

8-2-1999

# Trafton, Barbara McKnight oral history interview

Mike Richard

Follow this and additional works at: [http://scarab.bates.edu/muskie\\_oh](http://scarab.bates.edu/muskie_oh)

---

## Recommended Citation

Richard, Mike, "Trafton, Barbara McKnight oral history interview" (1999). *Edmund S. Muskie Oral History Collection*. 388.  
[http://scarab.bates.edu/muskie\\_oh/388](http://scarab.bates.edu/muskie_oh/388)

This Oral History is brought to you for free and open access by the Muskie Archives and Special Collections Library at SCARAB. It has been accepted for inclusion in Edmund S. Muskie Oral History Collection by an authorized administrator of SCARAB. For more information, please contact [batesscarab@bates.edu](mailto:batesscarab@bates.edu).

## **Interview with Barbara McKnight Trafton by Mike Richard**

*Summary Sheet and Transcript*

### **Interviewee**

Trafton, Barbara McKnight

### **Interviewer**

Richard, Mike

### **Date**

August 2, 1999

### **Place**

Lewiston, Maine

### **ID Number**

MOH 128

### **Use Restrictions**

© Bates College. This transcript is provided for individual **Research Purposes Only**; for all other uses, including publication, reproduction and quotation beyond fair use, permission must be obtained in writing from: The Edmund S. Muskie Archives and Special Collections Library, Bates College, 70 Campus Avenue, Lewiston, Maine 04240-6018.

### **Biographical Note**

Barbara (McKnight) Trafton was born May 22, 1949 in Rumford, Maine. She graduated from Wellesley College in the class of 1971, then attended University of Southern Maine and earned a Masters in Education and Northeastern for a Masters of Business Administration. She has served in the state house and state senate for two terms and has been a member of the following committees: Joint Committee, Energy Health and Institutional Services in the House; Joint Committees in the Senate: Judiciary and Public Utilities. She was spokesperson for Maine Turnpike widening in 1991, and is on the Board of the Maine Audubon Society, chairman of legislative policy committee, the Board of Trustees, Maine Maritime Academy, and the Review Committee for the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP). Her mother, Frances McKnight, and her husband, Richard Trafton, were also interviewed for this project.

### **Scope and Content Note**

Interview includes discussions of: Rumford, Maine community; Bates College; family recollections; 1956 Maine gubernatorial campaign; 1968 vice presidential campaign; 1976 Senate campaign; 1980-1981 Muskie as Secretary of State; Environmental protection; Vietnam War; Cliff Rolfe, grandfather, naturalized Stephen Muskie; Dick Trafton's political career; Willis A. "Bill" Trafton, Muskie's opponent in his re-election campaign as governor; health care

reform in Maine in the late 1970s; first domestic violence bill in Maine; Governor Longley; displaced homemakers' bill or "women and work" bill; gender tensions in Maine legislature and 'Old Boys' Club; uniform property tax; party politics diminished in recent decades (no more big box, no longer as much of a social life); Jonathan Carter and Green Party; reforms to Department of Environmental Protection in Maine; Joe Brennan; John McKernan; and George Mitchell.

## **Indexed Names**

Acheson, Dean, 1893-1971  
Adams, Mary  
Brennan, Joseph E.  
Broder, David  
Carter, Jimmy, 1924-  
Carter, Jonathan  
Carter, Rosalynn  
Chisholm, Bill  
Chisholm, Hugh J.  
Clark, Nancy  
Clifford, Robert  
Clinton, Bill, 1946-  
Clinton, Hillary Rodham  
Conley, Gerry  
Curtis, Evelyn Rolfe  
Emery, Dave  
Hobbins, Barry  
Huber, Sherry  
Humphrey, Hubert H. (Hubert Horatio), 1911-1978  
Katz, Bennett  
Kennedy, John F. (John Fitzgerald), 1917-1963  
Kennedy, Edward Moore, 1932-  
King, Angus  
Laffin, Stanley E. "Tuffy"  
Longley, Helen  
Longley, James, Sr.  
Manatt, Charles T. "Chuck"  
Masterton, Nancy  
McGovern, George S. (George Stanley), 1922-  
McKernan, John  
McKnight, Frances Rolfe  
McKnight, Dan  
McKnight, George Stanley  
Merrill, Phil  
Mitchell, George J. (George John), 1933-  
Mitchell, Libby  
Muskie, Edmund S., 1914-1996

Muskie, Jane Gray  
Najarian, Mary  
Nixon, Richard M. (Richard Milhous), 1913-1994  
Rolfe, Cliff  
Sewall, Joe  
Silverman, Harold  
Snowe, Olympia J. (Olympia Jean), 1947-  
Spencer, Dick  
Tierney, James  
Trafton, Barbara McKnight  
Trafton, Ben  
Trafton, Richard  
Trafton, Willis  
Webber, Curtis "Curt"  
Webber, Don  
Wilfong, James

## **Transcript**

**Mike Richard:** The date is August 2, 1999 and we're here at the Muskie Archives in Lewiston, Maine at Bates College and we're interviewing Barbara Trafton. Interviewing is Mike Richard. And Mrs. Trafton, could you please state your full name and spell it?

**Barbara Trafton:** Barbara, B-A-R-B-A-R-A, McKnight, M-C-K-N-I-G-H-T, Trafton, T-R-A-F-T-O-N.

**MR:** And what was your date of birth?

**BT:** May 22nd, 1949.

**MR:** And where were you born?

**BT:** Rumford, Maine.

**MR:** And how long did you live in Rumford?

**BT:** Well, probably for twenty-two years, until I got married. But of course I went away to school and, so I wasn't actually there all the time.

**MR:** And then after the twenty-two years you moved to Auburn?

**BT:** I've been in Lewiston-Auburn, in Auburn.

**MR:** Okay, well let's talk a little about your family life and background. How many siblings did you have?

**BT:** I have one brother; Dan McKnight, Bates graduate, class of 1970.

**MR:** And were you, are you older or younger than he?

**BT:** I'm younger, younger.

**MR:** And what about your parents, first of all their names?

**BT:** My father, George Stanley McKnight, and he was research director for the Oxford Paper Company in Rumford, Maine. And my mother Frances Rolfe McKnight was an English teacher in the Rumford school system. And what probably would be of most relevant here to Ed Muskie is her father. Cliff Rolfe, naturalized Ed Muskie's father [Stephen Muskie] when they first came over from Poland. And my grandfather used to run the naturalization classes and so he naturalized, ran the classes and then performed the naturalization ceremony that made Ed Muskie's father a citizen of the United States. And Ed Muskie's father was a tailor in Rumford and made suits for my grandfather.

**MR:** So you have the Muskie whole family connection. And what were your parents' political views?

**BT:** They were Republican. They voted for Nixon I remember against John F. K., and much to my dismay now, probably to their dismay too. That was when I was in sixth grade and so I remember, you know, you had the mock elections. And so I was supporting Nixon because my parents were supporting Nixon. And I was disappointed the next day that my side had lost.

**MR:** Did you talk about politics much in the home? Was it a frequent conversation topic, or just . . .?

**BT:** Not really, not really, no. Just aware of my political, my parents' political interests.

**MR:** So it was only kind of an issue when elections came up or things like that.

**BT:** Yup, really, I mean my parents were always interested in issues, and community issues.

**MR:** And what were their religious views or beliefs?

**BT:** Protestant, Methodist.

**MR:** And what was your family's social standing in the neighborhood or in the town, was . . .?

**BT:** Well in Rumford, to be a white collared worker, to be director of research, was to be, you know, in the upper sphere of Rumford society, but of course that's relative.

**MR:** Speaking of Rumford, what was Rumford like at the time you were growing up?

**BT:** Well, Rumford was very vibrant at the time I was growing up. The mill was still owned by Hugh J. Chisholm and the Chisholm family. Bill Chisholm<sup>1</sup> was very involved in it. And I went to Chisholm Elementary School. I mean they were heavy contributors to the town and to activities, recreational activities and cultural activities. The headquarters were there so all their white collar workers were there and so those people, you know, the management people were very involved in community affairs and boards and school boards and things like that. So it was a thriving community at that point in time.

Ed Muskie's sister was my dental hygienist, but I had no real sense of Ed Muskie growing up. It wasn't until I was in college that I began to be aware of, you know, more aware politically and more aware of my interest in Ed Muskie.

**MR:** So you didn't really get to know any of the Muskie family members when you were growing up?

**BT:** Well, his sister.

**MR:** His sister?

**BT:** Who was my dental hygienist. But I mean, I didn't really think of that as a political connection, I thought of it as a health connection. But my aunt and, my aunt Evelyn Rolfe,<sup>2</sup> my mother's older sister by ten years, was in Ed Muskie's class in high school and they were very good friends. And I learned a lot of this later. My aunt then went on to Bates College and was in Ed Muskie's class here at Bates College, and so they continued to be good friends. I think my aunt, well I'm not sure, but she was either the valedictorian, or was he the valedictorian?

**MR:** I'm not sure. I don't think he was.

**BT:** I can't remember, but maybe it was my aunt then, but anyhow they were traveling in the same sort of academic, you know, sphere at that point in time.

**MR:** Were they involved in the same sort of clubs, debate club (*unintelligible phrase*)?

**BT:** You know, I never really asked her about that. My aunt has since passed away and, but she used to see him frequently at Bates functions and things like that. But that was again just a Rumford connection and a Bates connection. And I think Ed Muskie always valued his Rumford roots, even when he became a national figure. You know, he had a soft spot I think for Rumford, and some of his family was still there.

**MR:** And what was Rumford like ethnically when you were growing up?

**BT:** It was diverse. You know, there were, there seemed to be an Italian community and a

---

<sup>1</sup> William Chisholm, Hugh Chisholm's grandson, assumed presidency of Oxford Paper Company after his father, Hugh, Jr. ([www.Paperhall.org](http://www.Paperhall.org))

<sup>2</sup> Mrs. Evelyn Rolfe Curtis Bates College, B.A. 1933. Homemaker, Auburn, ME.

Polish community and a Lithuanian community. And, you know, I had friends like Susan Aludic, that was sort of a Lithuanian connection. A lot of their parents still spoke, you know, the traditional languages. And, of course, heavy Franco-American, so it was very diverse.

**MR:** Were there any, do you remember any incidents of ethnic tensions or prejudices, anything along those lines?

**BT:** Not really, except that I remember my father hired the first black in town to work in the Oxford research department. And I remember just hearing my parents talk a little bit about how difficult it was for him to assimilate into the community.

**MR:** Were there many other Blacks in the community?

**BT:** No, I think he was the first, first one. And, yeah, it was largely a white community, but eth-, you know, different nationalities but all white.

**MR:** And you mentioned you went to Chisholm Elementary School. So you went to public elementary and primary school?

**BT:** Yup, Chisholm elementary school and Rumford junior high school, and then that went through the ninth grade and then I went to Gould Academy and graduated in 1967, went to Wellesley College, graduated in 1971. Since then went on and got a masters degree in education at University of Southern Maine and a masters of business administration at Northeastern University.

**MR:** And how did your interests in these fields develop? Did they start at Gould Academy or through Wellesley or just?

**BT:** Oh, who knows? You know, my mother was a teacher and so right now I'm teaching English. And I got my education credits at Wellesley and then a master's in Education and I've continued to be involved in that field. And actually just agreed to serve on George Mitchell's institute board and I'm going to be on the aspirations committee.

**MR:** And do you remember any teachers or other students or groups that you were involved in during this time in your education that were important, maybe extracurricular activities?

**BT:** Well certainly, well I was involved in everything, but in college, you know, because it was during the Vietnam War, I was very involved in protesting the war. And as you remember, well, you probably don't remember, most of the more active colleges actually shut down, students actually shut down the colleges, Wellesley was one of those, and, in order to allow students to be more active in anti-war activities.

And I was never involved in the real radical groups like SDS and things like that. I was much more mainstream, but still we traveled all the way down the East coast speaking at various clubs about our views about the Vietnam War and ended up in Washington, D.C., you know, various rallies and speaking to our congressman.

**MR:** Was this a particular club that you were involved in, or was it kind of an informal . . . ?

**BT:** No, just a group of students, concerned students.

**MR:** And was that group particularly active at Wellesley? Would you say that Wellesley . . . ?

**BT:** I'd say all students were pretty active; it was a very socially active time; very different from what you experience now I think as a student. You know, our focus was off-campus, it wasn't on-campus. At this point in time Wellesley created their East Boston campus and so I became a volunteer teacher in East Boston, in the inner city schools. And it was the, the first Black ran for school board in Boston and we all campaigned for him. And it just was a time that our education was more of a street education, and, you know, we weren't as focused necessarily on our classes.

Hillary Rodham Clinton was at Wellesley when I was there; she was two years ahead of me. And, so she had really graduated by the time things really began to get active in the anti-war movement. But, you know, a lot of, Ellie Acheson,<sup>3</sup> Dean Acheson's daughter was there, a lot of politically astute and aware people were at Wellesley, women, very active, and who have continued to be active.

**MR:** Were you also involved in, during the time you were in college, in the women's rights movement much?

**BT:** Not really, except that I think, I mean not formally, but to be at Wellesley is to be involved. To choose a women's college is to choose, you know, I think to be an advocate for women.

**MR:** And speaking of the Vietnam issue, actually. You were in Wellesley in '68 during that . . . ?

**BT:** Sixty-seven, fall of '67.

**MR:** And you were there for the '68, well during the time of the '68 Chicago Democratic National Convention. What were your, being more politically active and aware at that time, what were your views of the Humphrey-Muskie ticket, do you remember your recollections of it?

**BT:** I would say that was just the dawning of my political awareness then. I was not at that convention, but certainly proud of, you know, a native son and aware of Muskie and aware of. You know, my sense looking back now is that he received more positive, a more positive response than Hubert Humphrey did, you know. So that was sort of the beginning of seeing him as a national figure I think, and his eventual bid for presidency, just the way he conducted himself. But of course he, my perception was that he wasn't, he wasn't an early anti-Vietnam advocate, you know, he came to it late, later.

---

<sup>3</sup> Elle Acheson, Wellesley College, class of '69.

**MR:** And were there any political figures that you especially identified with during this time?

**BT:** Well I think, I think Ed Muskie certainly. I mean, by the time I turned twenty-one, which I couldn't vote until I was twenty-one, I turned twenty-one on May 22nd, 1970. And so it was a couple weeks away from his uncontested primary for the U.S. Senate, but I felt strongly enough about voting for him that I, you know, borrowed a friend's car from Wellesley and I, it wasn't easy, you couldn't register as easily and vote absentee. So I came all the way back home to register and then vote for him. Which, you know, was a gesture of my interest in politics. It certainly wasn't that he needed my vote.

**MR:** Actually, getting back to the Rumford community, how do you think, first of all have you maintained pretty close ties to it over the years?

**BT:** I still have friends there, but, you know, I've really centered more here in the Lewiston-Auburn community, and really the state of Maine as a whole I would say.

**MR:** Okay, well I guess, just maybe from your visits to Rumford, how would you say that it's changed since you lived there?

**BT:** Well, it's had a tremendous downward spiral since I left. I think, I can't remember exactly the year that Oxford was sold. But, you know, Stevens High School was never the same after about 1964, it went on double sessions at that point because there wasn't enough room, and that educationally was difficult; that's why I went to Gould Academy. And then shortly thereafter, or sometime around then, Oxford Paper Company was sold to Ethel Corporation. Ethel Corporation was a multi, you know, national kind of operation, conglomerate, with lots of different things, rubbers and other things than paper. Its main interest was not in paper. But Oxford Paper Company at that point was a cash cow, it was producing most of the paper for, semi-gloss papers for like *National Geographic* and a lot of the big magazines and that huge market.

So the perception in Rumford was that Ethel ran it into the ground and then sold it to I guess Boise at that point, and then Boise sold it to Meade. I mean after, after it was no longer Oxford Paper Company, it was the beginning of the downward spiral, you know. The management team was moved out and so you lost a lot of the community leaders, and instead of investing in the community, Ethel Corporation was perceived as drawing money from the community, using it as a cash cow. And so there just wasn't the interest in Rumford from its major employer.

So the education, you know, the leaders were gone, the same level of interest in community affairs and civic affairs, the same level of capital investment wasn't there, and the community declined. You know, and the population has gone down, I'm sure it was at its heyday when I was there and I'm sure, you know, even worse now, now that, you know, the mill has closed down, lost two-hundred more jobs just recently.

**MR:** Okay, well I guess we'll move on to talk about your husband. When and how did you first meet him?

**BT:** I met him in, at the Lewiston swimming pool, the Lewiston YWCA swimming pool; I was the director, that was my first job out of school. And his mother was on the board of directors and he was recently graduated from Dartmouth and trying to decide, he was on the U.S. ski team trying to decide if he would stay and go to the Olympics, which was four years away, or go to graduate school and do other things. So he was very athletic and ran and swam and did all sorts of things. So they have an Olympic size swimming pool on East Avenue and he ended up over there doing lap swimming. So I met him.

**MR:** So this was after your graduate school time?

**BT:** No, just after Wellesley, yeah. I met him in, probably it was really, you know, the fall of 1971.

**MR:** And is he, I know you were both in the state senate and you, after you vacated your seat in '83 he was to take over the same seat.

**BT:** Right.

**MR:** But beyond that connection, has he shared in your political involvement and the issues that you're interested in?

**BT:** Oh sure, oh sure, I mean we're very ideologically aligned. And when I first, I first ran for the city council in Auburn, unlike now when often seats are uncontested, seven people wanted to run for that seat, which is great. It was my first time and I came in second. It was sort of like Ed Muskie running with Humphrey, you know, I think I received as much attention as the winner because I'd sort of come from nowhere. And then I ran for the State House, house of representatives, and won. And from that point on I was the top vote carrier in every election that I ran in. I ran for that, and then I ran for state senate twice. Then I retired and then Dick ran for state senate for two years, for two terms. And then he came back and was mayor of Auburn for either two or three terms, it was like five years.

**MR:** Now, what was campaigning for that city council seat like? I mean, what were some of the perspectives you got on local politics and how it operated from that election?

**BT:** Well, Auburn is non-partisan, and so it really was just sort of a name recognition then I think. I was in ward one and a newcomer, and of course the Trafton name was pretty well known at that point. Dick's dad had been on the city council way back, but a lot of his generation was no longer there. But the person who beat me had great name recognition, too; he just beat me by a little bit, but his father had been a doctor in town. And he went on to run for the legislature with me the next time around and I got a lot more votes than he did at that point, so, you know, name recognition is so important. You have to run and get your name out there, that's a big factor I think in elections. People want to feel comfortable so if they go in they may not know what you stand for but they say, oh, you know, Mike Richards, I remember that name.

**MR:** Well, maybe one day (*unintelligible phrase*). Actually, yes, speaking about the Trafton family name, what are your perspectives on the Trafton family in general and their political

involvement? You mentioned they changed from, well basically changed from Republican to Democrat.

**BT:** Well, they didn't change, I'd say the, a younger generation leaned more towards being Democrats. And probably part of that was, you know, my influence. And also I think it was just our generation, I mean, you know, who was going to enroll as a Republican when the role model was Nixon. You know, and he just resigned in disgrace for breaking in and so Dick and I cut our teeth on going door to door for McGovern. That of course was before Nixon resigned and I remember at that point it wasn't particularly a popular cause to be supporting McGovern, he seemed too far out. But then shortly thereafter of course people saw him in a different light.

**MR:** How did you first become interested in working for the McGovern campaign?

**BT:** Well, I'd registered as a Democrat of course to vote for Muskie. And, so, when I got back here, you know, some of the people we knew, I think of Curt Webber, you may have interviewed him, he was active we were in town. I'm sure his father was probably, he was Judge [Donald] Webber, I'm sure his father was probably a Republican too, but he was a Democrat. And so it just, you know, it's part of community involvement, you know, that you would care about the elections and who was representing you, it just seemed a part of becoming a full-fledged citizen, you know, when you turn twenty-one you follow the issues and you vote responsibly.

**MR:** And speaking, one more question about the Trafton family, what was Willis Trafton, Richard's father like?

**BT:** He was an incredible man, and I feel bad that he was never governor of Maine. But back then, you know, people ran for office out of a spirit of community service. It wasn't viewed as, it wasn't so "me" motivated; that people had to have the office and that they chose carefully when they would run for office in order to maximize their chances for winning. You know, Bill was speaker of the house and he was tapped to run, it was, you know, well, you have to run. And so he ran against Muskie at a time when I'm sure he knew politically he couldn't beat him because it was Muskie's second time. He was an incumbent, and, but it was, you know, it was sort of his civic responsibility to run because he was the most prominent Republican. If he'd waited until Muskie moved on he clearly would have been governor. But what, but anyhow, that would be typical of Bill anyhow, that he wouldn't do it for what was in it for Bill Trafton, you know, it was never, it would never have been for his own self aggrandizement.

Bill probably was one of the most honest and ethical men that I have known. And non-judgmental in interesting ways. He, and he brought up his nine children that way and I see Bill, in my husband Dick, who, you know, regardless of his being husband and whatever loyalty I might feel because of that, I think that Dick, you know, exemplifies that same level of integrity that is so rare in political leaders nowadays.

So I'd say that Bill served his state well. He certainly would have made a great governor, too. Even after he ran, nowadays, you know, people run and they lose and that gives them the name recognition they need to run again. And he could have run the next time around when Muskie didn't run if he'd really been interested in having a political office. But he was very interested in

his family and interested in his community and, you know, that was, that was where his focus was. Holding high office and having a title wasn't of interest to him. So he found other ways to serve his community, it wasn't that he didn't continue to be involved.

**MR:** Okay, I guess we can move on to your involvement in the House of Representatives. Was that, I've got '77 to '79 as those dates, does that sound right?

**BT:** No, I think, is that what you have down? Seventy-seven to '79 and then . . .

**MR:** Yeah, those aren't really set in stone. I looked up some articles but those were ...

**BT:** I think that was my first term in the Senate. I think I was in the House '75 to '77, '77 to '79, and then '79 to '81 in the Senate.

**MR:** Okay. So what was your time in the House like, and who did you work closely with, first of all?

**BT:** Well, it was very interesting to be there. There were a lot of young active Democrats who had just been elected. We controlled the house, we did not control the senate, so that was kind of a stumbling block. And we had a lot of people in the senate who were pretty unenlightened. So it was hard, you know, working on some of the issues, whether it was education or health care, or other things you know, we always had to deal with the senate.

I remember in the early '80s I was serving on the same committee that Olympia Snowe was serving on, health and institutional services, and - or actually it was the late '70s - and, you know, we had a chance to do something really progressive about health care costs then. And her now husband, Jock McKernan, at that point was lobbying for Blue Cross/Blue Shield, the Maine Hospital Association, and the Maine Medical Association. Of course, nowadays you would be well aware that they have nothing in common with each other and they don't see their agendas in any way linked, but back then they did. And the reason they did was because health care was a tremendous monetary, you know, opportunity for all of them, and there seemed to be plenty of money for everyone because it was all coming out of the government. And at that point, for example, hospitals were retrospectively reimbursed, which meant that hospitals would operate just the way they chose to, buy anything they want, hire employees, pay them at a wage, whatever. And then retrospectively, meaning after their budget year had passed, they would submit the bill to the government for those costs and of course we as taxpayers would pay those.

In the late '70s the whole issue under Jimmy Carter was to try and go to prospective budgeting which meant, you know, let's approve your budget up front and then you operate for a year.

Well of course, you know, all the interests that Jock McKernan was lobbying for were opposed to that. Olympia was, you know, very active in trying to oppose any meaningful cost containment in the health care. And there was a federal law that allowed states to be exempt from the federal law that mandated that we move in this direction if we set up a voluntary cost review board, which of course that was the Republican ruse is to set up that, which meant that hospitals would file their budgets and then if you chose to you could go in and look at them and

review them on a voluntary basis.

It's almost laughable now, you know, twenty years later it's just ludicrous that anyone thought that had any potential to control health care costs when you see the kind of, you know, hard nosed cost cutting that's going on now. But back then, you know, it was just the entry into that whole field. And of course I, I was very interested in seeing health care costs contained for a lot of reasons, you know.

The Democratic Party I think was interested because then health care might be extended to people who had no health care, that's still a huge issue in this country, and why should people profit off something that really doesn't operate in a normal, you know, supply and demand market that we think of as, you know, our economy. And it still isn't, you know, if you suffered a stroke here in front of me, my, we wouldn't be doing any cost comparisons before we had the ambulance take you . . .

**MR:** Well, I hope not.

**BT:** No, you would hope not. But I mean, that was always the argument from the Republicans that, you know, well consumers can choose, you know. Yeah, maybe on elective, you know, face lifts or something. So anyhow, back then those were the kinds of issues that I was involved with and, you know.

I was also involved with the first domestic violence bill, and again in the late '70s I was the prime sponsor of that. It was an ugly, ugly fight to get recognition that domestic violence was an issue. The police didn't break it out as a separate statistic. There were no, you know, shelters or services for victims of domestic violence, largely women and children of course, and it was a very contentious issue. Olympia Snowe was not supportive at all of that issue, you know, so we had, because we had her in the house, in the senate as one of the few women in the senate, and she wasn't even supportive of it. I remember at one point I think she marginally voted for it, never spoke for it, never did anything, but at least her political advisor said you probably shouldn't vote against, you know, this major women's issue. But she didn't lead the fight at all and so Jim Longley vetoed it. We got it through the house and senate initially, Jim Longley vetoed it and then it was overridden in the house but, with the lack of leadership in the Republican senate and with one of the few women in the senate not willing to do anything, it was killed. We brought it back two years later and it was passed. Different governor.

**MR:** Yeah, and I noticed in an article that it said, I don't know if I should go here with this, but it said that you were publicly attacked by Governor Longley for this bill?

**BT:** Yup, yup, absolutely.

**MR:** What was the nature of this attack?

**BT:** You know, in retrospect, I think that he had some very personal involvement with domestic violence, and how personal I'll never know, but I think it just was a very raw and difficult issue for him. He was brought up Catholic, you know, I'm sure the idea that families were being torn

apart by domestic violence was very difficult for him. I'm sure, you know, a lot of men had a difficult time acknowledging that that kind of battering was going on. And as I said, it just, it was an issue that, you know, was very difficult to bring to people's awareness, you know. It's nothing you like to think about and so men, and particularly I think his background as a Catholic family man and so forth, and maybe some other personal involvement. I just felt there was a tremendous resistance on his part.

Interestingly, the last thing he did before he left his office was to call me down. It was on the eve of swearing in Governor Brennan, and he asked to see me and I came down and he acknowledged he had been wrong on that issue. I think, you know, he was a deeply religious man, I think it had troubled him that he had acted so outlandishly, and he gave, he had some discretionary money left in his governor's budget and he gave it to a shelter in Bangor. He wanted me to know that. That was never made public, and I think it was just his parting way of making peace with his conscience and righting something he knew he'd been very wrong on.

Of course now twenty years later, you know, it's routine that an appropriation, a large appropriation goes to the shelters around the state, but twenty years earlier it was a very difficult issue.

You know, I remember at that point Longley, we were also trying to get the Hasting Memorial Armory for the senior citizens because it wasn't being used by the National Guard and it seemed too bad not to use that, effectively, and he came down for, or maybe he was signing the bill and so he had to have the whole Auburn delegation in there, but he was a little maniacal, too, if you were to study Jim Longley at all and if you were to ask anyone who served with him, you know, people found him most of the time on the edge if not over the edge. And he looked over and saw me and it was just like some wire in his brain sprung, you know, and it was like he had to talk about the domestic violence bill and he thought that, you know, this was how I was going to make a name for myself, you know, by this domestic violence bill and he chastised me for sponsoring a bill like that.

Clearly it was no self interest. It was an issue that nationally was gaining attention, and I think one of the things that legislators do, or interested legislators do when you get elected is you look nationally to see, you know, what kinds of innovative legislation, you know, are being considered, you know, to improve the quality of health care, the quality of education, the status of, you know, working people, you know, all those things, you look around for ideas to see, you know, what's going on that's really successful and works in the rest of the country. And so that was an issue that, you know, certainly was on the forefront, more on the west coast where innovative legislation usually starts.

Another bill that I sponsored was the displaced homemakers bill which now it's the center for women work, and, "Women and Work" I think is what the new name is. "Displaced Homemaker" lost its cache twenty years ago or slightly thereafter. But anyhow, we passed that bill and it was merely to help women who were displaced because of divorce or the death of a spouse or something, and suddenly were forced into the workplace but had no skills, or no so-called skills on a resume because they'd been homemakers all their life, and so they were destitute. They were being forced to sell their homes and there was no opportunity for them to

get training. They were often in their late forties or fifties and so they became financially destitute. So that was another bill that I was, you know, I sponsored and active in passing.

**MR:** Now during your time in the house and the senate, how unified would you say the Democratic Party was ideologically and politically?

**BT:** Oh, it's never unified. Wouldn't be any fun if it were unified. We had very conservative Democrats, and I remember a fellow named [Stanley E.] "Tuffy" Laffin who advocated the death penalty from Westbrook. Even the Lewiston delegation tended to be at odds with the Auburn delegation in terms of the Androscoggin delegation. You know, very different sensibilities.

**MR:** Who were some other people then who were kind of on your side of the fence politically in the house and the senate, or who you worked with?

**BT:** Well certainly Libby Mitchell, she was chairman of the education committee and very thoughtful, very bright. Jim Tierney, who was majority leader then and subsequently became speaker of the house. Jim Wilfong. Some of the Republicans that I was closely aligned with were Sherry Huber, Nancy Masterman, Masterton,<sup>4</sup> I'm trying to think who, you know, even Bennett Katz later on, I could identify with his educational issues.

**MR:** So would you say that there's a pretty wide spectrum both within the Democratic and within the Republican parties of liberal, moderate and conservative?

**BT:** Yup, and there were a group of us, you know, Sheri Hubert and Nancy Masterton. And, you know, certainly I was involved with that group who saw eye to eye on a lot of issues, a lot of environmental issues, a lot of economic issues. Nancy Clark was another one, Mary Najarian. Nancy Clark from Freeport, Mary Najarian from Portland were, you know, very much soul mates with me.

**MR:** And now working in a male dominated, I'm sure it was a male dominated House of Representatives and senate you already mentioned, what was it; did you encounter any prejudices or obstacles to your work there?

**BT:** Oh sure, oh sure. I mean it was, it's changed a lot of course in twenty years but I remember Mary Najarian, Nancy Clark and I were elected to the senate together. And so for the first time we had six women in the senate; there were four Democrats and two Republicans. And Joe Sewall, who was then president of the senate, hardly knew what to do with us. And Jerry Conley, though, who was the majority, he was the minority leader, was very good and he appointed us all to the best committees. You know, he appointed me to the Judiciary Committee, Mary Najarian was on the Appropriations Committee, Nancy Clark went on the Business and Legislation Committee. So he made very good use of, you know, the talent, even though we were, you know, incoming freshmen into the senate he appointed us to the most prestigious committees; so he really worked based on talent.

---

<sup>4</sup> Nancy Masterton. Born in MA moved to Maine in 1962. Maine president, League of Women Voters. 1976-84 Maine legislature. Cape Elizabeth Planning Board, Town Council, USM faculty ([www. CapeElizabeth.com](http://www.CapeElizabeth.com)).

But Joe Sewall was very much the old school and it was very hard for him to know sort of how to deal with us. And he, you know, he was used to having run as an old boys club and taking leisurely breaks and, you know, having an extended cocktail or an evening before coming back for an evening session; it really was the old boys club. And I remember one small incident; he used to address everyone of course in the way that you should address them, the senator from Androscoggin, you know, senator, well, the senator from Cumberland, Senator Conley, so all the male senators, will you stand up to be recognized, you would get that kind of greeting. However, when I stood up, it was always, you know, the chair recognizes the senator from Androscoggin, Mrs. Trafton. And so this went on for a couple of weeks and Mary and Nancy and I sort of looked at each other thinking, you know, why is it that he feels it necessary to, you know, address us differently. And finally I just went up to him and I said, "Joe, it's okay if you call me senator, too." You know, but with Joe I don't think it was malicious, I think it was just inexperience and he just didn't know really how to deal with women in his all male club.

But so, yeah, I think, you know, being a woman in politics in the '70s and '80s, there were incidents certainly where men had a hard time dealing with you. And then certainly from the electorate's perspective and from some of the more enlightened male perspectives, they were delighted to have such capable colleagues and so we were given a lot of opportunities. And the electorate seemed totally enchanted with having women. We were very good on constituent work, you know, very organized, very issue oriented and, you know: I think they, you know, really related to our kind of politics. Much more personal, citizen oriented.

I remember there was one, he was the independent back there, Harold Silverman, and I was on the judiciary committee and I was not a lawyer. I actually had been accepted at law school and went to the orientation and said, "No, I don't think so, I think I'll forego that." My husband at that point was already a lawyer and I thought well, this isn't going to be for me. But I was interested in legal issues of course and hence I eventually was in the legislature.

So Harold Silverman was an independent, and he was appointed to the Judiciary Committee. And, so after serving with me there for two years, and he always used to defer to me, I was, you know, sort of the ranking member of our party and he would sort of defer to me. And it was such a shock to him at the end of the two years to find out that I wasn't a lawyer. It was, I'm sure if he had realized that earlier he probably wouldn't have, you know, revered my opinion so highly and followed my lead so often, you know, but, so some men, you know, they're just awed by other things rather than, you know, how capable you are at, you either have to have a credential or something else. So I think there certainly were people like that that, you know, weren't ready to really accept us totally.

**MR:** And now you mentioned that most people were not really maliciously prejudicial against the women in the senate or the house. Did you come into contact with any deliberate type of things that . . .?

**BT:** No, I think, I think, you know, just a lot of traditions from, you know, the past. I think one that I, I don't believe they do any more, but they used to parade up all the egg princess and the rodeo princess and the broiler queen princess and the men always acted like jerks. You know,

and so, you know, things like that I think just eventually, you know, had to change, and so, but I don't remember anything malicious.

Certainly campaigning, you know, I ran into some Christian Right who said, "Well I can't vote for you because man is supposed to be above woman." And my response always was, "Well, that's fine because, you know, keep in mind I would be a public servant; I would be serving you in this capacity." So (*unintelligible word*) why mankind are like that but, you know, I wasn't going to make much of it and if they didn't want to vote for me that was fine. Politically we probably weren't very aligned anyhow so it probably was a good choice. I often used to tell people not to vote for me, you know, people who were too far out, I'd just say, "You know, really, you know, you and I are not at all aligned politically in terms of our ideas and you probably want to support my opponent."

**MR:** Okay, I think I'm going to flip the tape here.

*End of Side A*

*Side B*

**MR:** This is the second side of the first tape of the interview with Barbara Trafton on August 2nd, 1999. And we were talking about your time in the State House and state senate. What was the nature of your involvement with Senator Muskie during this time?

**BT:** Well, he was Maine's senior senator and so he would come back and make addresses to the legislature. And, so, I remember him speaking at length in the senate and in the house, sometimes a joint session, and so we really saw quite a bit of him. I don't know that that's done any more, but it seemed to be done a lot when I was in the legislature. He would come back and talk to us about the Vietnam War or, you know, some difficult issues that he was involved with and sort of, it was like a Washington update. And then he'd schmooze with us and see how we were doing. And of course he had been involved with me before because he had actually done ads for my campaign. And so I had seen him and I had, you know, helped him. I had done campaigning for him. He had, you know, a good idea of who I was even bef-, because of the family connections on both sides, and so he was always quite amused that he was doing ads for me, a Trafton. He thought it was real good, I remember his saying to me once that he thought it was a good move that, you know, I was making Democrats out of those Traftons; he was pretty pleased.

And of course he was well aware of the Rumford connection. So, but he made ads for my campaigns, you know. I'm sure he made ads for a lot of people, but, you know, saying what a wonderful person I was, that everyone should vote for me. And then he went on to make ads for Dick, too; so he was very supportive. And I remember when he made some ads for Dick. It's typical that you have a party after, hopefully a victory party. And Ron Percell, who is the owner of KISS and WLAM radio stations, would make our ads for us; he was very supportive of our campaigns. And so he decided with Ed Muskie, after he cut the, you know, the serious side about what a wonderful candidate Dick was and so forth, that he would get some out takes. And so I have tapes of Ed, you know, saying sort of outlandish things about Dick, you know, things like, I think he was the one that said, you know, "Well, if you can't vote for him, at least bring

your business to his office and support him that way.” And he had several other lines that for Ed were pretty light. And I remember Ron Percell saying to me afterwards, you know, he said, “I couldn’t believe that he, you know, would be so light and actually make fun of, you know, have some fun with me on the tape,” he said, “I didn’t realize he had such a good sense of humor.” But he was, he had a very dry sense of humor but he, you could see that twinkle in his eye.

Every time I saw him, you know, he, he just, you could see that, you know, he liked the turn, the political turn of having run against a Trafton and now working with, you know, Traftons as Democrats. And he always used to encourage me to run for a higher office, too. And again, that may have been something that he did for a lot of people, but he did it in such a genuine way that, you know, it made me feel that he saw real potential in me. Nice to have a mentor like that.

**MR:** Yeah, and so he was, he was making ads for you in the ‘75 campaign I guess, for the house?

**BT:** I can’t remember, I probably have those someplace, I’d have to go back and check. I think so. I think he did it for all my campaigns, yeah.

**MR:** And you probably worked with him at least on the, what was it, the ‘76 senatorial campaign? Was that the first one?

**BT:** I would have been running at the same time, so we would have been at functions together. And, I’m trying to think, I can’t remember, I’ve hosted so many functions at my house with, you know, Rosalynn Carter and Ted Kennedy and George Mitchell, I’m sure I must have had something for Ed Muskie at my house, too. And keep in mind, I ran for the Democratic National Committee, and so I was on that the beginning of 1980, too. So I was even more involved on a national level. We would go to Washington and see him down there.

**MR:** Yeah, that’s something I’d like to ask you about too. But while we’re on the subject of your involvement with Ed Muskie, when did you, do you remember the first time that you actually met him?

**BT:** I really don’t. You know, it feels like I’ve always known him, and I was thinking I don’t remember a specific time.

**MR:** Like you really became more involved with him kind of in the mid ‘70s when you started to become politically involved?

**BT:** Yeah, yeah. And, and he always knew who I was, and I was always so, you know, I mean at that point, you know, he was such a national figure, you know, and one had to assume just because you were a little freshman legislator in the Maine legislature that it was a bit much to expect, you know, him to know all of you by name, but he nearly always did. So, but I attribute that probably to our family connections. And he of course was aware that my grandfather had naturalized his father.

**MR:** Okay, well let’s talk about your time in the Democratic National Committee. How did you

first, you mentioned you ran for it in 1980, how did, how exactly did that election or selection process work?

**BT:** Well it was at the state convention; it was a vote for all the delegates. So there was one committeewoman, one committeeman, and so you had to campaign throughout the whole state. Go to all, I mean I remember flying up to Aroostook county and going to Washington county and, you know, I mean I went, did extensive traveling all throughout the state. And then, actually I was pregnant with my second son at that point, and he was born on May 13th, and if you check back and see when the convention was, it was a few days after that.

So I had a, like a two day old infant that I, that I brought to the convention with me, because I had to make a speech at the convention. And, I don't remember that Ed Muskie was on the podium, but George Mitchell was on one side of me and Joe Brennan was on the other side of me (*unintelligible phrase*) of course, you know, they couldn't quite deal with the fact that, you know, I had a small infant two days before. But, you know, that was again just an interesting experience, so I gave my speech and then went off to nurse my baby.

**MR:** And who did you work with on the Democratic National Committee?

**BT:** Well, Barry Hobbins was party chair at that point; he was also in the legislature with me. And Phil Merrill was on the National Committee, but mostly it was Barry that I worked with. And, you know, I was involved with the New England caucus and we did some issues.

It was much more satisfying to be in the legislature than it was to be on the Democratic National Committee. You know, I'd travel to various meetings all around the country, it was all at your own expense so it was, it was, you know. I think now the state committee pays, but it, so it was very expensive to be on it. And then of course everyone felt that you had to contribute to his campaign, so that was expensive. And to try to maintain your constituency which was the whole state.

But I think that I just didn't feel that the DNC really did much, it was sort of a useless group, you know. It was interesting to meet people, you know, it was interesting to have, you know, Bill Clinton, when he was still governor of Arkansas schmooze around, and, you know, it was interesting to see, to have dinner in the White House with Jimmy Carter and Rosalynn, and. But I didn't feel it as useful I think, I didn't feel that I was as instrumental in making change in the DNC, sort of. You know, you had some people who were trying to wheel and deal and raise money. And, you know, at the, I wasn't at a national fund raising, I wasn't involved with national fund raising, I was thinking it was more issue oriented. I'd been chairman of the state party platform so I thought we were going to talk issues, you know, I was still in my idealistic stage, I think the DNC was more about raising money.

**MR:** So that really was the original intended purpose of your position, was more of a fund raising position (*unintelligible phrase*)?

**BT:** No, no, I thought it was representing the state of Maine, you know, on issues and setting a national agenda, but I didn't feel that. Well, you know, there was some of that but it seemed to

be not the major part of what the DNC was all about. And how could it be, we only met a few times a year and, you know, so, it's largely a, sort of a show horse kind of meeting. But it was interesting, you know, because you'd have these meetings and David Broder and all those people would be, you know, interested in interviewing you and, you know, Chuck [Charles T.] Manatt<sup>5</sup> was the head of the DNC when I was there, he was a big fund raiser. So, it was, it was interesting.

**MR:** And how long were you involved with the DNC?

**BT:** About five years, and then I resigned because I was going to have another child (*unintelligible phrase*).

**MR:** Okay, let's talk about some of the issues that have been important to you over the years. You mentioned a couple of times environmental issues, what have your particular interests and goals been in that area?

**BT:** Well certainly living on the Androscoggin River, as Ed Muskie did, cleaning up the rivers. So the Clean Water Act, the Clean Air Act, things like that, making sure that Maine was at least as stringent as the federal legislation, if not more stringent. You know, certainly sustainable forests, things like that. What else? Preserving public land, making sure the public has access to public lands for recreational uses. So both, sort of the health side of it, you know, the Clean Water and Clean Air, groundwater was of interest to me.

In fact my husband did the first piece of legislation on groundwater. That's still of interest to me, and seeing Poland Springs Bottling Company about to, you know, take water out of that aquifer and two new wells over there, I really, I wonder, you know. I view groundwater as the citizen's resource and I don't see it as owned by any company. Aquifers extend over a large geographic area, and the impact of withdrawing water is still unknown. I think that's still an issue for us, but (*unintelligible word*) sort of began to talk about it when I was there twenty years ago, but there's obviously a little ways to go.

And so, you know, I guess, you know, spraying, all of the issues that determine the quality of health and the quality of the air and the water, and protecting endangered species, you know, all of the issues that routinely come up, would be of concern to me. At the same time, you know, I'm, I don't, I'm not a nut, you know, I think there's a balance and, you know, a lot of out-of-staters come in and want to preserve Maine, the way they think Maine should be, to twist the phrase. And, you know, so I think that, you know, Mainers need to be able to afford land in the harbors, they need to be able to have work and there are some, you know, some balancing that needs to be done.

So, for instance, the Maine turnpike, I was the spokesman for that and in '91, and I would have widened the Maine turnpike back then; it should have been. Now we have these six and seven mile backups, but we were beginning to have them back then. And the thought that we couldn't

---

<sup>5</sup> Charles T. Manatt, partner and founder of the law firm Manatt, Phelps, and Phillips; former U.S. Ambassador to Dominican Republic, Chariman DNC, 1981-1985.

widen the Maine turnpike, particularly since part of it has already been widened and when you get to South Portland it breaks off into, you know, two major highways there anyhow, four lane highways and so eight lanes. We should have widened it back in '91. Now it's going forward and I notice that the environmental groups have made only a token resistance now. Well if it was an environmental issue for them in '91, it's still an environmental issue now. So I, I'm a little cynical about this, but I think they saw it as a fund raising opportunity and a constituent building opportunity back in '91 and sort of a political statement. Their political ads that eventually killed it showed Jock McKernan, an unpopular governor at that time, said "He wants you to vote this way", we say, you know. And then the polls went from being sort of sixty-forty in favor of widening it to sixty-forty against it, almost overnight, after they started these sort of ads drumming the, you know, the power people in Augusta because it wasn't a popular administration.

So, again, I choose my environmental issues carefully, I don't, I don't consider myself an unthinking environmentalist. Any issue that someone tells me is environmental I look at it before I decide whether I think it's, you know, an issue or not. I would have widened the turnpike. I was the major spokesperson for that; I'm happy they're doing it now.

**MR:** That will be nice.

**BT:** I think it's, I think it's eight years too late. I helped a friend of mine this year who is working on the lobster legislation around Monhegan, trying to preserve that resource. Again, it's a balance between, you've got to have the resource in order to have, have it as a part of the economy. We can't lobster if you don't have lobsters. So, it's not just an environmental issue, it's really an economic issue. And back then when I was in the legislature I said, "You know, I'm as interested in roads, you know, as I am in the (*unintelligible phrase*)." I mean, roads are an environmental issue, they're often an economic issue. I mean, you know, it's silly to think women are only interested in Displaced Homemaker Bills, you know. We travel the same roads, you know, we live and breathe the same air, drink the same water. So I was involved in a wide range of issues.

You know even another issue that's still, I was still concerned about the other day, when a policeman called me up to solicit me for money, and that's charitable solicitation, and I passed one of the first charitable solicitations bill that required charities to reveal how much of your dollar was going to charitable purposes, because a lot of charities were asking you for that dollar, and then seventy percent of it was going to their fund raising costs, you know, i.e., their pockets, and thirty percent was going off to some, you know, homeless child. So, you know, it's just hard to say that there are any, you know, narrow range of interests that I followed, I was very involved in the economy, the environment, you know, whatever, whatever the issues, education.

**MR:** Yeah, that's another thing I was going to ask you about actually, your interest in especially the home schooling programs and public education policies. Do you want to talk a little bit about those issues?

**BT:** Well actually I was, I, again, did a lot of speaking on the UPT, the uniform property tax. Mary Adams was trying to repeal it and I was trying to keep it to even out what communities

have to pay for high quality education. And the UPT was an effort to take large industries, the property taxes from large industry and spread it to other communities. So why should Wiscasset get all of Maine Yankee property taxes and be able to have, you know, top of the line schools when the next town to it, you know, and many of the people in the next town probably worked at Maine Yankee, but they just didn't happen to have a resident in their community so they didn't benefit from having the property tax.

I think that was a bad move back then, but any chance that people get to vote against a tax, you know, it's politically pretty appealing, and so Mary Adams was out plying people with that, and so I think that undermined public education. So, home schooling, I happened to home school my own children for a couple years, but I don't support home schooling over public schooling. I think it's an option and it just was an option for us because our boys were very into Nordic skiing, as was their father on the U.S. ski team. So, in fact one of my sons right now is in Finland training, and he went to the Junior Olympics last year so he and Ben will ski for Bates; he's captain of the Bates Nordic team. So it just, in order to get them more training it worked out that, and I of course was a teacher, I was a certified teacher. And they have plenty of social attraction so, I think, you know, I support options in education, but I certainly support public education.

**MR:** Okay, well, I guess we'll talk about some more general questions about your assessment of the Democratic Party and how it's, well especially in Maine, or in general, and how it's changed over the past thirty or forty years.

**BT:** Well parties in general have just lost their cache, haven't they? So, you know, back in the '70s and even the early '80s, you know, we had a lot of interest in people who were involved. I think that's diminished, and party politics isn't as interesting any more, it tends to be a narrower group of people, often not terribly issue-oriented, and you know, it just is very hard, you know. You continue to get letters to raise money and, but I think more people that are supporting a party are more interested in supporting individual candidates. So when you lost the big box and a lot of those things, parties I think began a downward spiral. And I remember even when I ran in the '70s; the party never did much to support me; that was a myth.

What happens is as soon as you're a candidate, the party wants you to support it. And so it's more what can you do for the party, you know, if there's going to be a chicken supper you're expected to sell fifty tickets as a candidate. So you go out and sell fifty tickets and then maybe they'll give you a couple hundred dollars. Well, you could have had your own chicken supper and, you know, made a lot more. So it was always a difficult decision how much time you were going to spend supporting party activities.

The Androscoggin county committee, so you had the city committee, and you had the Androscoggin county committee, and then you had the state committee, and everyone wanted you to help them with their activities. Meanwhile you're trying to run a campaign. I rarely saw very much money from those respective committees in terms of donations to my campaigns, nor workers. The workers who helped me were people who knew me and like me and were interested in seeing me in office to represent them. So again, there isn't this big machine that's out there ready to, you know, get you elected. So, yeah, political parties are in trouble.

**MR:** Would you say that pretty much of the same things apply for the Republican party for the past thirty years, just kind of a . . .

**BT:** Just a downward spiral. You can't win just working with people who are identified as party stalwarts. And in Maine, you know, fewer people are identifying with parties anyhow, that's why the rise of unenrolled, you know. Angus King likes to glorify it as an independent but, there is no independent party in Maine. Unenrolled is the other option, and what unenrolled means, as I used to explain to people, is that you only get to vote in the general election. So that if I'm in a contested primary and you choose not to enroll to vote in that primary, and I lose, you'll never get a chance to vote for me, you know. So you really disenfranchise yourself by not enrolling in a party, whether it be Republican or Democratic. And, but more and more people are choosing not to enroll. I always used to encourage them, "It's fine to be unenrolled, you can still enroll when the election comes along and, you know, decide which primary you can be most effective in." As a Democrat you don't have to vote Democratic, but you shouldn't miss the opportunity in Androscoggin county to vote in a Democratic primary because that's often where, you know, elections are done. Sometimes the general election is uncontested; so if you didn't vote in the primary then you didn't vote. So I'm very big on voting as early and as often as possible.

**MR:** Sounds good to me. Well connected with that I guess, what about, what's your take on the growth of the Green party movement?

**BT:** Well, you know, quite frankly Jonathan Carter<sup>6</sup> is a nut and, you know, so he, it's hard to take that party seriously with his involvement. And his recent opposition to the removal of the Edwards Dam, it's almost incomprehensible; an issue he had no involvement with and a lot of grandstanding. And yeah, there are tradeoffs and compromises, but, you know, I think he further undermined any credibility that he had.

But, you know, I don't see the Green party as being broad based enough. It doesn't really appeal to the serious environmentalists, you know, it's still more the fringe group. I used to be on the board of Maine Audubon and I was chairman of their legislature policy committee and, you know, we had a few people like that, you know. We were trying to advocate, well, which energy source, you know, that we felt was most sustainable and most compatible with Maine's environment. I remember going down through the list just for the heck of it and, you know, I had people who were opposed to every energy source. So a little lack of realism there, you know. Okay, so what is it that you do support here. Conservation. Hmm, great. So you won't be using your dryer, you promise not to use your dishwasher, you know, so there's . . .

**MR:** Not effective energy source.

**BT:** Yeah, so, yeah, somewhat unrealistic but, so I don't really take the Green party seriously. Could there be another party? Sure. But people aren't interested in organizations, you know. If the two main parties were thriving, I'd feel that we have more of an opportunity for a third party,

---

<sup>6</sup> Green Party Candidate for 2<sup>nd</sup> District of U.S. House of Representatives in Maine, 1992.

but people aren't interested in being identified with organizations: they don't want to volunteer, they don't want to spend the time, you know, they don't want to be locked into that.

Political parties used to provide some social life; people don't see that as their social life any more. People are busy, two people in the families are working, you know. It used to be more women had time, men would sort of be the party bosses, but women would do all the work. That's still the way in most political campaigns. I think, you know, some men are coming along; we're bringing them along slowly. But, so I don't, I don't really see the Green as taking off, being a huge factor. I mean, you've got a lot of splinter groups and so in the aggregate they're a factor. But it's so hard to ever appeal to the Green Party, you have to be so out of the mainstream, and Maine isn't that kind of state, you know, Maine is a balanced state, you know. Angus King is popular because he is, he's a compromiser. You know, he doesn't hang out on any one issue particularly; he's always balancing and compromising, trying to find the middle ground. Bill Clinton was successful because he was a compromiser. You don't usually get people in political office who are on the edge of innovation, you know; they're just too far out there for people. Is it good to have the Green Party? Probably, you know, to advocate one end of the continuum, but is that where most Maine people are, or most people in America are? No, I don't see it looming as a huge political. . . . I don't see people flocking to it, you know.

**MR:** Speaking of some of the governors in Maine that you've had contact with, probably Governor Brennan you worked very closely with?

**BT:** Governor Brennan is the one I've worked most closely with. He, Jim Longley was governor when I, he was in his second, the second two years of his term when I was elected. And, you know, he was out there, you know, as I said before, he was, you know, a little, well, The Year of the Longley, that book that was written about him I think it characterizes his sort of, you know, sort of wild moments. He was politically sort of weird, you know.

Of course I didn't agree with him on much of anything. He cut back on routine maintenance, on capital improvements and all sorts of other things to make it look as if, you know, the economy was doing better than it was. And then, what Gov. Brennan got hit in the neck with was, okay, so all the cruisers now are falling apart and the roofs and, you know, you don't delay routine maintenance and think that that's a, you know, way to save money long term; it's a very short sighted strategy. So he did things like that, he wasn't very, he didn't have a very progressive agenda for social issues, certainly wasn't enlightened on women, you know.

He made his name sort of being negative about the media, about everything, you know. Taxes, taxes and saving money and so forth, but he didn't do anything to really save money except in a short-sighted way that eventually hit the next governor in the neck.

So I didn't feel very closely aligned with him at all. And, I remember once going down to his office, he, obviously someone had told him that he needed to get to know the women legislators, so he had a bunch of us down for coffee. And as we came through the door it was obvious that he had been prompted, he probably had little cue cards someplace to remember who we were and something interesting about us. And as I came through the door he shook my hand and he said, "Barbara Trafton." And then he'd get this faraway look in his, you know, brilliant blue eyes and

they'd sort of go glassy, and, "Barbara Trafton, Wellesley." You could hear him remembering his cue card, but then he'd lose it, he'd lose it, and so he said to me, "Wellesley," and he's still sort of staring off and I'm thinking, "Now what?" And he said, "I went to a funeral there last week." And I was thinking, "Oh, now what do I say, 'Wonderful, governor,' or 'how was it.'"

And you may or may not remember about Jim Longley but he was an inveterate funeral goer in that he showed up at everyone's funeral, and that was sort of I think how he got elected. He was very big on going to funerals. So, anyhow, that's what I think of is he was just sort of weird.

And then if he disagreed with you on an issue and he attacked you or disagreed violently publicly, whether it was, you know, me or someone else, he would call up in the evening and he'd say, "Helen," that was his wife, "Helen said I should call you. And I don't know how the media got that all twisted, you know, I'm certainly not attacking you, or whatever." He'd do this to Joe Sewall, too, I know because Joe and I talked about it. And so it was Republican or Democrat, you know, if you sort of butted heads with him he would call up, (*unintelligible word*) "Helen said I should call."

**MR:** Nice scapegoat to have around I guess.

**BT:** So, probably Helen did say he should call, but you know, it seemed funny for the governor to have to use that as an entree.

But Joe Brennan was really the governor that I was most closely aligned with, and he of course was there during the four years I was in the senate, and then he was there for four years when Dick was in the senate, and you know, he was very easy to work with.

He's, he appointed me, he was always very respectful and supportive of my ideas and my legislation and. And at that point I was concerned, to go back to the environment, I was concerned that we had a very unresponsive department. And at that point we only had one unclassified employee in the department, that was the commissioner. What that meant was that if the governor didn't like the way policy was being administered and carried out, he could remove one person: his commissioner.

Well of course we all know that the heads of the bureaus and other people in there have tremendous latitude in carrying out, you know, the legislation that we enact. And in fact most of the legislation that we enact always carries with it a clause that says, that empowers the department to make rules and regulations in accordance with, you know, the intent of the legislation. So we don't sit and figure out all the details. How those rules and regulations are drafted, how they're implemented really determines how effective the legislation eventually is. Subsequent to my being in the legislature, you know, now they have some rules and regulations that actually have to come back to the legislature for approval and they've tightened up a lot on that kind of authority to go to the department.

But so, at any rate, what I was concerned about was that a lot of people complaining, a lot of industries complaining about the permit in kind. And I was afraid that, you know, our department of environmental protection was getting a bad rap and that we would lose a lot of our

meaningful legislation because of inefficiency and because of sort of bureaucratic ineptitude. And so Joe appointed me to be the head of a five person commission with representatives from the business and NRCM and so forth, and to review the charge to the department of environmental protection and the organization and so forth.

We eventually came up with a unanimous report. We held hearings all over the state and did a lot of research as best we could with a five member commission and a little bit of staff; you can imagine how easy that was while I was doing everything else. But we made recommendations, all of which have been implemented subsequently, and some of it was declassified and some (*unintelligible phrase*) so that the governor had more latitude in speeding up the processing, the permitting applications and processing times and things like that. You know, there really was no reason to, I mean if you're going to say no, just say no, you know, you don't need to string them out for a year, you know, just. I think industry can deal with a no and it can deal with being told no, you have to do this. But just not knowing, you know, is a tremendous, you know, expense to business, you know, if they're trying to, you know, expand or do something with their business. So, you know, Joe was very supportive of that.

When I left office he immediately wanted to appoint me, you know, to some board. I think he first tried University Trustees but I didn't think I wanted to do that, and then Board of Environmental Protection, I didn't think I wanted to do that. And I finally ended up on, I said I'd do the board of trustees at the Maine Maritime Academy, I thought that would be interesting and (*unintelligible phrase*) so I did that. So that was a further involvement in education, but a little lower key than getting all involved with the university system.

And, you know, and I thought Joe was a good governor. I must say I was disappointed when he ran recently for the senate seat in the primary. Because I felt, I supported him when he ran again against Jock McKernan and narrowly missed that in, was it '92, or '90. It may have been '90. And, you know, I felt he would have done a much better job. He was very candid at that point about, you know, the downturn in the economy, you know, Jock McKernan was not. And shortly after Jock won the election after having said that, "No, no, there won't, the state budget's fine, you know, we're not going to lay off workers." Shortly after he was elected he said, "Oh whoops, you know, there's something like a thirty million or forty million shortfall." And he started the furlough programs and all these other things so he, and that's why he wasn't popular.

By the time the Maine turnpike issue came around. You know, people would never elect him to anything else I don't think unless everyone who had memory of him was gone on. But, but then for him to come back and run in this most recent time in the Democratic primary. I was, I did not support him as I, I was sorry that he won it because I just felt that he wasn't going to be successful in a general election, you know. That he just hadn't weathered the times well enough to be able to come back and do that. And I would like to have seen someone like a Dick Spencer, you know, have that opportunity. And so we ended up with a Republican senator, someone with very little experience who clearly couldn't have beaten I think a good candidate had they put up a good candidate. But that, so that was too bad.

And then Dick served after and he had four years with Joe Brennan. And again, Joe was very supportive. And when my husband ran, the senate turned Democratic, so I had to suffer through

four years of being the minority party, then you know, then I offered to run his campaign; I thought he would enjoy it. And then he gets in and it's the majority party, he gets to chair a committee. I would have loved to have chaired a committee. I just got to chair little things, oh, well, Joe appointed me so I got to chair that Review Committee for the DEP but, so, he had four years in the majority which was nice.

**MR:** And were you involved in any political offices in the '90s or late '80s? You mentioned you were on that board in the mid '80s.

**BT:** No, not really. You know, Dick was mayor until, let's see, so he must have been mayor until like '91, and so that was two decades of political involvement for our family and so we continue to give money to candidates and, you know, be involved in the issues. I did do that turnpike, you know, I did agree to be the spokesman for the turnpike so I did that in '91. But, and then I was teaching, just being a good citizen, an educated voter, and a contributor, and felt that other people could have a turn. The next generation, Mike.

**MR:** All right, my turn.

**BT:** Your turn, get ready.

**MR:** Okay, well some of the people that we've been talking about, maybe George Mitchell, how did you get to know him and what was your relationship with him like?

**BT:** Well, George Mitchell of course was the Democratic National Committeeman. So he and I sort of had that in common. He ran for governor when I was first getting politically active. I remember, it was back when Bob Clifford was I think mayor of Lewiston at that point. And I was over at their house, they had invited us over for a Democratic function to meet Joe Brennan. They were supporting Joe Brennan, but George Mitchell went on to win that primary, and that was in '72 ['74] and I remember he lost to Longley. And it looked as if he were going to win, and then he lost because it was a three way race and the Republican was very weak, I can't even remember his name now, but he was a very weak candidate. And so that, I knew George a little bit, you know, in '72, I was handing out his literature and things because I was working for, that was McGovern too. And then, I'm trying to think, then he went on to be a judge at that point I guess. And then he was appointed by Brennan when Muskie became secretary of state, and that must have been in '78 was it?

**MR:** That was '80 when he became secretary of state.

**BT:** Was it '80? Right before Jimmy got out. How long was he secretary of state?

**MR:** It was just for that year, I think, '80 to '81.

**BT:** Just a year? I was going to give him a couple more years, but. So, so then Mitchell was appointed to fill out his term which must have gone until '82. And then he had to run in his own right in '82 for a six year term. And he was running against Dave Emery and a lot of people thought he couldn't win, and that's when I hosted a lot of functions for him and I remember we

had Ted Kennedy as a guest over at my house, and I helped raise money.

Actually I was co-chair of his reelection committee. I think he had four of us. George was always very politically astute, you know, sort of like one elephant, one giraffe, you know, one aardvark, and so I think I was the central Maine woman, I don't know what other slots I filled, but you know, I believe there were four of us, separate co-chairs of his campaign. So I was very active in helping him get reelected.

Sometimes when I was in D.C. I would go down and he was always, you know, very supportive. He always did ads for me and was sort of a mentor too, you know, encouraging me to think about higher office, you know. I remember him taking me down to the Senate chamber and eating in the Senate dining room, you know, sort of giving me a taste of what a wonderful life this would be. And, you know, so I just continued to, you know, be involved with him and supportive of him.

And now as I said, I had been on Muskie's board, and then I resigned when I, my husband and I just two years ago adopted a child from China. So I resigned from all my boards, but Muskie was the one that I resigned from. I have enjoyed doing that, and of course seeing Muskie a lot in that and he would come to our meetings and that was certainly interesting. I've been down to his house in Kennebunkport for various functions and things, too, when he and Jane were there. So now I moved to Mitchell and agreed to be on his institute board because it ties in a lot with my educational interests at this point in time.

**MR:** Would you say that your political interests are pretty similar to George Mitchell's, that they have been, or?

**BT:** I can't really think of anything that George has done or supported that I haven't felt, you know, was a reasonable approach. I mean, you know, ideologically very close to where I am. As was Muskie, you know.

**MR:** Okay, actually I'd better flip this tape again.

**BT:** Oops, twelve o'clock.

*End of Interview*