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## Townsend, Clinton Blake "Bill" oral history interview

Andrea L'Hommedieu

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## **Interview with Clinton Blake “Bill” Townsend by Andrea L’Hommedieu**

*Summary Sheet and Transcript*

### **Interviewee**

Townsend, Clinton Blake “Bill”

### **Interviewer**

L’Hommedieu, Andrea

### **Date**

December 11, 2002

### **Place**

Skowhegan, Maine

### **ID Number**

MOH 384

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### **Biographical Note**

Clinton Blake “Bill” Townsend was born in New York City on August 12, 1927. Bill grew up in New York City and summered in Annisquam, Massachusetts and Thetford, Vermont. He attended St. Bernard's School in New York until the eighth grade, and then Milton Academy in Milton, Massachusetts. He served in the Navy before entering Harvard, where he graduated in 1950. He then attended Harvard Law School, graduating in 1953. He worked briefly in New York and Hartford after graduation. In 1957 he moved to Maine and began practicing law in Skowhegan. Soon after coming to Maine he became involved with environmental protection issues, and was an early member of the Natural Resources Council of Maine. He served as president of the Natural Resources Council from 1965 to 1971. At the time of interview he was still active in the Council and practiced law at the firm of Perkins, Townsend, Shay, and Talbot in Skowhegan, Maine.

### **Scope and Content Note**

Interview includes discussions of: family history; New York City in the 1930s; growing up as a Republican; beginnings of the Natural Resources Council of Maine (NRCM); Bob Patterson; pollution in Maine at the end of the 1950s; early goals of the NRCM; Allagash River issues; criticisms of Muskie; early members of the NRCM; Larry Stuart; Marshall Burk; organizational

riffs over Maine Yankee; organizational problems within the NRCM; Muskie's misunderstanding with the NRCM regarding Dickey-Lincoln; George Mitchell's stance on the environment; CBS interview as a Republican in support of Mitchell; Muskie's temper; sugar beets; Freddie Vahlsing; Don Nicoll; reaction to Muskie's national races; Bill Loeb; and the roots of his passion for the environment.

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## Transcript

**Andrea L'Hommedieu:** This is an interview with Mr. Clinton Bill Townsend at his office in Skowhegan, Maine, on December the 11th, the year 2002, and this is Andrea L'Hommedieu. Could you start just by giving me your full name and spelling it?

**Bill Townsend:** Yes, okay, my first name is Clinton, C-L-I-N-T-O-N, my middle name is Blake, B-L-A-K-E, my last name is Townsend, T-O-W-N-S-E-N-D. And because my, I'm a junior, and my father was called Blake, and my parents didn't want to call me Clinton for whatever reason, they gave me the nickname Bill. And I've had that nickname Bill ever since I can remember since I was probably two or three years old, or younger than that. So that's where the Bill comes from.

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

**BT:** I was born in New York City in 1927, August 12th, 1927. And I was raised in New York City although we, my family always spent summers first in Annisquam, Massachusetts and then later on in Thetford, Vermont. But I went through school up through eighth grade in New York City at St. Bernard's School and then, which was a private school, and then went to Milton Academy in Milton, Massachusetts. And then after doing a stint in the Navy at the very tail end of the Second World War, I went to Harvard College, four years at Harvard College, three years at Harvard Law School, and I got out of Harvard Law School in 1953.

**AL:** Now, what were your parents' names and their occupations?

**BT:** Okay, my father was Clinton Blake Townsend also. He was an attorney, a litigation attorney specializing in intellectual property, primarily patent law, to a lesser extent copyright, trademark law in New York City. And my mother, while they were married, they got divorced in 1948 I believe it was, and she had done a lot of volunteer work in hospitals and that kind of thing, but she never had a full time job. And my recollection is that after their divorce she moved to Florida and lived down in the Keys and did much the same kind of thing, a lot of volunteer work, but was never employed.

**AL:** And did your father, being an attorney, have an influence on you later in your education?

**BT:** Well, yes and no. Yes in the sense that I knew that he was a good attorney and he enjoyed it very much. I went to law school probably more as the path of least resistance than because I felt had a great dent for the law. When I was a senior in college I didn't quite know what I was going to do with my life, and so going to law school was a way of putting off a decision. And when I got out of law school I knew I did not want to practice in New York City, and I practiced for a very brief time in Hartford, Connecticut, three years in Hartford, Connecticut. And then my wife and I knew some people here in central Maine we used to come up and visit, and we liked central Maine, and in 1957 we moved here. And we had, at that time we had a baby under two and my wife was pregnant, and we've been here ever since.

**AL:** What kind of a community was it in New York where you grew up?

**BT:** Well, we lived on Manhattan, on Park Avenue, various apartments on Park Avenue, and it was, you know, I was raised during the Depression but our family was never adversely affected by the Depression, although I certainly saw evidence of it all around. I remember going out to Central Park and seeing what they called Hooverville in Central Park, where homeless people had built themselves shelters out in the park and so forth. But it was a, you know, our life was one where my parents, my father, was quite capable of supporting a family.

**AL:** Did you have brothers and sisters?

**BT:** I have two sisters, one of whom has now died, and the other who is still living in New York. The sister who died was a teacher at Harvard College; she was the head of the classics department at Harvard College for many years. And the sister who's still living in New York is a psychiatrist and still practices there.

**AL:** Were your parents, your father, political at all?

**BT:** No, no.

**AL:** That wasn't something that was discussed at home?

**BT:** Well, it was kind of a mixed marriage in that my parents were both Republicans but my father was much more conservative than my mother, and so, you know, there was a lot of discussion of politics. And by the time I, I guess the first political campaign that I was conscious of was the [Al] Landon campaign in 1936 against President Roosevelt, and then of course in 1940 the [Wendell] Willkie campaign against President Roosevelt, I was very conscious of those.

**AL:** Did you have opinions yet on those things?

**BT:** Well, of course being raised in a Republican household I was of a Republican frame of mind, without really understanding what the issues were. I knew that my father was very opposed to Franklin Roosevelt. I didn't see any reason to be opposed to Franklin Roosevelt. I thought Franklin Roosevelt was doing a pretty good job in very difficult times. So I wasn't influenced in that sense, I mean I made, I formed my own opinions about political figures.

**AL:** Now you came to Maine in 1957, so at that time Ed Muskie was governor.

**BT:** Yes, I think he had just -

**AL:** He became governor in '55.

**BT:** Okay, yeah, he was the first Democratic governor in a long time, as I remember, probably going, since Louis Brann maybe, back in the thirties.

**AL:** Yes, absolutely.

**BT:** But it seems to me that he was running against Fred Payne for the Senate about that time? Or maybe I have my timing a bit off?

**AL:** Probably would be, because the governor's terms were two years, so he was elected in '54, and then he was elected in '56, so in '57 he probably would have been running for the Senate which is what he went on to afterwards.

**BT:** Right, right.

**AL:** Do you recall any of that?

**BT:** Well, dimly, you know, I certainly was not involved. We were very engrossed in getting settled down in Maine and trying to make a living, and I wasn't paying a tremendous amount of attention to what was going on politically at that time. I mean, I certainly was aware of it.

**AL:** When was it that you got involved in things like the Natural Resources Council and the Allagash Wilderness Waterway, and those issues? Was that in the sixties?

**BT:** That was in, beginning in the late fifties, very tail end of the fifties or early sixties. I remember very vividly how that all came about. When I had been practicing law in Connecticut, of course pollution was, water pollution particularly, was rampant. I don't think people were so conscious of air pollution in those days as they were a little later on, but water pollution was obvious. The firm that I worked for, a big firm in Hartford, represented some polluting clients. I remember a couple of particular cases that I just felt, I was appalled I guess is the best thing I can say, by the whole attitude. I remember there was a case, and I'm not sure that our firm was involved in it, but it involved a printing company that discharged a large amount of printer's ink into a small coastal stream and caused a lot of trouble. And think it was kind of chauvinist because that's the way things were, you know, it was kind of accepted that there was going to be pollution and there wasn't a whole lot that people could do about it.

And when I came to Maine, of course, there was a lot of pollution. The Kennebec [River] was badly polluted, the Androscoggin was badly polluted, the Penobscot was badly polluted. And I remember one day in, probably in November or December of 1959, there was an editorial in the *Waterville Morning Sentinel* talking about this newly formed organization called the Natural Resources Council of Maine with headquarters in Augusta that was going to be involved with various environmental issues, water pollution being one of them, the Allagash another.

So the next time I was going down to Augusta I made a point of stopping in to see Charles Pierce, who was a lawyer in Augusta at that time and one of the people who had organized the Natural Resources Council, and talked with him. This was probably maybe in January of 1960. And at that time I was on the board of the Somerset County Soil and Water Conservation District because their office was right across the hall from the office, the law office, John Merrill's law office that I was working in at the time. And so Charlie said, "Well why don't you have the Water Conservation District join the Natural Resources Council," which was an organization of organizations at that time, "And you could be on the executive committee." And I thought that

was an interesting idea and I brought it up at our next Soil and Water Conservation District board meeting and then they thought it was a good idea, and as they say, the rest is history.

**AL:** So what did you find the aim of the Natural Resources Council was?

**BT:** Well, it was, water pollution was of a, if there were a three-cornered stool, and I guess that would be a good analogy, water pollution was one of the legs, pesticides a second one of the legs, and the third one was preservation of the Allagash. And there were a couple of people who have been involved in the organization from the very beginning. One was Robert Patterson from Mt. Desert Island, and the other was Ezra James Briggs from Caribou, Maine, who had been in the Maine Senate. He was out of the Maine senate at that time, although he went back in subsequently. And he was, (*unintelligible word*), was very upset about the starch waste in the Aroostook River and other rivers in Aroostook County, and also he was very concerned about the Allagash.

Bob Patterson was also very concerned about the Allagash because he spent a lot of time canoeing up there with his wife and his family. And so they were kind of the leaders in two of those areas, but all of us were concerned. And there weren't very many of us, I mean there were maybe a dozen people at the most, but we were all concerned about pesticides, and water pollution, and preservation of the Allagash, because at that time the, it was first the Rankin Rapids Dam proposal, and then that morphed into the Dickey-Lincoln proposal, and there was also another one that was privately proposed which was called the Cross Locks proposal that would also have built a big dam on the St. John. And so we were very interested and concerned about all of that, Army Corps of Engineers proposals, private proposals, preservation of the Allagash and so forth.

**AL:** And Robert Patterson, now who was he?

**BT:** Well Bob Patterson was a landscape architect who lived down on Mt. Desert Island and, I'm trying to think, it was a little community at the head of Somes Sound, maybe it was Somes Sound, I can't remember now but, and his son still lives down there. Bob is dead these many years, and his wife Barbara is dead these many years. But Bob, he'd come to Maine to work for the National Park Service as a landscape architect at Acadia, and then he went into private practice as a landscape architect, and he was the moving spirit behind the organization of the Natural Resources Council.

**AL:** And, so you worked with him for many years.

**BT:** Oh, yes.

**AL:** What's your perspective on how he shaped where the Council went and its history?

**BT:** Well, Bob Patterson was the first president of the Council for six years, from 1959 to 1965 and, you know, he found money for us, he found, he got us from being an organization that was totally composed of volunteers to the point where we actually had enough money to hire our first executive director, a man named Carl Fenderson who didn't stay with us terribly long, and that

was followed by Marshall Burk. And so Bob was, you know, and he was a person with wonderful ideas, and this was back during the [Lyndon] Johnson administration, and Mrs. Johnson was very interested in highways and scenic beauty and that kind of stuff, I remember Bob was involved with that. We had, so we became involved with these like billboards that, the Garden Club Federation of Maine was one of the members of the organization.

But Bob really did a lot of just organization building. Jim Briggs was, he was not so much of an organization builder, but he was somebody who was always out front on calling a spade a spade when he saw things he didn't like, but they were two great moving spirits. Then I became the president of the Natural Resources Council in 1965 and I was president for the next six years, and so, but I had Bob Patterson as my mentor, if you will.

**AL:** And during those years, were there issues that you had that connected with Senator Muskie?

**BT:** Yes. I don't remember just where that started, but long before the Clean Water Act we had a, I was not then president of the Natural Resources Council, I think I was secretary. And we were going to have a conference in Portland, and I'm going to say it was perhaps 1962 or '63, along in there, about water pollution because, you know, there were fish kills in the rivers. And you've probably seen the pictures of the raw sewage going into Belfast Harbor from the chicken plants, and all of that kind of thing. I mean, things were not good.

And so we decided to have a conference and we called it What Price Clean Water, and I was in charge of pulling that conference together. I went down and made the arrangements with the Eastland Hotel and found speakers for panels and so forth, and we decided to ask Senator Muskie to come and speak to us. And that was frankly for two reasons: one is we thought that if we got him to come and talk about clean water he would take an interest in clean water; and the other was that he clearly was a presence in Washington and that, you know, we thought we might be able to get some good things accomplished. And I don't know whether that was, it certainly wasn't the sole cause of his subsequently becoming the father of the Clean Water Act, but it certainly didn't do any harm either that he was asked to give a speech. And he did, he gave quite a good speech. I have no idea if it's ever been preserved or anything, but as I said, that was in the early sixties, probably within '64, I'm sure, I would say '62 or '63.

**AL:** Was that the first time you had met him?

**BT:** I believe so, yes, right, right. Of course he'd practiced law in Waterville, and many of the lawyers here in Skowhegan knew him and some of them knew him pretty well, and as in any gathering of people there were people of different opinions of the man. Some were admirers and some were not. But I had not met him because he was out of the practice of law at that point, and it was his political career.

**AL:** Maybe the people who had criticisms of him, do you recall what sort of things they didn't like about him? Or is that is that, I have a question about that?

**BT:** Well, you kind of have to take it from whence it came, so, and I've always been one to

take what I hear about others with a grain of salt, I don't like to form opinions about other people without having ever met them. But I guess he liked to party and probably had a pretty good time at some parties, maybe had a little more to drink on occasion than perhaps he should have. I heard that second, third, fourth hand, you know, kind of thing. I never heard anybody say that he wasn't a good lawyer, you know, but, and I also heard on the grapevine that he had a short temper, and I saw that in action later on which I'll come to in due course. But, you know, his reputation was. . . I was at that time, in fact I still am a registered Republican although I don't think like a Republican, but you know, the people, most of the people around here were Republicans, at least the people I knew. And Ed Muskie was a Democrat and, you know, there was all that kind of overlay.

**AL:** Now he came and spoke at that conference, and who were some of the other people involved in that? Was Larry Stuart involved at that time?

**BT:** Larry Stuart was certainly around. I don't know that he spoke at that conference, whether he was panelist or not. There was a fellow named Linwood Royal who was from down around Yarmouth who I think was involved with the old Maine Fish and Game Association, he spoke. There was Alonzo Garcelon, "Gus" Garcelon whose, I think, grandfather had been governor of Maine at one time, was a dentist in Augusta and later became very active in National Rifle Association, and he was on our board, and he may have spoken.

I really don't remember who all the panelists and speakers were, but basically we were trying to point out that there could be economic benefits to clean water from the hunting and fishing point of view, and that water pollution was shameful. And I'm sure that Reagan MacDonald, who at that time was the head guy at, not on the board, but the head operating person at the Portland Water Improvement Commission, which eventually became the Maine Department of Environmental Protection. I'm pretty sure that he was one of the speakers. But, you know, they might be, somewhere there might be an old program around, but I certainly couldn't put my hand on it. Whether they have those things in the archives at the Natural Resources Council office, I don't know. They probably need a historian down there.

**AL:** Do you have a sense of how the public received the conference?

**BT:** Well, I think, we felt that it was, it was fairly well attended as those things go, I mean there were probably two or three hundred people, and I think we felt that people left feeling that, boy, there's a huge job ahead of us but, you know, it's doable and we can accomplish a lot if we work together. I think it was a positive step on the whole path that led eventually to both state and federal participation in cleaning up waters.

**AL:** And we mentioned Larry Stuart briefly, can you tell me more about him, what his role was and (*unintelligible phrase*)?

**BT:** Yeah, Larry was, I'm not sure what the title of the department was at that time, but basically it was the Bureau of Parks and Recreation, or Department of Parks and Recreation, something like that, and he was an appointed cabinet officer. I don't even recall who the governor was at that time, but Larry was kind of a fixture as, you know, it all kind of blurs

together. There were things going on about the Allagash, there was an Allagash River Authority that was created by the legislature and then, that had an advisory committee that both Bob Patterson and I served on and apparently has some pretty substantial records.

Dean Bennett produced a letter that I'd written to somebody back in the mid-sixties, he popped it out at me last year, and I'd totally forgotten all about it but I could have written it yesterday, you know, the style was just the same and the substance was just the same. I was calling at that time for the formation of some kind of a state agency that would be like what the Land Use Regulation Commission has turned into, and so forth; very interesting to go back and look at your tracks years later. And certainly Larry was involved with the Allagash River Authority. I think Austin Wilkins, who was the forestry commissioner, was also involved. And probably whoever at that time was head of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife was also involved. I can't remember who all the players were, but certainly Larry Stuart and Austin Wilkins were two of them.

**AL:** And you mentioned Marshall Burk.

**BT:** Yes.

**AL:** Who was he?

**BT:** Well Marshall Burk, who is still living down in Winthrop and you probably ought to talk to him, was a, he'd been a life insurance salesman down in, oh, probably in the Rockland area I think, and he was involved with one of the fish and game clubs down there. And we hired him, and he became the executive director of the Natural Resources Council for a number of years, probably six or seven years.

I was involved with hiring him, I was involved with firing him, which was a very difficult decision that was done in the early seventies. And it was basically because the job had outgrown Marshall, it was becoming ever so much more complex. And Marshall is a wonderful guy, a very, very fine person, but you know, it just got to be more than he was capable of managing. We remained, one of the things I'm proud of, is that after I fired him we remained friends, so, and that's not easy.

**AL:** He did something right.

**BT:** That's right. But Marshall was our executive secretary all the time, director all the time I was president, and probably a little bit before. And I probably talked with him on the telephone every day, and some days several times a day about all kinds of issues ranging from the Allagash River bond issues and the referendum which was in, what, the fall of '67 I think, and the. . . And at that time Maine Yankee was coming along and there were people, myself included, who felt that the advent of nuclear power would mean that it was less likely that big dams would be built up in northern Maine, the Dickey-Lincoln project and so forth. And yet we also saw the downside of nuclear power, which has been amply demonstrated and subsequently.

**AL:** That's what I was going to ask you, it must have been mixed emotions about the nuclear

situation.

**BT:** Yes, right.

**AL:** Did it, did groups come to you during those years who were against nuclear power to get support from you, like the Maine Clamshell Alliance?

**BT:** No, they came along considerably later.

**AL:** Okay, mid-seventies, would you say?

**BT:** Mid-seventies at the earliest, and maybe not even until the eighties, you know, it's all kind of a jumble looking back. But, and I do remember they were, during that series of efforts to shut down Maine Yankee, they really, there was a lot of internal struggle in the Natural Resources Council about that, a lot of dissention and it effected how the organization functioned.

And it really, well, as I mentioned earlier, it started out as an organization of organizations and it remained that way for quite a long time. But it became apparent that there were a number of people who didn't care about the organization as an organization, they cared about how they could use it to further their own goals. And I remember at one time taking, making the analogy that here were some people who had a very fine watch, and they looked at it and said, "Oh boy, that'll make a great hammer to drive this nail with," you know, and didn't care about what the effect on the organization would be.

And we eventually restructured so that we're not an organization of organizations anymore. We're composed entirely of individuals, simply because we had a huge board of directors and, one time I think we had a board of directors as many as sixty people, but they would, many of them would only show up when there was something that they cared about, you know. They might be gone for nine months and then something would come along and they'd turn out, and turn out in force but just on one issue. . . And then they'd disappear again when that issue stopped being a hot issue.

**AL:** So you're saying that it used to be every organization had like a representative, and they were part of the organization of organizations.

**BT:** Yes, right.

**AL:** But now, each person that's on the Council, say, they are representative of all the organizations?

**BT:** No, they represent, they may be involved with other organizations, but they're on as individuals which is, you know, the idea is to get rid of that divided loyalty issue.

**AL:** And do you find that that's worked a lot better?

**BT:** Oh yes, much better, much better.

**AL:** I lost my thought. Where, what's the next logical thing to talk about in terms of the organization and interactions with Senator Muskie or Don Nicoll?

**BT:** Well, the whole issue of preservation of the Allagash, and the issue of a big dam on the St. John River was, all of it was brewing all at the same time. And I remember Don Nicoll coming to at least one and maybe more than one of our Natural Resources Council board meetings to discuss preservation of the Allagash and so forth. And somewhere long the line, I think Senator Muskie felt that he could kind of have his cake in eat it, too, in the sense that he could support preservation of the Allagash. . . And Stewart Udall was Secretary of the Interior at that time, and I'm sure that, you know, I'm sure there's all kinds of things that I don't know about that were happening. But clearly there was a federal presence in the form of funding for acquisition of the land that went into the Allagash Wilderness Waterway, and clearly Senator Muskie's office had a profound role in that. They had to, they had to be deeply involved in that.

And the, so the idea of the Dickey-Lincoln alternative to the old Rankin Rapids Dam was both because the Dickey dam would have been upstream of the confluence of the Allagash, the Lincoln dam would have been a smaller re-regulating dam downstream of the confluence, which would have flooded the lower Allagash up to, not probably as far as Allagash Falls but certainly, and maybe it would have gone up as far as Allagash Falls, but it certainly would have flooded it to some extent. And that was also unacceptable to people at the Natural Resources Council, Jim Briggs for one and Bob Patterson for another, the idea of losing any portion of the Allagash. So the focus kind of shifted from preserving the Allagash to preserving the St. John, because it was in the late sixties, I think as I say that, I think that vote on preserving the Allagash Wilderness Waterway and the bond issue were I think in the fall of '67 and, you know, I stand to be corrected on my dates (*unintelligible phrase*).

**AL:** Oh sure, absolutely.

**BT:** And so we were concentrating, the Natural Resources Council was concentrating on that but we were very well aware of the Dickey-Lincoln project lurking in the background. And I think Senator Muskie, and Don Nicoll would certainly have some insight into this. But I think Senator Muskie was convinced that he had made a trade with the Natural Resources Council of Maine where they would give up the flooding of the Allagash and allow the Allagash to become protected substantially in its present form, but the trade-off would be that a large dam would be permitted on the St. John. We never saw it that way at the Natural Resources Council of Maine.

I remember vividly at a, and Bob Patterson and I were both involved with the National Wildlife Federation which was a national organization of which the Natural Resources Council of Maine is the main affiliate and has been ever since the early 1960s. And Bob was, I think, on the board of directors, and I was the delegate from the Natural Resources Council of Maine.

And this was probably in, might have been 1968, I'm not sure, but there was a meeting of the National Wildlife Federation in Chicago at that famous hotel, it's got two towers, I've forgotten the name of it, but (*unintelligible phrase*) and so forth. And Senator Muskie, who by that time I think was really beginning to push hard for what eventually became the Clean Water Act, was

coming as a speaker to the National Wildlife Federation.

Well, what more natural than that the two guys from Maine would be asked to go out and meet him at the airport and come into town in a taxi. Well, very interesting taxi ride. At one point, this is a direct quote, Ed Muskie, talking about Dickey-Lincoln and the Allagash and so forth, he said, "You and your goddamn club." Because he was not happy, he really thought that there had been a trade-off, which as I say we did not see that there had been any agreement at all that we were going to give up protection of the St. John and allow that to be flooded. So, but there certainly were some differing perceptions at the time. But, you know, it never came to, never went beyond that as far as, but I remember those words vividly, "You and your goddamn club."

**AL:** Well, and, I mean later, you know, Dickey-Lincoln, the idea and the project was, you know, went away.

**BT:** Eventually, yup. Didn't go away until well into the eighties as I remember, and maybe even later than that.

**AL:** Oh really?

**BT:** Oh yeah.

**AL:** I wasn't aware of that.

**BT:** Yeah, it was, my recollection is that the, at some point, and I couldn't tell you the years, but at some point the funding for the Army Corps of Engineers' further pursuit of Dickey-Lincoln went away. But the authorization was still there, the authorization for the Army Corps of Engineers to build this dam was still there. And that was a matter of great concern to us until eventually the authorization was repealed, and that was in, I'm pretty sure, well into the eighties.

And I remember Rob Gardiner was the president, not the president, but the executive director of the Natural Resources Council of Maine, now that was probably fifteen or more years ago, what's this, 2002? Rob's just retired from Maine Public Broadcasting, Brownie Carson's been executive director of NRCM for pushing fifteen years, so that gets us back into the mid-eighties, I guess. And, but I remember at one time Jim Briggs, who by that time was in failing health and suffered terribly from arthritis, he was all bent over with arthritis, but he just lambasted Rob Gardiner and accused him of selling out and so forth.

That had to be in the early 1980s, but it wasn't long after that that not only had the funding long since dried up but the authorization was repealed. But it hung around; it was a Damoclean sword hanging over our heads for a long, long time and one that we were very conscious of.

**AL:** Did you ever have a sense during the years that Senator Muskie was still in the Senate that he, did he ever, do you know, change his opinion on (*unintelligible word*)?

**BT:** I don't think he ever changed his opinion, and I think even after, when did he leave the Senate to become Secretary of State?

**AL:** Nineteen eighty, eighty-one.

**BT:** Nineteen eighty. George Mitchell, I remember there was a meeting here in Skowhegan, I think it was up in the meeting room downstairs at the Key Bank up here on Madison Avenue, and George Mitchell came, and at that point he was in the Senate. When did he go in, I think he went in in '82, I think?

**AL:** In '81, he replaced Senator Muskie.

**BT:** Well, he was appointed and then he ran, right, and so he was elected in '82 I'm quite sure because that's when I, that's when acid rain was a big deal. And that's when I appeared on Dan Rather's evening news on an acid rain thing and said I was going to vote for Senator Mitchell because he was right on acid rain, and David Emery was wrong on acid rain. Rob Gardiner had arranged all that, I remember how that came up, Rob had -

**AL:** Let me stop you just a second and flip the tape because I don't want to cut off the story.

**BT:** Sure.

*End of Side A*

*Side B*

**AL:** We are now on Side B, and you were starting to tell a story.

**BT:** I'd been down, this was in the fall of '82, I was down at the Natural Resources Council office where I went very often in those days, still do for that matter, and saw Rob, Rob Gardiner, and Rob said he'd just gotten a call from CBS Evening News and they were looking for two people who were going to vote for George Mitchell on the acid rain issue, and they said they needed a Republican and they needed a fisherman. And I said, "Well you've got both of them right here." And so it got set up and Dan Rather came to Maine in early October, and it was after the fishing season was over, because he wanted to be videotaped fishing with a fisherman and talking about acid rain.

Well, there was only one place we could go and that was the Kennebec River right here in Skowhegan because that was still open to fishing. And he had to have a license and so we had to scramble around to get him a license. And we took a boat, my boat, oh, and they, CBS was going to buy a boat to, as I said, "They, you know, by the time of day he gets here and light conditions, we're going to have to go out in the middle of the river, we're going to need a boat." And CBS said, "Oh, we'll buy a boat." I said, "No need to buy a boat, we'll use my boat." Anyway, to make a long story short, we got, they went out with a cameraman and a sound man and Dan Rather and me, we stood in the middle of the Kennebec River and filmed this business about my talking to Dan Rather about acid rain and going to vote for George Mitchell and so forth.

And it was run about ten days later, and I watched and, you know, I thought it was fine, and he'd

helicoptered around, Dan Rather had helicoptered around other parts of the state before he finally got to Skowhegan. And Rob called me up and he said, "Do you know how much you had on national television?" And I said, "No, I didn't pay much attention." He said, "You had two and a half minutes," he said, "Nobody ever gets two and a half minutes on national television." And so anyway that was, that's kind of an aside, much more about George Mitchell than about Ed Muskie.

**AL:** Well, that's important, too, yeah.

**BT:** But I do remember, I think it was after that election at a meeting here in Skowhegan when George Mitchell was present, talking, and he was still pushing hard for the Dickey-Lincoln project, that, you know, we needed the energy and so forth. So it took a long time to kill it, a long time, it lingered on well into the eighties.

**AL:** So even, it was even an issue among the people who were seen as interested in preserving the environment, you know, in terms of Ed Muskie and the Clean Air and Clean Water Act and a lot of those issues Mitchell carried on, and so, I mean, they cared about the environment and did a lot of work in preserving it, but at the same time were at loggerheads with you over the Allagash. How -?

**BT:** That's right, that's right, disagreements among friends, I would call it.

**AL:** Is that how it, I mean, you were still able to work with them on other issues in many ways?

**BT:** Yes, oh absolutely, absolutely, yeah, right. I do have one other story about Ed Muskie I don't want to forget. In the early days, and I don't remember the date, and I don't remember the circumstance, but it was again in the early sixties and he came and he gave a speech at the Margaret Chase Smith School, which hadn't been built very long at that point. So he and Senator Smith, with, this was long before Bill Hathaway beat Senator Smith, I'm going to say it was '63, '64, along in there somewhere.

And I can't remember what the subject matter of his speech was; I remember being there with my wife and other people. And my recollection was that my wife had asked him a question about Dickey-Lincoln; her recollection is that she asked him a question about the lowering of water classification on Prestile Stream because of the sugar beet factory. But whichever question it was, it just set him off, he exploded. I mean, he showed that famous temper, and he must have berated her for at least five minutes about, you know, "You people don't have any real understanding about what is important and our economic future is at stake here, etcetera, etcetera, etcetera." And he was both very defensive and very angry and so forth.

**AL:** Was that in defense of the sugar beet project?

**BT:** Well, as I said my recollection is that it had been about Dickey-Lincoln, but she said, no, it was about the sugar beet project. And she's got a better memory than I do so she's probably right. But yes, I would say it was, he was defending something that he felt, even though it

appeared not to be environmentally appropriate, he felt was important for the economic well-being of the State of Maine. Fortunately the sugar beet factory went away, too, eventually.

**AL:** Yes, I was going to ask you about that. Were you involved with the people trying to get that started? And I'm thinking in terms of Freddie Vahlsing and John Cancelarich?

**BT:** I don't know about John Cancelarich; I remember Freddie Vahlsing. I remember at one time, I mean, at the Natural Resources Council, we just thought this was the most terrible, not necessarily sugar beets but lowering the water classification so that they could have the processing plant and putting its processing waste into the Prestile Stream. I remember at one point after the, I think it was Vahlsing, Inc., became a publicly owned corporation, I bought two shares of stock in it because I was going to start a shareholders derivative lawsuit against it, the corporation, for doing all these terrible things. Nothing ever came of that, but, and I have no idea where those stock certificates are now, but I didn't see them the last time I looked in safety deposit box.

But, yeah, we were very, very upset about that whole business. It just seemed to us that lowering that water classification was the wrong thing to do, sent the wrong message. And of course it turned out that the sugar beet business was a huge failure for a variety of reasons, but I think the underlying thought that there was a need for agricultural diversification in the western county, and there was a need for farmers to have a market that they didn't then have. I take no exception to that, although beet sugar was going to be heavily subsidized. It was competing against heavily subsidized cane sugar from Florida and Louisiana and, you know, Cuba can beat the pants off us on production costs on sugar anyway, so the idea of destroying a river system for a subsidized crop, you know, that wasn't well received.

**AL:** Did you meet and have conversations with Freddie Vahlsing? I'm wondering if you have, just your perception of him.

**BT:** I don't know that I ever had a one-on-one conversation with him. I certainly was at meetings, maybe legislative hearings or some kind of public information meetings where he was present, and I remember, you know, I have a mental picture of him. But my take on Freddie Vahlsing was not that he was an evil person, but that he was an opportunist, an entrepreneurial type who if he could make a buck by doing something was perfectly willing to make a buck by doing it. And, I mean, he's probably no different than ten million other entrepreneurs. I think he's dead now, if I recall, died several years ago, and he had been out of the headlines a long time before he died, I remember. I was kind of shocked to read, I think it was in the Bangor paper that I saw that he had died, and in relative obscurity in retirement or something. But he was a hot item here for three or four years.

**AL:** I recall the song that Sandy Ives wrote, I don't know if you ever heard it? It was called "Vahlsing Pollutes It."

**BT:** Oh, no, no.

**AL:** That was written and sung, I guess, in the Bangor area, anyway, during those years.

**BT:** No, I never heard that, I'm interested in that.

**AL:** Are there other people or things that I haven't asked you specifically about that are important to talk about?

**BT:** Oh, boy. We haven't talked about the DDT spraying in northern Maine, but I don't know that Ed Muskie was deeply involved in that, although he probably had something to do with getting funding for it because my recollection is that that was a federally funded program. That was, again getting back to that three-legged stool, water pollution, pesticides and the Allagash, that was a huge issue all during the sixties and well into the seventies, the DDT spraying in northern Maine, which was also going on in New Brunswick at the same time. I remember being at a meeting, and I think Larry Stuart was there, I don't know why he would have been, but I know Austin Wilkins was there. It may have been an Allagash River Authority meeting, that would have been why Larry Stuart would have been there.

But the issue of DDT spraying came up, and I remember Austin Wilkins asking me, he said, "Would the Natural Resources Council go along with spraying DDT on. . ." I can't remember the acreage, but some very large number of acres, at some very low rate like a half pound to the acre or a less amount. I mean, it, the way he expressed it sounded absolutely minimal, and I did a little mental arithmetic and I said, "Austin, that's fifty tons of DDT, that's absolutely unacceptable to us." And so he was hoping that of course that we would, when they went to the legislature to get authority and some funding that we wouldn't oppose it. Which we did, and we failed, but I think that was the last time that DDT was actually sprayed. I think they went to BIE spraying after that. But I do remember that story, Austin just, you know, trying to con me into thinking, well this really isn't very much, but it was a huge amount of DDT.

**AL:** Now, when you dealt with Senator Muskie's office over the years, was it Don Nicoll that you often spoke to?

**BT:** Probably.

**AL:** Do you have recollections of him? What was it like, I mean what was your feeling towards Muskie's office and dealing with Don, do you have recollections of that?

**BT:** Well, I remember Don coming to at least one meeting at the old Natural Resources Council office on State Street, which was just a couple of rooms downstairs in an office building. And I couldn't tell you about any substantive discussion, but I can tell you that my reaction to Don was, this is a really fine man and, you know, I liked him instinctively, I think most everybody did, and not what I would call a conniving person, I mean very straightforward, very up front about what he wanted. He was carrying messages from Senator Muskie and, but I couldn't tell you a word that was said during, or even the topic that was talked about, although I'm quite sure that it had to do with the Allagash and Dickey-Lincoln. And I just remember thinking, aren't we fortunate to have people like that who are working in the public sector.

**AL:** Overall, looking back on Senator Muskie and his career, what are your over all

impressions, and what do you think he's given to the state of Maine and the nation?

**BT:** Well, very clearly he was a leader, a flag bearer, if you will, that changed the shape of the State of Maine. I mean, there was the old joke about the Democrats could caucus in a telephone booth, and I really think that Ed Muskie, first as governor and then as senator, changed a lot of political thinking in the state of Maine. I think he, and my personal experiences with him were along the lines, I talked about a taxi ride in Chicago, being at that Margaret Chase Smith School, and so forth. And like any very complicated person, we're all very complicated, you know, I'm sure that of the many sides of Ed Muskie I saw very few. But I think he was a real ornament to the State of Maine. When he ran, he ran for vice president when?

**AL:** Sixty-eight.

**BT:** Sixty-eight, and I think the election of Richard Nixon and the defeat of Hubert Humphrey and Ed Muskie was a disaster from which this country has never recovered. And when Ed Muskie was running for president in '72, we all remember the incident in, where was it, I can't even remember.

**AL:** New Hampshire.

**BT:** New Hampshire, Manchester, and I remember actually meeting Bill Loeb some time after that. I just think that, I think he did a good job as Secretary of State, and I think he would have made certainly as good a president as many other presidents as we've had. You know, he wasn't a superman, and I think very human and with all that that implies, both positive and negative, but I think the State of Maine has been, over all, extraordinarily fortunate that Ed Muskie was around.

And my story about Bill Loeb is that, and that might have been in the mid-seventies. A fellow from Waterville and I, Steve Levine I think it was, he ran a lighting shop, were goose hunting in (*name*), New Brunswick at (*name*) Point, and Loeb was there, and that was before Mackie Loeb had her accident, so Bill and Mackie were there. And Steve and I were put at the same dinner table, with just four people at this dinner table, and I knew perfectly well who he was and Steve knew perfectly well who he was, and we talked about little or nothing. And then Loeb started trying to work the conversation around to politics, and he said something and I can't remember what it was, but Steve leaned forward and looked him in the eye and said, "I'm a Waterville, Maine Democrat."

**AL:** Did that stop the conversation?

**BT:** That stopped the conversation cold. We went back to safe topics later.

**AL:** Did you get, so the subject was never broached about the New Hampshire incident and what Bill Loeb's feelings were?

**BT:** No, no. Bill Loeb of course, and I had read, "Who the Hell is William Loeb" at the time, so I knew a little bit of background about him. But Bill Loeb was, vicious as he was in his

writing. He was very low key and mild, at least in the circumstances that I saw him in, having three meals a day with him for three days I think it was, when we were together there duck hunting. But, you know, obviously there was another side to Bill Loeb than what you saw.

**AL:** My last question that I have for you is; I mean you talked a little bit about how you got involved in environmental and natural resources issues, but where did that passion come from, because you've carried it through your adult life, you know, and just continued with this protection of the wilderness? Do you have a sense of where that came from?

**BT:** I have no idea, I have no idea. When I was a young man, I would not have said that I was passionate about anything, although I always loved fishing and so forth. And I would not have said that I was a passionate or energetic person, and who knows where it came from, maybe it just grew. I have no idea.

**AL:** Is there anything I haven't asked you that you feel is important to add before we end?

**BT:** I can't think of anything, no, I think we've covered a lot of ground. I just don't, I mean, getting back to Senator Muskie, he wasn't perfect, none of us is perfect, but he was a guy who, he did a lot of very major things, the Clean Water Act being very high on that list, and the Clean Air Act being very high on that list as well. Extraordinarily important accomplishments that, you know, if it hadn't, I really strongly believe that history is influenced by individuals, and if there hadn't been Ed Muskie around I think the course of history might have been quite different.

Now there are a lot of people who are trying to erase all that work, I mean in the current Bush administration, we're just seeing forty years of work being blurred, and why the hell Christy Todd Whitman doesn't resign from the EPA, if she had a shred of honor she would. I think this administration is just outrageous, and I don't see, and as I said, I am a registered Republican although I don't think like a Republican, but I don't see any Democrats out there with the courage to take on this stuff. And I think if Ed Muskie were around today, he probably would.

**AL:** Do you think that there's a forum today for Democrats, do they have a forum for getting their voices heard on the, opposing issues?

**BT:** Well they, if there isn't one, they need to create one. I mean, they've just got to do something that comes across to people as caring about people, caring about issues that affect people, and I don't see anybody out there. I saw Al Gore the other night after he was being interviewed after something, and -

**AL:** Of the Trent Lott issue, possibly?

**BT:** I wasn't, no, I don't think so. I can't remember, it was, I can't remember what the circumstances were, but I just saw he was bobbing and weaving and shifting and not being straightforward. And it's too bad, because I think Al Gore is a fine person, I just think that he's got some personality flaws.

**AL:** That get in his way.

**BT:** Yes, they do, they certainly do.

**AL:** Well, thank you so much for your time.

**BT:** Thank you for coming.

*End of Interview*