, in 1958 you ran with Peter MacDonald.

**MT:** Right.

**NC:** And won. Can you tell me a little bit about that campaign?

**MT:** Again, very low key. (*Unintelligible phrase*) I guess.

**NC:** Now what was motivating you to get involved politically, on the public level, at this time?

**MT:** Oh, I guess I just thought it would be a very interesting thing to do. Which isn't a very good answer. I wasn't going out to slay dragons, (*unintelligible phrase*) know a lot of people like Don Nicoll and Muskie and, I think I'm losing my memory, this, oh, the arbitrator, George Mitchell, I got to know him fairly well.

**NC:** What sort of man was he?

**MT:** I beg your pardon?

**NC:** What sort of man was he?

**MT:** Very, very high class.

**NC:** What was the, comparing Rumford and Bethel and Paris and Norway, would you say there's a collective Democratic atmosphere, or would you say that there's -?

**MT:** Rumford has always been Democratic. I think all the other towns you've mentioned have been strictly Republican. Norway, Paris, you say? They were always Republican. Fryeburg was very Republican. I used to, when I was in it, I used to keep all the figures of different towns, how they voted, and the Democratic ones were few and far. We used to count on Rumford to make up whatever you lost in all the other towns.

**NC:** And speaking of Bethel, would you say that that has changed over the years?

**MT:** A little bit. I still think they vote Republican. Not as bad as, percentage wise, not as bad as it was.

**NC:** Now, I want to ask a few questions about Sunday River. You are one of the early organizers of the Sunday River ski area. I wonder if you could tell me a little bit about how that idea got developed originally.

**MT:** As I said, the whole of Bethel was a very dead town in the winter, no, there's nothing going on. And I was a member of the Chamber of Commerce and they had a meeting and appointed me the head of a committee to find a way to stimulate winter business in Bethel. I had always skied and (*unintelligible word*) many ski areas were busy towns, so to me that was the only obvious answer. So they, oh, I guess somehow we got ten people together and formed a committee to develop it. I was one of the committee. We didn't have any money, all we had was ideas, all dreamers. And oh, one of the committee (*unintelligible phrase*) found the land where Sunday River is. Have you ever been there?

**NC:** I haven't.

**MT:** Bates always used to come for their carnival, a ski day (*unintelligible word*), so we picked out this mountain and then we thought we didn't have brains enough to, confidence enough, I think we were right. So we hired a skier expert named (*name*) to come over and cruise the mountain. And good thing we did, we were going to build it on the wrong side. You can save building a little (*unintelligible word*) roads, you build a road over here and you've got a wonderful area.

And we sold stock with the concept that for every ten percent of the money we raised we could only spend that, only spend ten percent. And the rest went into escrow which wouldn't be released until we raised ninety thousand I think, which paid for the lift and rope and -. No, wait a minute, I'm back a step, that was the rope tow in town, which was for Sunday River. Okay, no I'm right, we budgeted, we had to have ninety thousand dollars. That's when we sold the stock with ten percent being held back, and if we didn't get the ninety thousand, they'd get ninety percent of their money back. So we got to sixty, sixty-five thousand, couldn't get any more. Twisted arms and begged and finally Gould Academy gave us ten thousand, and we were still about thirty thousand short. We went to the SPA and they came up and looked at it. Don't put this in the story because the SPA wouldn't like it. It was a hell of a hot day, we had to walk a half a mile and went up and sat on a rock and showed them where we were going to do it. We get back down at the bottom and one of the local characters, he had a bottle of whiskey down in the water, he says, "I think this will taste pretty good. Will you help us?" (*Unintelligible phrase*). And finally after he'd had about two drinks, the SPA man thought that was the greatest idea in the world. So he says, we'll give you the forty thousand. But, again, I don't think the SPA will like that story. And then we did a lot of the labor ourselves, cut a lot of trees, it was kind of a community effort, at the beginning. Organized road building days and tree cutting days. I did a lot of surveying the run, and I didn't know what the hell I was doing.

**NC:** That's harder than it looks, isn't it?

**MT:** Hmm?

**NC:** It's harder than it looks, to do surveying, right?

**MT:** Well, I was scared to death because I was afraid I was going to make a mistake. And volunteers (*unintelligible word*) we ran the profile of it, so the lift company could know how to design the lift. So it opened in '59 with one T-bar. Two years later we put in another T-bar, this one went only half-way up the mountain. Two years later we put one up to the summit. Two years after that we put another novice area over on the other side of the brook there. And grew from there.

We weren't doing very well, we were paying our bills and growing a little. And then we decided there was no hope for us so we sold it to Killington. I don't know how much of this story (*unintelligible phrase*), Killington (*unintelligible phrase*) over Les Otten, he was assistant manager, he was one of the management trustees, trainees. And he had great vision, he could see what was there so that when Killington wanted out, they could see they weren't going to make the return they made over in Vermont, so they loaned him the money to buy it from them. And then he was off and running. Well, I guess that's about all I can think of there. But it certainly

changed life in Bethel.

**NC:** How so?

**MT:** Well it raised the price of everything. Used to be half the houses on Main Street had broken windows and shutters hanging off, and you couldn't give them away. Now the place is, everything in Bethel is about double the, same house in Bethel would sell, well, maybe not double, but fifty to seventy-five percent more than the same house in Rumford, because Bethel really is kind of a nice, clean little town.

**NC:** It's quite a contrast to Rumford.

**MT:** Many of the old timers in Bethel curse the day Sunday River was ever built. They do. They have to wait in line in the grocery store, and the roads are crowded and (*unintelligible phrase*) young and active people, always a drinking problem and hell raising in general.

**NC:** Now, you said that at the beginning there was about ten people that came together to kind of start this project off. Can you tell me a little bit about first how those ten people happened to come together, and who they were?

**MT:** Well, Edison Saunders, his family owned a dowel mill, same as we did. Kimber Lanes of the local bank, he was an odd, not odd but he was about sixty years old, never, didn't know what a pair of skis were. But he'd come out and sell tickets every weekend. Phil Chanbourne, Chadbourne Lumber, he was just interested in everything. He would call me up at two o'clock in the morning, say, "I just thought of something." Vance Richardson, he was an ex ski trooper, 10th Mountain. Paul Keeley, (*unintelligible phrase*) Paul Keeley, he was a well-known collegiate racer and the Middlebury ski coach. He was the one that found the mountain. Howard Cole was just a good public spirited citizen. Jack (*name*), he was an insurance man. Jack Trindle, local dentist. Sam Davis, who was a small building contractor. He built the base lodge. I guess that's all I can think of at the moment.

**NC:** When the project first started between all of you, you briefly said, well, what sort of vision do you think you all had right at the very start, what were you imagining Sunday River?

**MT:** Nothing like this, we couldn't even conceive of that. We just (*unintelligible word*), well, some of us were very ardent skiers and selfishly give us a place to ski and give employment to make it a better town.

**NC:** Were you a big skier?

**MT:** I enjoyed it. And I skied quite a lot. I think I went to Europe thirty-two times skiing. I still ski a little, once or twice a week.

**NC:** Oh, wow. Now, you mentioned that early on in the project you, there was a certain amount of work to be done in organizing the community to make the project possible. Now, how did, what sort of, what was the, how would you describe the community interest the first

year or two of the project, and then also how is that compared to how the community has moved (*unintelligible word*) over the years?

**MT:** Early on it was just general community spirit. You all pitched in to do different aspects of the job, just enough to get it rolling. We all, we were pretty active, take turns parking cars and even running a lift once in a while. I used to drive the Snow Cat (*unintelligible phrase*). But we were pretty low skilled. Les Otten is the one that really built it up.

**NC:** What was is function, how did he -?

**MT:** He was beginning (*unintelligible phrase*) by Killington, assistant manager in their trainee program, and he liked what he saw and he had, I told you that, he borrowed the money from them and then he ended up buying them.

**NC:** That's what started to take off. Right. Okay, so in 1959 you entered the state senate, is that right?

**MT:** In '59 what?

**NC:** You entered the state senate?

**MT:** Yes.

**NC:** And how did that come about, how, what was it first like when you entered politics in that level?

**MT:** It was not vicious; the Republicans tolerated us but, literally they tolerated us. They had so big a majority. They were nice people and you liked them, but you didn't have much influence.

**NC:** And how cohesive was, as of '59 or '60, the Democratic Party in Maine in terms of the platform and in terms of the leadership?

**MT:** Oh, I think we were quite, Clauson was governor. Nice fellow but he wasn't much of a leader. And then he dropped dead I think. John Reed became governor. And then John Reed defeated, my memory's going to hell, George Mitchell. I think that was the biggest heartbreak of my political career.

**NC:** You were fond of George Mitchell.

**MT:** I didn't know him that well personally, just what he stood for and his ability, and I wasn't particularly hot on John Reed. He was all right, but he certainly wasn't George Mitchell.

**NC:** What was it about George Mitchell's beliefs that you found attractive as a political figure?

**MT:** I can't, don't remember a specific thing.

**NC:** Now, when you were involved with what was really a very early stage of Democratic growth in Maine, where did you stand politically?

**MT:** What do you mean, how did I stand? Of course I was Democrat.

**NC:** But did you find that in terms of a party that you fit in easily, or that -

**MT:** Yes, I did.

**NC:** In a sense what I'm asking you is what was, what were the most basic beliefs that seemed to be represented by the Maine Democratic Party?

**MT:** Oh, I think they were the same as now. We thought Democrats represented the interests of the common people really, and the Republicans always had a reputation of being the other way. I remember one statement my mother, my step-mother was in the legislature once, and a Republican local rally (*unintelligible word*) made the statement, as a Republican it behooves us to cater to the needs of the common people. That was their attitude, they weren't the common people, the educated few, they called it.

**NC:** And the people of Maine felt that distance?

**MT:** Evidently.

**NC:** I'm just going to flip this tape over real quickly.

*End of Side A, Tape One*

*Side B, Tape One*

**NC:** You were talking about the Maine Democratic Party, and earlier in the interview you mentioned that your father felt that the liberal attitude and spending too much, he found that bothersome.

**MT:** I think he did, but I wouldn't swear to it, but I'm reasonably sure.

**NC:** Now, Muskie started in Maine and eventually ended up having an incredibly, or the most liberal careers of any Democratic in the national Senate. Did you get a feeling for how his views and opinions changed, or did, how did you see his career progress over time?

**MT:** Oh, I can't give you a very intelligent answer on that.

**NC:** You mentioned the Clean Air and Water Act. He also had quite an effect in terms of housing, the national budget committees and things like that, but at the same, he was criticized to some degree that he, as a senator from Maine, he became very quickly engulfed by national politics. Did you feel like he was connected to Maine once he left the governor's seat?

**MT:** Oh, I had no reason to feel that he wasn't representing Maine. I'd never heard that before.

**NC:** You felt like his presence was strong in Maine, even as he was working -?

**MT:** Oh, I thought so.

**NC:** What was the opinion in Bethel or in Rumford of Muskie's politics?

**MT:** He was a hometown hero certainly. Bethel I think, I guess they probably supported him.

**NC:** Now when you were in the state senate, state legislature, and a decision would come up in terms of legislation, how strongly did you feel there was coordination between, say, the governor at the time and the other members and yourself?

**MT:** You mean whether he was a strong leader, or -?

**NC:** That, and also how strong was the actual organization in terms of platform and a belief system?

**MT:** I guess my opinion would be that it wasn't, that it was not particularly strong.

**NC:** Concerning Muskie, did you feel, do you have any memories of him on a personal basis, in terms of what kind of a man he was just as a human, not a politician?

**MT:** Again I'll say a wonderful man. I just traveled around with him, went to county fairs and drive him to local stores. He was absolutely down to earth and friendly. I thought I had a picture of him up there somewhere but, it was of him cutting a ribbon on the turnpike. Somewhere I have it.

**NC:** Now, can you tell me anything about Dave Stevens?

**MT:** Yeah. He was about the best administrator I ever knew. He didn't like to take no for an answer, but he was a great administrator.

**NC:** He was both the highway commissioner and a commissioner of health and welfare?

**MT:** Commissioner of health and welfare before he got into highways, I think. Then he became the head one on the Maine Turnpike, I can't remember his title, but the chief administrator.

**NC:** Were you personally friends with him, or was he -?

**MT:** Yeah. I went to Texas to some convention with him. He felt guilty if he spent more, I'll say, five dollars for lunch. I'm making up a number, but you didn't have sirloin steak if he was there. I thought a lot of Dave. I remember my father telling the story that, oh, he and Dave were on the *(unintelligible phrase)* make up his mind, *(unintelligible phrase)* I think you better stop

doing that.

**NC:** He had a strong temper?

**MT:** I never saw him lose his temper but he made up his mind, that's it, and that's the way it's going to be.

**NC:** And it worked?

**MT:** Seemed to. I don't know anyone who didn't respect Dave Stevens.

**NC:** Now, going back to your childhood, just to skip back a ways, you had siblings?

**MT:** One sister, five years older.

**NC:** What was her name?

**MT:** Rosalie. So she is now eighty-five and mentally just as sharp as she ever was.

**NC:** She lives around Bethel?

**MT:** In Rumford.

**NC:** In Rumford, okay. Now you mentioned that you can remember when you were, very early in school being ridiculed by other students for your family's political beliefs.

**MT:** Yeah, oh, they'd just kid jokingly, and it hurt a little bit.

**NC:** It's just interesting to think about politics at a young age having such a clear-cut boundary. Probably particularly around here where there's such an awareness of someone being outside of the main group.

**MT:** Oh, I guess that was just childish joking, kidding. I still joke with some of the people that, I'm still friendly with today, that were some of the worst pickers-on.

**NC:** You mean in respect to when you were a child?

**MT:** Yeah.

**NC:** Now you, your father has a connection to William Bingham.

**MT:** I don't think he ever met him personally, but he was kind of a, I guess I considered him as a, I thought he was kind of a conduit. If people wanted money from Bingham I think they came to my father and he would send word to Bingham somehow. I don't know the exact path the message went through. And I'm reasonably sure that Muskie got, reasonably sure.



**NC:** William Bingham was, would give money to individuals or, who needed help?

**MT:** Oh my God, he helped everybody and everything. Oh, he had, one thing I remember, my father . . . [Bingham] would loan a kid money, enough to go to college and set up a family, close to maybe a hundred dollars a month or something, have to give out. When Bingham got the first check, he would write back, account cancelled. And my father always thought that was a poor lesson for kids that, I'm sure the story got around.

**NC:** And you said you're reasonably sure about Muskie. I, supposedly in relation to what you just said, I read somewhere that he got money at least trying to get into his second year at Cornell, and at the end of it, at the end of that year he was going to enlist. And Bingham found out about it and he said, well, I don't want you having to go off with anything, with any debts, so he said, let's leave it that when you, I don't know the exact details but the end result of the whole thing was it got completely cancelled because he stayed over there. And in the end he ended up paying for his second year. I don't know many details about it.

**MT:** Well I just continually hear that story of Bingham that if you showed the intention of paying the money back, the intention was good enough.

**NC:** So he was a very generous man. Did you know him personally?

**MT:** Nobody in town knew him personally, nobody. Oh, maybe Ed Vachon who was the head of Gould, did. I only saw him one day, once in my life, walking up the street.

**NC:** Did you talk to him?

**MT:** No, nobody talked to him.

**NC:** Why was that, why was there this distance?

**MT:** I don't think he wanted to talk. My aunt was kind of his appointment secretary and lived with him I guess, lived in the house. So I think probably, if I'm right, that Muskie probably went to my father then my aunt, different, an aunt but a different, grand aunt I guess, great-aunt. He was rather eccentric. I remember him going to Portland, it was too much for him to go in one day so he'd go to Poland Springs and spend the night and rest up for the rest of the trip. Boy, the made him a complete, completely dependant on them for everything.

**NC:** In what way?

**MT:** Well, he wouldn't do anything unless he got the approval of one of the doctors, and they made him an invalid.

**NC:** The doctors?

**MT:** Yeah. This aunt I was telling about, I used to ask her what his life was like. He would get up in the morning, have his breakfast, look at the paper, and then go rest. And after his rest

he'd come up and look at some business papers, and then he'd go rest again.

**NC:** Wow. But he had quite a reputation in town?

**MT:** As being unapproachable?

**NC:** Oh, okay.

**MT:** His sister was a representative in Congress, from Ohio, her name was Blossey. I think that was her name, B-L-O-S-S-E-Y. But I know he has a sister, and I think that was her name. No, Blossen, I think. I don't think I'm adding very much to your . . .

**NC:** Oh, definitely, you are. Now you mentioned Gould Academy. And was Bingham involved?

**MT:** Oh, very much so.

**NC:** Very much so. Can you tell me about that?

**MT:** Just he was very free to give money to build buildings.

**NC:** You said he was unapproachable. Was it also to some degree unknown where his generosity came from, or -?

**MT:** You're talking about being unapproachable? I'm talking about the local townspeople, they just, in awe of him, they didn't, he wasn't anybody you'd go up and pat on the back and, he just wasn't, nobody saw him.

**NC:** And yet he played such a big part in the local community.

**MT:** As I say, he built the Bethel Inn. And many of the buildings at Gould. In fact, he left funds, called the Bingham Funds, handled by a New York law firm, and they still give a lot of money to Gould.

**NC:** How long has Gould Academy been running?

**MT:** Eighteen thirty-six I think, (*unintelligible phrase*). I think it was 1836.

**NC:** Eighteen thirty-six. And you told me earlier that it holds about a few hundred?

**MT:** Yeah.

**NC:** Now getting a little bit back to politics, in terms of Muskie and in terms of Maine, when he was in the Senate in '68 he ran as a vice presidential candidate with Hubert Humphrey, what sort of feelings did you get, as a Maine resident and as a Democrat who had run with him, seeing him on that level?

**MT:** Well, just very, very proud of being associated with him. I was very unhappy that, when he broke down in front of Loeb. I'd always heard he had quite a temper. I never saw it. But I guess his career kind of went down from that day on, as far as popular electoral support.

**NC:** Now, as a Democrat, and thinking nationally, what do you think about how things have been going in terms of the Democratic party, on both the state and the national level?

**MT:** Well, if this strictly political, I think both Johnson, and even Clinton, are going down better in history than they are viewed at the moment.

**NC:** And do you feel that way because of their policies?

**MT:** I think (*unintelligible phrase*) some of the major decisions have been right. Now, again, maybe this is politics, I'm somewhat worried about the country under Bush. His campaign promises seem to be meaning nothing. Obviously their campaign promises don't mean too much, but he's just flaunting them.

**NC:** It's frustrating to watch.

**MT:** Hmm?

**NC:** It's frustrating to watch.

**MT:** I'm sure he's the nicest guy in the world if you want to go fishing or, he'd be great.

**NC:** In terms of when you think back to '68 and '72, when you really had a clear idea of who was liberal and who was conservative, and now it's a little bit more of, it's not so clear-cut; especially with party lines. Do you see that, do you feel that the country has really moved towards the center, and how do you view, in terms of your beliefs, how things have worked out that way?

**MT:** Oh, I don't think there's any doubt it's moved toward the center.

**NC:** When you think of Ed Muskie and Eugene McCarthy and George McGovern and those types of Democrats, and then you compare them to the new Democratic party that Clinton has kind of revised, do you think it's, do you see it as an extreme difference, do you see it as a good difference?

**MT:** I guess I wouldn't say there's a good difference, but it's, I don't think it's earth shaking.

**NC:** Oh, incidentally, is there any connection to Thurston Mountain?

**MT:** Never heard of Thurston Mountain.

**NC:** Okay, that's a little note I had attached on here with a question mark, I was wondering -

**MT:** I never heard of it.

**NC:** I don't know anything about it either, but someone down at the archive was curious.

**MT:** If you ever find it, well let me know where it is.

**NC:** Okay, yeah, I will. Let's see, now at one point you converted the dairy farm into a motel, am I right?

**MT:** Yeah.

**NC:** And, what's the name of the motel?

**MT:** Oh, it's called River View now.

**NC:** And it's just down the road.

**MT:** Yeah. Now that was where I grew up. There is a -

**NC:** Oh, we've got pictures here.

**MT:** And that on the right is the house, and the house is still there, that's where I grew up. And then the garage, they made it into a lobby and swimming pool out back, and motel, well they doubled the length and doubled the height, and they had eight units I think. Now they got sixteen times, the big building on the left used to be a hay barn.

**NC:** So in season Bethel must really fill up quick.

**MT:** And in the winter, too. I'd say winter maybe even more.

**NC:** Really.

**MT:** Well, I take that back, depending on the weather.

**NC:** Right. This last winter you must have had quite a few people.

**MT:** Sure did.

**NC:** That must have been great for Bethel.

**MT:** Even I can hardly get out of my driveway in the morning and late afternoon.

**NC:** Now, oh, incidentally, do you know a man of the name Sam McCoy?

**MT:** I did, he died two or three years ago.

**NC:** Oh, okay.

**MT:** Yeah, and Connie called his widow. He didn't know Muskie very well in law school, so they used to debate against one another. He was a Republican. Opposites sides of the political debate. But Sam never practiced law, I think there was money in the family. He graduated law school and came back to Bethel to live.

**NC:** All right, I'm going to stop the tape for a second.

*(Pause in taping.)*

**NC:** And now we've got both Mr. Thurston and Mrs. Thurston. Mrs. Thurston, could you spell your full name, state and spell your full name?

**Constance Thurston:** Constance, C-O-N-S-T-A-N-C-E, and Philbrick is my middle name, P-H-I-L-B-R-I-C-K, Thurston, T-H-U-R-S-T-O-N.

**NC:** And can you tell me where and when you were born?

**CT:** I was born December 21st, 1929, I mean December 29, 1921, I'm sorry. December 29, 1921 in Rangeley, Maine.

**NC:** Okay, yeah, I have a note here that you were born in Rangeley. I was wondering if you could tell me a little bit about what it was like growing up there?

**CT:** Oh, it was, it was a typical small town but it was kind of a wonderful place to grow up because it was, it's remote, and so we made all our own fun. You didn't, you just didn't go out of town to do things, you . . .

**MT:** It isn't on the road to anywhere.

**NC:** Oh really?

**MT:** No, really, if you wanted to go to Rangeley you went, but -

**CT:** It's kind of, you've never been to Rangeley. And of course those were the days, I remember the roads were rolled in the winter, by a huge roller and horses, and cars were not, were not terribly, terribly, there was no traffic, nothing like that. We could slide down our hill and never think about, and this was in the street, never think, never worry about cars or getting hit by a car. Oh, I can't think what, I don't know why -

**NC:** It must be different now.

**CT:** Oh, yes, yeah. As all small towns are. That was, that was a lot of years ago.

**NC:** I have a note that says your father was a forester.

**CT:** Yes, and he was a game warden for many years, too. Definitely outdoors, did not like to be inside.

**NC:** And you can remember as a young child his involvement?

**CT:** As a game warden?

**NC:** Yeah.

**CT:** Oh yeah, yeah. I remember, I don't know what to tell you about it. He was very happy in that setting because it did keep him outdoors a lot.

**NC:** So you were brought up in an atmosphere where the outdoors played a dominant role.

**CT:** Yes, hm-hmm.

**NC:** How did you end up in Bethel?

**CT:** Well, I went to the Maine School of Commerce in Auburn, and during the war Phil Chadbourne who owned P.H. Chadbourne & Company, thought he was going to be losing all his male help to the service and so he came to our school and wanted, through our headmistress, someone to work for him, to come to work in his office. And I thought, well, 'that will be kind of a lark. I'll go up there and ski for the winter and then save some money and be off.' And I never left.

**NC:** You enjoyed it so much.

**CT:** Yeah, yeah, I like Bethel. I could be a Chamber of Commerce for Bethel.

**MT:** Of course she met me.

**NC:** Ahh, the other half of the story.

**CT:** That's right, the other half of the story. We met and married in 1947, and that was it.

**NC:** You both, you met each other in Bethel.

**CT:** I met her on the day I left to go into the service, so I never saw her again for three and a quarter years.

**NC:** You met, the day you that you were going to the service you guys met each other.

**CT:** We were introduced.

**MT:** She was coming out as I was going in to meet a fellow that was going with her. I said, good luck, and that was the entire conversation.

**CT:** Yeah, but of course he never forgot me. And, you know, when he came back he called, asked for a date, and that was the beginning of it.

**NC:** That's great. So you were in Bethel when Sunday River started developing.

**CT:** Yeah.

**NC:** And you were also in Bethel when the Democratic Party started developing.

**CT:** Yes.

**NC:** Do you remember, well first of all, back to Rangeley for a second. Was there, I mean I know you said it was very small and very remote, but there must have been political feelings in Rangeley.

**CT:** Some. I can remember some of my good friends, Theresa's father was a Democrat, and of course Theresa, Theresa became quite a staunch Democrat, even at a young age. I never did, I never got involved in politics. I, at that point in time, just, it was not part of my, it was not an interest.

**NC:** And when you were in Bethel and your husband got involved and you saw that -

**CT:** That was the beginning.

**NC:** That was the beginning.

**CT:** That was the beginning, and almost the end. Because we, we were terribly fond of Frank Coffin and we worked very hard for him and, when he was campaigning for governor. And when he lost, we just couldn't believe that such a brilliant person could have lost to the Republican candidate of the day. And really, it, we took it pretty hard, didn't we?

**MT:** Very much so.

**CT:** Yeah, to the point where I almost tuned out on it. It just didn't seem possible to me that anyone that smart could have lost to John Reed.

**NC:** Did you find that Frank Coffin also responded, was very distressed by that loss, or -?

**CT:** I'm not sure that I could tell you. I'm not sure I could tell you how he, he became a -

**MT:** You say was he distressed, or were we distressed?

**NC:** Was he distressed?

**CT:** I think he was.

**MT:** He must have been, knowing how -

**CT:** He had to have been.

**MT:** Knowing inside how much superior he was, of course he knew.

**NC:** Right.

**CT:** He went on, though, he became a federal judge, didn't he, in the state. And I'm sure you've heard about Frank Coffin and his role in the Democratic Party in the state.

**NC:** His role in Lewiston as well.

**CT:** Yes, oh yes, yeah.

**NC:** So you were in Auburn for a while, for a short period of time, you said.

**CT:** Yes, for two years.

**NC:** For two years? And can you please tell me again, where were you, you were . . . ?

**CT:** Well, it was the Maine School of Commerce, which has since become, oh, what's the name of that, it is a business school and it's out, it's off, is it Washington Avenue? It's Washington Avenue that goes out to the turnpike, isn't it?

**NC:** Hm-hmm.

**CT:** Yeah, what is the name of that now. I'm not a very good one to be interviewing because my memory isn't that good, Nick.

**NC:** That's okay.

**CT:** Well, you can find, I know you, you'd know, you probably have heard of it.

**NC:** I'm just thinking about Lewiston and Auburn and how it's probably changed considerably from when you were then, before you came to Bethel and you were in Auburn, going to school there and recently trying to have figured out what politically has gone on there. It seems like quite a bit, democratically, with Frank Coffin and Don Nicoll being there.

**CT:** But this was all before I became interested in politics. I really didn't pay that much attention to it.

**NC:** Incidentally, did you know Don Nicoll?



**CT:** Oh yeah.

**NC:** This was back when you were -?

**CT:** See, Mike and Don ran together for state legislature, and campaigned together and so we were seeing a lot of Don and Hilda at that time.

**MT:** They were living in Buckfield and we went down to see them several times.

**CT:** And then when they went to Washington they invited our whole family down and we spent about a week with them in Washington, D.C. We had a grand time.

**NC:** Did you get a chance to meet Senator Muskie while you were down there?

**CT:** No, we never did. He was in Senator Muskie's office at the time, but we didn't. Although we hadn't, we knew him of course. I don't know why we didn't.

**MT:** I was thinking about it, I can't understand why we didn't.

**CT:** They were busy showing us all over the place. We went to Gettysburg of course, and the Washington Monument, and it was a busy time, it was a busy time.

**NC:** Must have been exciting.

**CT:** It was. It was pretty nice of them to invite a couple with three children, and they had four of their own, and it was just . . . .

**NC:** A little hectic maybe?

**CT:** A bit, a tad.

**NC:** Right. And then in 1958 Mike ran with Peter MacDonald. Right? In '58, you, I was asking if, do you remember that campaign at all?

**MT:** Which one?

**NC:** The second one in '58, after -

**CT:** When you ran with Peter MacDonald. I don't remember that.

**MT:** Oh, it wasn't much of a campaign.

**CT:** No, I don't think. You lost then.

**MT:** No, with Pete MacDonald I won.

**CT:** Oh, with, you ran against him in the primary, or, you know, I forget that, I don't remember that.

**MT:** There were two senators, four people on the ballot. And I was telling him, the one that got the most votes was, and the second highest, were elected, and the bottom two didn't.

**CT:** I'd forgotten Pete MacDonald. Not good.

**NC:** So have you been a pretty staunch Democrat, would you say, as the years have gone on with, after Muskie? So-so?

**CT:** So-so. I have not always voted Democratic. I'm much more apt to vote for the candidate of my choice. I still am a registered Democrat, and I really favor the Democratic viewpoint.

**NC:** You're speaking, when you say looking at the candidate, you're talking about not just the national level but also local and state level.

**CT:** Hm-hmm, hm-hmm. If this is being recorded, I'll probably be shot at sunrise.

**NC:** So you both had the opportunity to watch a party in the state go from practically nothing to at some times a majority.

**CT:** Yeah.

**NC:** That must have had an influence even on the local level I would think, particularly.

**CT:** Yeah, it was very gratifying to behold and be a part of.

**NC:** And of course Senator Muskie played a role in that, as well as -

**CT:** Yeah, I think he was the, THE star at that time. And then Frank Coffin of course came along, and a lot of emerging personalities in the Democratic Party as a result of sort of getting in, I guess you would say.

**NC:** Right. Well, I guess a question I'd want to ask both of you is, how would you think, if you think back to when the party first started and the ideals of the platform that was being talked about then on both the state and the national level, and then you think to now, and we've kind of talked about this before, I mean, is it what you expected would happen? When you think back to Eugene McCarthy and George McGovern and Ed Muskie during, you know, Vietnam and all, and the environment, and then you think about now with Clinton, and with a new, a newer type of party. Is it what you would have expected?

**CT:** Kind of the evolution you mean, of?

**NC:** Yeah.

**CT:** Well I didn't expect Clinton to behave the way he did, if that means anything. I was terribly disappointed in him. I just could not understand how such a smart man could be so stupid. But, that's all. McGovern I never was terribly wild about. I just couldn't enthuse over him.

**MT:** You're still on Clinton?

**CT:** No, I said McGovern. I couldn't enthuse -

**MT:** No, I couldn't either.

**CT:** So there have been candidates that I've not been enthusiastic at all about.

**NC:** What was it about McGovern, was it his personality or his -?

**CT:** I think the people he was surrounding himself with, maybe. It wasn't -

**MT:** I don't know whether I thought he was too idealistic or something. He was kind of pie in the sky, I thought.

**NC:** Hm-hmm. Which is a sharp contrast to Muskie.

**CT:** Yeah, who always seemed to have both feet firmly on the ground. Hubert Humphrey was a favorite of mine. And I was all for Bill Clinton, in the beginning. So he was a big letdown I think to a lot of us who were for him.

**NC:** If you don't mind, I'm just going to stop the tape real quickly.

**CT:** Sure.

*End of Side B, Tape One*  
*Side A, Tape Two*

**NC:** We're continuing the interview with both Mike and Connie Thurston. This is tape two, side one. And I just want to ask a few more questions to you about, do you remember back when the idea of Sunday River first came together?

**CT:** Oh yeah.

**NC:** And do you remember how it first came together in terms of, Mike was telling me there was a group of people that had an idea.

**CT:** Hm-hmm, Bethel Area Development Corporation.

**MT:** Yeah, well I guess then I got confused. The first ten people were just the rope tow.

**CT:** Was that the Bethel Area Corporation that did that, or did you, some of you guys just decide that on your own and then, and then the Bethel . . . .

**MT:** (*Unintelligible phrase*).

**CT:** - Area Development Corporation was founded, and in order to promote business here in the winter they came up with the idea of doing a ski area. That's my recollection.

**MT:** Yeah, I was trying to think of the connection between the rope tow and the Sunday River when it wasn't much.

**CT:** Except that you used the rope tow at Sunday River when it was finally built, but that's the way I remember it.

**NC:** And he was saying that the idea, compared to where Sunday River looks now, is a drastic contrast.

**CT:** You could easily say that.

**NC:** Hm-hmm. Now, -

**MT:** You say you've never been up around here?

**NC:** No, I have never skied before in my life.

**MT:** You've never even seen the place?

**NC:** No, I haven't. A large, just about everyone I know at school comes here all the time; it's quite a popular. I think this is one of the most popular places that they from Bates go to.

**MT:** It's a lot closer than Sugarloaf, and closer than Bridgton, Pleasant Mountain, whatever they call it now.

**CT:** Bridgton is about the same, isn't it, the same distance? There's a lot more variety here, of course, that's a factor, too.

**NC:** So, Bethel has changed, along with the vision of the mountain has changed probably considerably as well.

**CT:** To a degree, to a degree. A lot of people are very anti-growth. And it's a pretty hard haul to make many changes around here. But it has become a much sprucier looking town as a result of the ski area because people have bought buildings, dressed them up. And actually the only, the biggest visible change is the Bethel station area.

**MT:** (*Unintelligible phrase*) falling on his face.

**CT:** But as far as, I mean it's a much nicer looking area than it ever was with *(name)* Company there and all the old sheds and everything. But that's been the biggest physical change in Bethel.

**NC:** Main Street looks very nice. When I was driving up, it looks unlike, like when I compare it to, say, Rumford or areas like that, it has very, you used the word spruce, a very clean look to it.

**CT:** Yeah, it really has, it really looks so much nicer than, at one time, I can remember walking with a friend of mine up Main Street and there were all kinds of houses for sale and they were kind of run down looking. And I remember saying to my friend, "You know Bethel is becoming a depressed area." And it, it just looked seedy, it really did.

**NC:** One question, and I don't know if there's a clear answer to this or not, but when, when Bethel started to pick up from Sunday River, started to get, the economy started to get invigorated, you already have a group of local merchants and I know, and I'm thinking about Lewiston or other places, that when an area starts booming quickly there's a trend for outside business to come in. Has that been an issue, or has most of the business that's boomed been local?

**CT:** Okay, outsiders have come in.

**MT:** They are resented by the ones that were here first. Remember that meeting we went to?

**CT:** Yeah, when Ford Reiche wanted to develop the Bethel Station area.

**MT:** Well, somebody up in the back of the auditorium got up and said something about, and you were, you came in, there was no business, and now you don't want anybody else to come in.

**CT:** Yeah it was, that was the, that's the same thing I'm thinking of.

**NC:** Oh, okay.

**CT:** But that was, that never came to fruition. Ford Reiche and his group who wanted to develop, but many, many meetings over it involving the local people, and the antis and -

**NC:** And that must be continuing today, I would think.

**CT:** Yes, yeah, there are, it's really difficult. As a matter of fact, I don't see how Bethel can grow too much more.

**NC:** Are there plans now to expand Sunday River itself, the mountain?

**CT:** I don't think at this point in time, because financially they're not in great shape.

**MT:** There are some pretty ornate plans, they're going to build a golf course up there on the

whole village, but I guess those are on hold for a while.

**CT:** Yeah. So we're just kind of holding our breath on what's going to be taking place up here, hoping that they can continue to do well and, because it's been a boon to the town, there's just no question about it.

**NC:** Well, unless either of you have anything that you'd like to add to the interview, is there anything else you'd like to say, about Muskie, Maine, Bethel or anything at all?

**CT:** I don't know what all you've talked about.

**MT:** No, I don't think so.

**CT:** Did you, have you ever interviewed Shep Lee in Lewiston?

**NC:** No, I haven't personally, but I would have to see, Shep Lee?

**CT:** Yeah. He and Ed Muskie were very close, and Ed Muskie stayed with Shep many, many times during campaigns and trips to Lewiston. Shep Lee is the one who has the -

**MT:** Automobile agency.

**CT:** Yeah.

**NC:** What is that?

**MT:** Automobile agency.

**CT:** The big one out on -

**NC:** In Auburn?

**CT:** Yeah, out on the strip on Route 4.

**NC:** Right, which has grown considerably. Hmm, Shep Lee. He was involved politically also with Muskie probably?

**CT:** He never ran for anything, Shep didn't. And then, whatever happened to Jean Simpson?

**MT:** Jean Sampson.

**CT:** Sampson.

**MT:** I don't know.

**CT:** Because she certainly would have a lot to offer, I would think, if she's still alive.

**MT:** Yeah, definitely if you could find her. And I'm sure Don Nicoll could tell you where or how.

**CT:** They actually saw a lot more of Muskie than we did because of our geographics here, but he was our guy.

**MT:** How about Darby Beliveau? His name isn't Darby, but, what is his -?

**CT:** Yes it is, isn't it?

**MT:** I don't think so.

**CT:** Severin is one brother.

**MT:** Severin is Darby.

**CT:** No, Darby is, Darby is the other one who's, they're brothers.

**MT:** Don could tell you anyway, Don Nicoll could tell you.

**NC:** Okay, I'm going to stop the interview but I want to say thank you very much to both of you, (*unintelligible word*).

**CT:** Well, I wish we could be more helpful, I wish I could. I just, I just never, except for the time that Mike was in the senate and the time that Muskie was in politics, we stayed active with the party for a long time and would do what we could locally. We were very fond of George Mitchell, too, and, you know, did what little we could locally, for the party. But aside from that we never got into the national scene too much. But Don Nicoll, I would think he would be a wealth of information for you, he must be, goodness.

**NC:** Oh yeah.

**CT:** Plus, he's got a memory I'm sure, which . . . .

**MT:** Are you implying something?

**CT:** What?

**MT:** Were you implying something?

**CT:** I'm talking about both of us.

**NC:** Well thank you very much for the interview, it's greatly appreciated.

*End of Interview*

*(Interview continued.)*

**NC:** All right, this is Nick Christie. We're still interviewing Mr. Thurston and now we're on the road, we're going to have a short tour of Sunday River. We're approaching, are we approaching the covered bridge now?

**MT:** Just a mile or two ahead. When we first started building Sunday River we were in Boston for, I think he paid thirty-two hundred dollars for that, thirteen acres of land.

**NC:** That thirteen acres was the original -?

**MT:** No, thirteen acres of land went with that house.

**NC:** Oh, with the house we just passed.

**MT:** Which he got for thirty-two hundred dollars.

**NC:** How much, what was the process you had to go through to originally, for the group of you to acquire the mountain?

**MT:** We leased the land from Henley Corporation.

**NC:** And that was a relatively easy thing to do, or was that really the biggest struggle?

**MT:** *(Unintelligible phrase)* were very cooperative. Beautiful old house on the left.

**NC:** Oh yeah. We're approaching the covered bridge. Wow, it looks like it's been there for quite a while.

*(Pause in taping.)*

**NC:** Really?

**MT:** And the last peak on the right, you can ski down over the back side.

**NC:** But the majority of the trails are all on this side.

**MT:** Yeah, they have to face either north or northeast.

**NC:** Why is that?

**MT:** South you get too much sun, it melts the snow off, melts it through the day and freezes at night, you have ice.

**NC:** Oh, okay. Now how many trails did you have in the first year of the valley?



**MT:** First year we had one and a half.

**NC:** One and a half? And how many do you have now?

**MT:** Well, they've gone crazy, I believe it's got seventy-five or a hundred. (*Unintelligible phrase*). Oh, I'd say right now they got probably what they call six real trails.

**NC:** Okay. So Sugarloaf, is that, that's the main competitor to Sunday River?

**MT:** Yes, I would (*unintelligible phrase*).

**NC:** Would you say it actually plays a major role, because it's such a distance apart?

**MT:** Yeah, that's right. Then there's the other big area in Maine, of course, (*unintelligible phrase*). So I guess from Portland, a big source of skiers, Sugarloaf is a little farther away. Snow making, they pump all the way to Sunday River, all the way up to make snow on the mountain. They have a very sophisticated snow making; they come all the way from Europe to study it.

**NC:** Really, to study specifically Sunday River?

**MT:** No, the way they make snow. They think they're a Kennedy Control Center, valves and switches and lights all over. (*Unintelligible phrase*).

**NC:** How long have they been doing that for?

**MT:** Twenty years, but they're getting much better at it all the time. (*Unintelligible phrase*) we had a very ingenious guy that figured out what a couple of zigzags in the pipe agitates the water enough so it comes out as snow.

**NC:** This is how it was done earlier, in the earlier days.

**MT:** And now they have an air line and a water line. Still a little snow up here.

**NC:** Oh yeah.

**MT:** (*Unintelligible phrase*) call it White Heat, the steepest.

**NC:** That trail specifically?

**MT:** Yeah.

**NC:** And that's one of the more advanced.

**MT:** Yeah, THE.

**NC:** THE most advanced. Is Sunday River more of a, looked at as a whole, is it more of a beginning area to ski, or is it more an advanced area?

**MT:** There are some pretty steep trails there.

**NC:** We're entering the Resort Hotel Conference Center. So has there been a problem with actually not having enough hotels and motels and inns to accommodate the large crowds of people that come?

**MT:** I don't know, I don't think really.

**NC:** No?

**MT:** Very similar one up, called The Peak.

**NC:** We're now at the Grand Summit Resort Hotel, going into the parking lot. Wow, it's quite large. Is this relatively new, or has this been here for a while?

**MT:** Oh, I'd say seven or eight years. The ownership is what they call quarter shares, about one week a month.

**NC:** The ownership?

**MT:** Of the condos.

**NC:** Oh, okay.

**MT:** Like you buy the first week in February (*unintelligible phrase*).

**NC:** Okay.

**MT:** You can buy a full time if you want to, but most people buy short periods.

**NC:** It's pretty amazing to see how much of a business is related to skiing, or ski related in one way or another.

**MT:** One base lodge, they have three base lodges.

**NC:** Now we're entering what looks like a collection of restaurants at the base, it's a base camp, the White Cap Trolley Station. So are these areas closed now completely for, until season, until skiing season opens?

**MT:** No, they run one for bicycling, mountain biking.

**NC:** Oh, okay. Now this is one of three of the base camps, and you say this is the main one.

**MT:** Yup.

**NC:** This is probably the one that was initially built?

**MT:** No.

**NC:** Wow, it's quite large.

**MT:** And there's a children's headquarters, they're for the children's program. Some of the handicaps (*unintelligible phrase*) pretty well known. I've worked in there two or three years, I have people with one leg; blind people.

**NC:** Skiing? Wow.

**MT:** There's another restaurant.

**NC:** So, I know you said that generally speaking most of the community cooperated quite well with the idea, but I'm sure, was there any difficulty with zoning or with, no? All that went right through?

**MT:** We had no zoning (*unintelligible word*).

**NC:** Oh, okay.

**MT:** This is in Newry, (*unintelligible phrase*). Another lift goes up here. (*Unintelligible phrase*). And it's kind of fun to watch them put the towers in by helicopter.

**NC:** Oh, that's how they do it? Oh, wow.

**MT:** They do now, but when it was built . . . .

**NC:** Really, now how did you first find out, was there a model, a model ski lodge that you looked at to figure out -

**MT:** Ski lodge?

**NC:** Not lodge, just a plan of, like off another mountain that had already been developed, that you used as a model for this project?

**MT:** No. Each mountain is so different.

**NC:** Right.

**MT:** Nice and easy trail up here.

**NC:** So whose initial idea was it, of the group of you, who first sparked the idea and said -?

**MT:** It was commonplace for all of us.

**NC:** Really? How tall is that ridge?

**MT:** Ridge?

**NC:** For that, what's the highest peak up on that?

**MT:** Oh, twenty five hundred and eighty two feet.

**NC:** Oh, wow.

**MT:** Which actually isn't very much.

**NC:** Right. Where did you come to the insignia, who came up with the insignia for Sunday River?

**MT:** That one I'm not sure, (*unintelligible phrase*). The original insignia, that first peak, that original lodge just, and the peak back and put it down to the front. Six times I believe it was originally. The headquarters for the snow making.

**NC:** That's still the present day headquarters?

**MT:** And Gould Academy, that red roofed building over there is the ski team headquarters.

**NC:** Wow, it's quite a site. Now what's the name of this trail right here, is this White Heat, or no?

**MT:** Oh no, that -

**NC:** That was the other side.

**MT:** This is Cascades I guess, no, I know it is. And then over beyond is, and right between the glass lift and the barn, you see that ridge? That's where they do all the fancy triple jumps and -

**NC:** Oh, really.

**MT:** Triple somersaults and -

**NC:** Oh, I can't imagine, I've only been cross country skiing, so I can't imagine.

(*Pause in taping.*)

**MT:** . . . dollars apiece.

**NC:** And what do those vehicles do?

**MT:** Grooming. It's all the snow groomers.

**NC:** Oh, okay, to maintain the quality of snow (*unintelligible phrase*). So has there ever been any complaints from either in or out of town about the development aspects of Sunday River, of so much and so quickly buildings being put up over -?

**MT:** No, I don't, unless it's those people who don't want nothing to change.

*(End of Taping Final Segment)*

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