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Twombly, Mary Ellen oral history interview

Andrea L'Hommedieu

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Interview with Mary Ellen Twombly by Andrea L'Hommedieu

Summary Sheet and Transcript

Interviewee

Twombly, Mary Ellen

Interviewer

L'Hommedieu, Andrea

Date

February 16, 2000

Place

Augusta, Maine

ID Number

MOH 174

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Biographical Note

Mary Ellen Twombly was born in Hyannis, Massachusetts on July 16, 1942 to Ruth (Nadeau) and Jim Twombly. Her grandfather, Guy Twombly, was one of the earliest Democrats in Waldo County, and was a staunch supporter of Ed Muskie. Her parents were also Democrats. She was educated in Maine schools, attending the University of Maine at Orono from 1960-1962 and from 1964-1966; she earned a degree in journalism. After college, Mary Ellen worked for the *Rockland Courier Gazette*, before being hired by Ben Dorsky to work for the Maine State Federated Labor Council. She then went to work for the Washington, DC newspapers covering labor issues.

Scope and Content Note

Interview includes discussions of Guy Twombly; early Maine Democratic politics; University of Maine in the 1960s; Ounegean Woolen Mills strike; Maine labor organizations; Ben Dorsky; 1960s labor movement; working in Washington, DC in the 1970s; 1968 Maine Democratic convention; Muskie in Washington; Watergate break-in; White House conspiracy theories; protests in Washington, DC; 1973 Congressional hearings; and Muskie's eightieth birthday.

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Transcript

Andrea L'Hommedieu: This is an interview with Mary Ellen Twombly conducted by Andrea L'Hommedieu on February 16, 2000, at 12:30 P.M. at 61 Winthrop Street in Augusta, Maine. Mrs. Twombly, could you start by giving me your full name and spelling it?

Mary Ellen Twombly: Sure, my name is Mary Ellen, two words, Twombly, T-W-O-M-B-L-Y.

AL: And where and when were you born?

MT: I was born on the 16th of July, 1942, at Hyannis, Massachusetts.

AL: Now, did you grow up there or did you -?

MT: No, no, I grew up in the first part of my life in Massachusetts and Virginia, and in 1952 my family moved back to Maine to the old home in Monroe. My great- grandmother had been raised in that house, and so I think I was like the fourth or the fifth generation to grow up in that home. I grew up, basically my childhood was in the fifties, and I graduated from high school in the spring of 1960. So I was quite well aware of Mr. Muskie and his impact with the state of Maine. Not only because, you know, he was a sensation because he was a Democrat, but because I come from a long line of Democrats, and we were just as excited that Mr. Muskie ran and won the governorship as if he'd been a, you know, a close relative. Because in those days as you might remember, maybe you can't, the Democrats were few and far between.

My grandfather Twombly was, and my grandmother Twombly, were Democrats all the way back to probably when they first met each back in the early 1900s. I believe they were married in 1904. I never did meet my grandmother Twombly, she died the year before I was born, but she was an active party stalwart. I mean, she attended I think at least two if not more Democratic presidential conventions. I know she went to the 1940 convention, and she died in 1941. She was like the, oh, the party -

AL: Like the National Committeewoman?

MT: Thank you, that's right, yeah. National Committeewoman, and she was very, very active in politics. And my grandfather was, too. I think to some degree when they were very young they were like hippies in a way; they were proud not to be, or believe what the establishment wanted everyone to believe. So they were very active. And when Mr. Muskie began to run for governor I was probably eleven, almost twelve years old. And my grandfather Guy Twombly and my foster grandmother, Phyllis Murphy, were by that time the oldest long term Democrats in Waldo County, and nothing could happen really, politically, without their knowing about it. And so my first recollection of Mr. Muskie was hearing them talk of him and how excited they were and how they were just so hopeful and overwhelmed almost with the potential that- I don't think there'd been a Democratic governor since Louis Brann in 1930s, in the whole state.

And my grandfather and Phyllis put together, as I remember, they put together a supper and, sort of an informal, but where Mr. Muskie could come and talk to people and campaign. And all of us that were related to my grandfather, my Aunt Helen and my Uncle Bill and my parents Jim and Ruth, my sister Annie, and Mike and Mary, who were the McAleneys, they belonged to Helen and Bill, and God knows who else. We met in the village of Brooks at the Oddfellows Hall, I believe it was, upstairs. And by this time things, it was in the summer so that's why I'm not sure whether I was, I think it might have been in June or July, but it doesn't make any difference- we got to meet him.

And he was one of the tallest people I've ever seen, and he was quite, had this wonderful bearing about him and a gentleness. And he spoke as I remember very, you know, to the point, he didn't. He was very serious about this campaign, and he meant to win it. And what I remember is that I, this was the first time I had ever, I guess, come up against somebody that had, that was beyond my family that, so I asked him for an autograph. And he simply signed it Edmund S. Muskie with pencil, and I kept it in a notebook for years. In fact, I'm sure it still is somewhere that I could find. It would take a lot of work to find it.

AL: On a sheet of notebook paper?

MT: No, on a little teeny thing no bigger than a match book piece of paper, just a little, and I said to myself, this is going to be worth something some time. So, the next thing I can remember is that, with any degree of accuracy, was like in 1958 or '59 when the, what is now called the Maine State Ferry Service launched the Governor Muskie, the ferry boat that ran between Lincolnville Beach and Isleboro. And Grandfather and Phyllis were there because they were Waldo County-ites and always would, never missed a chance. And I remember the *Republican Journal*, which is a weekly newspaper down in Belfast, ran a photograph of Muskie and my grandfather, Guy, and Phyllis on the, I suppose on the bow of the ferry boat. And I cut that out and put it right next to Mr. Muskie's signature that I'd gotten a year or two before. So I was, like I said, I was raised in Monroe, and it was a very, and still is, a very small town. And I think my grandfather had been town manager there for a number of years and road commissioner and other such things.

AL: Was it, I guess my question is, your grandfather, Guy, and Phyllis, at the time Muskie was running for governor they were quite elderly?

MT: Well, my grandfather would have been seventy-six or seventy-seven.

AL: Okay, at that time.

MT: Phyllis might have been ten years younger, I can't be certain. Yes, at that time, yes, they were, they were retired folks.

AL: Now Phyllis, did she also have a political background that you remember?

MT: Oh yes, she, well, when she got together with my grandfather. I'm not sure whether she was active in politics before she met him but she certainly was once they got together. And Phyllis was the State Committeewoman, and I remember about Phyllis that she was in the Electoral College but for which presidential election I can't remember. And I think she was more than once in the Electoral College for the state. I don't recall that, whether either of them went to a national convention, but that's not to say they didn't. I don't recall that they ever did, so there was, 1952 was Eisenhower and '54 was Eisenhower and then Kennedy. I don't think they went to the '60, I don't think... They loved Adlai Stevenson, I know that.

AL: Right. What year did your grandfather pass away, do you remember?

MT: Nineteen sixty-three, in March. I think he was eighty-three or eighty-four.

AL: Was Eben Ellwell someone that you knew when you were growing up?

MT: Oh, yes.

AL: Was he active in the area? What -?

MT: Oh yeah, he was like a young person, I mean he was like in his thirties. And grandfather and Phyllis just sort of brought him along, and he came willingly. He loved politics, and he was an active Democrat, I know that. I know he had at least one if not two terms in the legislature here in Augusta.

AL: Was he, did he sort of, did you get the impression that he considered your grandfather sort of his mentor?

MT: Oh yes, I don't think anybody would have run for office on the Democratic ticket without talking to my grandfather in those days. Yes, he was the old man, yeah.

AL: Did he interest- have an influence on you when you were growing up? Or maybe I should ask, what sort of influences did he have on you?

MT: Well, in terms of politics, I mean I had no difficulties being a Democrat and being proud of it. It was sort of a Twombly attitude, so there, you know, I dare to be different. What they used to say, though, if there'd been a phone booth, you know, that you could put all the Democrats in Waldo County in it. When I was ten, the summer that I was ten, my family moved back to Monroe, and I remember listening to the, both the Republican and the Democratic conventions on radio, and... Where was I going with that? Oh, I remember, I was very interested in General Eisenhower, and I was interested in Senator Kefauver, and I think he was a Democrat. (*Unintelligible phrase*). But anyway, it was a lively convention and I decided that I wanted Eisenhower for president. And my father told my grandfather, and he says, "Oh, she'll grow out of that."

Yeah, I mean to be other than a Democrat in my family was not very, you wouldn't think of

doing it. And I, and one of the bigger curses that grandfather put on anything or anyone is that they went Republican; that was the lowest. That would be, you know, a machine if it broke down, or a car if it had a flat, or whatever. I mean, to go Republican on you was the lowest.

AL: It was sort of a phrase?

MT: Exactly, it was a catch phrase, yeah. That is about what I remember, you know, directly. I mean, I could go into great long things about that, but I guess you sort of got an idea that, of where and how it came to know.

AL: Now was it your mom or your dad that was the child of Guy?

MT: My father, Jim Twombly.

AL: Your father, Jim. Now, was he political?

MT: He was a civil servant for the federal government, so the (*unintelligible word*) was pretty heavy duty in those days, and, well, my father always voted straight Democrat. He was not -

AL: He couldn't show it, wear it on his sleeve.

MT: He couldn't be active in politics in that era, so. But my mother was a Democrat and she didn't get active in the sense like Phyllis and my grandfather, but more like Helen and Bill. They're solid, you know, so.

AL: And you said your mother's first name was?

MT: Ruth.

AL: Ruth, and what was her maiden name?

MT: Nadeau.

AL: Nadeau, and where does she come from, does she come from Maine?

MT: Yes, she grew up in Houlton.

AL: Oh, she came from the county.

MT: Yes, and she was a graduate of Colby College; my father was a graduate of the University of Maine in Orono. And my Aunt Helen introduced them I believe here in Augusta, I think it was 1936, I think.

AL: And where did you, after you grew up in Monroe, where did you go, did you start working or go to school?

MT: I went to Orono, and then I began, this would be, I began in the fall of 1960 and I dropped out after two years. And when I came back, it was the fall of 1964, and everybody throughout the country and even Orono, the students were getting very active in, well, it wasn't quite counter culture yet, but, and it hadn't quite formed what it was except that they knew that they didn't like the war in Vietnam. And this was, I think Berkeley happened in '64, so it took a ways.

But I studied journalism, and I was a reporter on the *Maine Campus*, the weekly newspaper, and we were, at that time Professor Hamilton was *the* department of journalism at the University of Maine, and he had made a commitment to his students that they could put the newspaper together without his oversight, or without anyone's. In other words it was a true laboratory.

And as I remember it must have been '65, '66, '66. The workers at the Ounegean Woollen Mill in Old Town went on strike for recognition, for union recognition. And where, I don't know, our campus staff was maybe seven or eight students, and someone of the, I'm not sure whether he was a Student for a Democratic Society or not. But anyway, one of the students came to us and said that it was Christmas time and the people at the woollen mill had been out on strike for recognition for probably two months, at, by that time. And it was Christmas time, and the University of Maine students, a number of them, were strike breakers. They were crossing the picket line, they were going in and taking the jobs of the people outside.

So this was sort of the start of how I got involved in organized labor, and I worked for the AFL-CIO, Maine State Federated Labor Council, and I went to Washington in 1969 to work for the International Association of Machinists and Aerospace Workers. And so, where can we go with this? But anyway, that's how I got to Washington, and it was absolutely the most interesting time. I remember that I was going to take this job with the machinists union and Mr. Nixon had just been inaugurated, and I said, "Wouldn't you know it? I'm going to go to Washington during a Republican administration." Well, there was never a dull moment there.

AL: Let me go back for just a minute.

MT: Sure.

AL: What was the result of the strike in Orono?

MT: The strike, sure, no, it was in Old Town.

AL: I mean Old Town.

MT: The result was that it became at that time, and it may still hold this abysmal record, but it was the longest strike for union recognition in the state's history at that time, and it went I think from October to April. The students at Maine, after the *Maine Campus* I was assigned to write and cover that particular thing. We carried the story and kept carrying it over the winter. These people had been out through Christmas. It was in the middle of a cold winter. And they were still outdoors walking the picket line. And the student movement decided along with, I think we may

have, I don't remember who came up with it at first or not, but, that we should join in the picket line. And, I don't know how many workers there were, but, I'm not sure how many students there were, but there was probably at least two hundred of us. And I remember it was a day when the snow, it had been snowing, and I think it might have been in April or late March, and the sky was blue, and it was beginning to melt, but there was still a lot of slush you had to walk through. And there were, oh, probably six to eight Penobscot county deputy sheriffs with, they didn't have dogs, but that was about it. And I believe it was due to that big show of support, the governor of course took notice, and I think it was John Reed who was the governor, who was a Republican -

AL: Probably.

MT: Finally, there was no way to ignore it any more, which is the reason the students had joined to begin with was because we knew that the media would, could not very well ignore that. And, so the strike ended with management recognizing the union. And so that's how it ended. And at that time I became very, very interested in labor journalism. And the business agent for the union, and God forgive me, I can't remember which union it was. I think it might have been the boot and shoe workers, or it might have been the textile workers, which would have made sense. But I think that all the unions joined together. I mean like the Bangor Council of Labor, all of us came together in a great solidarity as it were to make sure that the plight of this particular group of people was understood. I mean, they worked in awful conditions. There was no, I don't think OSHA had been invented at the time. But I mean, there was open whirling things. There was, the air was filled with wool, and I mean, it was really dark and miserable working conditions that weren't much different than they might have been in the 19th century. So we were pleased. We, of course, being young, know everything when you're young, we, see there, so you know, we were very pleased. And there was a celebration, I think at the Knights of Columbus in Old Town, and all of the strikers and their families and all the people that had helped were invited. And I think it was at that time I made it known that I was very interested in labor journalism.

AL: When you talk about that incident, it reminds me of the IP strike in Jay, just because I have a sense of growing up in that area, remembering what it did to the families and the people in the town. Did that have the same effect in Old Town, a sort of ripping people apart?

MT: Not really.

AL: Or was it quite not so widespread or mean spirited?

MT: It was just sort of a small group of people working in a small sort of dying industry, textile mills, that were trying to seek and get union recognition. The Jay strike, as I remember that, was a fully established union that things went to Hell with. So, you know, other than the fact they were both, involved unions, I don't think there was too much similar.

AL: No, I just wondered if the effects on the community had been the same.

MT: I don't think so, I think people just ignored it, ignored it, ignored it. That was one of the things that prompted us. Beyond the fact that students were taking their jobs, which got us into it, was the fact that nobody was listening to these people. They had been out for months and months. We picked up on the story around Christmas, like I said, and carried it through the winter, so I don't believe there was any of that sort of thing. There was a lot of courage for people to do what they did, to go out and. Even though they're protected by law, in other words allowed to strike for union recognition, it takes an awful lot of courage because you don't know what your employer's going to do. He could have sold it and left town, you know, he didn't have to stick around. But for some reason or another he did. I don't even know who the owner was. But, you know, whether it tore those families apart, I don't believe so. I believe they saw an opportunity to make a difference in their own lives and that if they acted together they could do that.

AL: Let me pause for... Now, after your time at the University of Maine at Orono, you then went to Washington immediately upon graduation?

MT: No, I worked, again, this is a good illustration of the connections with my grandfather. I went to work for the *Rockland Courier Gazette* in June of 1966. It was the day after the, I think the primary election. Ken Curtis won, I remember that quite well because. And I basically found out that the *Courier Gazette* wanted a young reporter through my grandfather who knew a man named Leo Chebeau, who was the Bangor *Daily News* reporter from the Rockland bureau. And I worked there for about six months and had a wonderful time. And right now I can't remember, I think it was still from Leo Chebeau I found out that Ben Dorsky was looking for a public relations person to put out his newspaper and help him in the legislature and be a gofer, sort of, a young person. So I interviewed for that job, and I was offered that job, and I stayed there. That would have been the winter of '67 until the spring of 1969, I worked for the Maine State Federated Labor Council.

AL: What was Ben Dorsky like?

MT: He was amazing; he was certainly different from anyone I had ever known before. He always had a cigar whether it was lit or not. He was always, I don't know, I was sort of in awe of him, I mean, I may have been, what, twenty-two or three years old. But anyway, I think I'd even heard of him before, probably from when I was at the University of Maine, and with that Wanagan Woollen Mill strike I must have heard his name. I can remember coming to Augusta, Augusta House was still standing, which was right down where the big bank is on the corner of Memorial Circle. And basically I chased behind him, or I went into a committee and took notes, whatever, I put the newspaper together once a month, and it was published, printed down in Lewiston by the same printer who printed *Le Messenger*, I think was the name of it.

AL: Louis Philippe Gagne?

MT: No, Lord, anyway, once a month I would traipse down to Lewiston and put the newspaper together, and they would print it, but it had to be done during the dark of night for some reason. The edit-, not the editor, the owner was an old newspaper man who had always worked during

the night time, and he never changed his habits for some reason, so.

AL: Oh, I'm trying to think who it is. It's not Faust Couture? I think he was radio.

MT: No, he was a nice man. I just, I mean we're talking, what, thirty something years ago? I can't remember. But, man, and I mean we did the same thing that labor people do every session, which is to go up against the same bills that new people are bringing in and supporting the same bills that have yet to be passed into law. A great deal of the time was, this was in an era, well it must have been Ken Curtis, but I think the executive council was still around and they were all Republicans. And I know that was a thing that Mr. Muskie had to put up with for his two terms. And there was these old line business interest lobbyists, and there's Ben, who was a Republican, and he did that and I'm sure for convenience. So it was like an old club, and here I am, you know, a young woman running around and, you know. I don't remember any specific battles we had in those days, having to do with organized labor anyway, I don't remember that.

AL: Was he a fair-minded person did you think?

MT: Oh yeah, he knew, you know, and you knew which side he was on, simple, simply put, there was no equivocation on that. And he had the respect of the people and the lobbyists in the legislature. When he spoke, he meant it, and he spoke in such a way that the point was well taken. I was sort, like I said, I was sort of, I don't think afraid is quite the right word, but you know, you sort of, I was real quiet, and I watched a lot. But it was with this job, then, that I got the other one that took me to Washington.

AL: Okay, and that was about 1970, '69?

MT: Sixty-nine, yeah, yes. The first day of work in Washington, and I remember I'd never been much of anywhere except Maine, Monroe, I mean, on the Orono and Bangor, Augusta, that was about it, you know. So here I am in a big city, which it really isn't, it's very small, but to me it was big. And my editor-in-chief decided that he would take me over to the AFL-CIO because George Meany was anointing I guess would be the word Lane Kirkland, who took Meany's position when he left. So, I remember it was in May, May 15th, 1969, so I remember I was sitting there with a bunch of all kinds of reporters and other things, people listening, and there was, you know, George Meany, o-o-o-h. So, and the only other thing I can remember at that particular time, the boss left me, he says, "So, you remember how to get back to the office." But I didn't even know that you had to hold your hand up to get a taxi, you know, so. But I watched, I got back to the office all right.

AL: Now were there others from Maine around your age that you had contact with in Washington?

MT: Yes, my good friend Ellen Toomey, she grew up in Auburn, she was from a newspaper family. And she's worked for the USIA ever since 1967 so she's almost ready to retire.

AL: What does the USIA -?

MT: It was once, well it was the propaganda arm for the United States during the Cold War, The Voice of America and other publications that were distributed through I assume our embassies to various other countries. But basically that's what it was, was, and now it's been sort of folded into the Department of State, and this is relatively recently. And there was three or four of our college friends were there, and Ellen was sort of the leader in terms of, she'd taken the chance first and gone down. But this was a very, this was like a year after the race riots in Washington, this was the era when as I remember... I think Nixon was making all kinds of noises about it, about getting out of it because what, was it, who was it, Johnson- who was after Johnson? Was it Nixon? Wasn't, was it?

AL: I'm blanking on the whole -

MT: That whole era.

AL: But, now when you were in Washington, would you hear about Ed Muskie sometimes?

MT: Oh yes, because I mean he was, this was, well, the 1968 was one of the wildest years in our history, I'm sure. This was less than a year later, and I think, well, McGovern had run, McCarthy ran, Bob Kennedy ran. What I remember very vividly was the state Democratic convention here in Augusta in 1968, that was before I moved to Washington.

AL: What was that like?

MT: It was wild, it was, it took place I think in early June, I believe it, or late May, it was before Kennedy was killed. And so there was all these wild factions. There was the McCarthy faction, and Kennedy, and I think Hubert Humphrey, and, who ended up being the nominee for '68. No, that's not right, it was McGovern. No, he was '72. Right. I don't know. But anyway, it was something. It was up at the Holiday Inn up Western Avenue, and this is an era when a lot of drinking was going on. And I went with my handy camera from the Maine AFL-CIO, I wasn't a delegate or an alternate, I was just joining the fringes, and I knew a lot of delegates. But there was fisticuffs actually, people were banging heads and throwing each other around and heaving people in to the swimming pool. Yeah, it really was -

AL: Because of who they were going to support?

MT: Yeah, yes indeed. I don't remember who the state finally endorsed, but it was a wild time.

AL: Very different from what you have today.

MT: Oh yeah, the '60s were definitely different, yeah. About this time, I mean, the war was a great big issue, and it hadn't been that long that Kennedy had spoken up forcefully against it. I mean, McCarthy and McGovern were sort of stalking horses, I guess, just a test to see how many live ones you could get I guess. And once he found out that it was a real, clearly a real issue, well, he must have known, but once it was proved to him then he decided he would run. I was

very disgruntled with that, I didn't think that was too fair. I think I was a McCarthy person at the time. But as we all know, that didn't, that did end rather tragically. So, what else can I tell you?

AL: Besides your family and having them be very strong Democrats, what were some of the other influences on you when you were growing up that shaped your beliefs and your attitudes? Were there outside factors like particular teachers that really reached you or places or people in the community that you had contact with?

MT: Well I don't know, I think, my mother was very liberal and my father was more quietly straight Democratic. The influence I think that I had learned from my family, my Aunt Helen had been, what, the head of the WPA or something in the Depression. The fact that there was, you know, great admiring words about Eleanor Roosevelt, and you know, Eleanor stuck her neck out for the underdog. And the Marion Anderson thing and the coal miners. And as I remember, during the fifties, I mean, the word union in Maine, or nationally, it was just, no matter where you went, if you ever heard it it was in a derogatory way. There was never anything in the newspapers, not that there is even yet, about organized labor or about, well, the civil rights movement was beginning, too. But going back, you asked me what got me going was that there was something sort of inherent in me that felt that workers, anybody, should have the same rights, that they shouldn't be.

So, anyway, I think that that was the beginning of it. Very liberal chancy things, particularly in Maine where unions were basically in your paper mills and shoe factories, some but very little. During that sixties era there was a lot of organizing of the shoe workers, and textile mills were all leaving Maine, and shoes, as you've seen over the past thirty years, have gone. And so, but anyway, deep down inside me I heard the admiration for these people that would go out on a limb for somebody, and somehow that interested me. So, I would say I got that influence from my family, and, I mean, there was only like four hundred people in Monroe, and there was nothing to do for work there except work in the woods or raise chickens.

AL: Let me stop there, and I'm going to turn over the tape.

End of Side A
Side B

AL: We are now on side two of the interview with Mary Ellen Twombly on February 16th, 2000. And you were talking about some of your connections with Senator Muskie.

MT: Right, I mean, the opportunities were always around to go and be where he was whenever he was in public, whether he was campaigning or not, and so it sort of, I can't pick out any specific times, but it always felt very comforting in a way that he was somebody who was a friend that was in a place of influence and power. And so of course, I think he ran, I don't remember what year he ran for senate but it must have been right after his two terms as governor, so it would have '58 or '59 or something.

AL: And '64 and '70, and '76.

MT: So you have to count back. I mean there wasn't much time between when he left office as governor to run and win the senate. So he was always there, and so when I, I spent five years in Washington as I said, and he was always there at the same time. And he was famous beyond just Maine acquaintances. When people said Mr. Muskie or Edmund Muskie they knew who he was.

AL: So even within Washington he stood out to some degree?

MT: Yes, oh yes. People, I mean, it seemed to me that all famous senators either came from Maine or Minnesota in that era. There was kind of all those, there was McGovern and McCarthy, and Hubert. And then there was Margaret Chase Smith and Edmund Muskie, and it seemed to me that was neat. I'd go to, the union would, the International would have, I think every year they had a sort of a congressional dinner and speakers and dance and such like that. And so as a member of the staff of the International I was expected to go to these things. So I would meet a lot of these people and all I had to do was say I was from Maine, and they wanted, you know, did I know Muskie, and what did I think of him and so forth like that.

So then I think it was '72 when he ran for president, and, I mean the anti-war fever was rather high pitched at the time, earlier too, and I involved myself in some of that. And my, the International wasn't too pleased, but they weren't about to tell me not to. I mean, their membership was making the war weapons, so. So I've been to some of these large multi-thousand anti-war Saturdays or whatever, like there was one in November of '69; I remember going to that. That all seemed, everybody seemed to think that if we yelled loud enough somehow the government would get out of Vietnam. It just seemed to take an awful long time.

So when I heard that Mr. Muskie was going to run for president, I was quite pleased. I found out where his campaign headquarters were. I think I told you on the phone it was 1972 K Street. Now whether that was, maybe they made up that number, I can't imagine, but anyway. And I went and offered my services and for some reason they told me to go down to the Democratic National headquarters in the Watergate Building which wasn't far from where I lived, it was like two blocks away. And, I remember going there, and they took down my name and number and said they'd get in touch with me when they needed me, and I think it was less than a week after that that it was broken into by the famous, what the Hell was his name? Anyway, about the red, I remember the red wig, that's all I can remember.

AL: The red wig?

MT: The red wig, and -

AL: What's that?

MT: Well, one of the, as I remember, one of the burglars was wearing it. And something about taping the door locks so, you know, so that basically they malfunctioned. I thought this was very interesting, and yet it was very slow to take off. But I was really involved in news and

newspapers, and there was, I think there was three dailies in Washington at the time and there was one afternoon paper, and all you had to do was go downstairs and look at one of the, what the next headlines were. But after a while they just, it became apparent that this burglary was a lot more than what it had appeared on the surface. And everybody knows the story, but it was very interesting to be there and to be sort of on top of it. I remember once being assigned either to take a photograph or go get something. Anyway, I was on a gofer detail, and I went to Charles Colson's law office. And Charles was staff, had been a staff member of Mr. Nixon's who said that he would run over his grandmother if she, you know, if he thought it would make chances better for Mr. Nixon to win the presidency. So he was rather famous, and he converted to rather, in prison he became quite a, well he converted to Christianity and sort of saw the light and -

AL: Redeemed himself.

MT: Well, somehow.

AL: So did you ever end up working on the campaign?

MT: Never, never, this thing sort of blew up. As you remember, I think, well that was the year that, '72, we ended up with... I get so confused.

AL: I'm thinking that '72 was, I'm trying to think of contemporaries of yours who would have been working on the campaign, like Peter Kyros, Jr.?

MT: No, his father was a congressman, I don't think, no, I think I'm a bit older than his child.

AL: Severin Beliveau, was he active, was he someone you knew?

MT: Oh yeah, yeah. Well my sister would know him (*tape fades momentarily*) . . .

AL: . . . in 1972 presidential campaign.

MT: In, what everybody remembers about, what I remembered about it was that he ran as Hubert Humphrey's running mate as vice presidential candidate [1968], his own campaign having sort of unraveled there in the spring. Of course thirty years later it's quite all right for a man to cry, but in those days it wasn't. I was very disappointed, not that Mr. Muskie would defend his wife or honor or anything about it. I was just sort of disappointed that, I had always cheered for Muskie, I had always thought that he would have been a fine president, and I would have gone out on a limb. And, what I do remember about that particular election, I bet nobody else would remember except, is that on the popular vote of that election, the Humphrey-Muskie ticket lost by one tenth of one one hundredth or something like, one tenth of one percent of the popular vote. It was almost virtually neck and neck in terms of human beings voting and human beings voting, never mind the electoral colleges or anything like that. Less than one tenth of one percent. That worked down to maybe like twenty thousand or something like that, something unreal. So he, I think that was too much for him. I don't know how old he would have been, probably he was sixty odd years old then.

AL: In '72? Born in 1914, so he would have been sixty, almost sixty.

MT: Sixty, somewhere out there, yup.

AL: Tell me about your involvement in, or do you have more stories about the Watergate era and your time in Washington? Things that stick out in your head as being significant, about the time period?

MT: Oh yeah, I mean there was a lot of, particularly during the Watergate end of things, when, oh dear, want to roll that one back. (*Taping paused.*) . . . don't remember but, where I left off I was going to get into sort of a flavor of how the, well the atmosphere in Washington during that particular time, right at the height of the Watergate scandal. And also the, basically the height of the anti-war movement in terms of, I think there was the yippies and any other anti-war group in the United States had come to Washington one spring morning, I think it was in May, with the express purpose of shutting the city down, stopping the government by laying their bodies in the road and on the bridges from Virginia, from the Pentagon into town. And things were beginning, as they started out they were very peaceful, most of these. But by this era, by this time, things were getting very, very unpeaceful.

AL: Even the anti-war protestors getting violent, yeah.

MT: Yes, they were. And Mr. Nixon was getting more and more, I think, worried. He, instead of getting us out of the war had driven us into it deeper and in fact had gone into Cambodia and said he hadn't. And virtually thousands and thousands of people came to the city that particular day, like I said, to shut the place down. And Mr. Nixon was as adamantly opposed as could be, which was that he was going to shut the opposition down. And what that meant in terms of people like me, and that particular day I was just an ordinary person who was walking to work, was quite different because the demonstration started very early in the morning like 5:30 or 6:00. And I remember, and oh, within an hour or so people were running up the roads, you know, with handkerchiefs over their faces and their eyes running because of the tear gas. And I could smell it coming into my apartment, and you could hear these choppers overhead. They were Huey helicopters, and they were flying low enough so you could actually see the people in the helicopters. And they had these tear gas, they looked like, from what I could see, giant shotguns sort of because the canisters were probably, I don't know, inch or two through, it seemed to me anyway.

But what I can remember is the people running, and they were beginning to take bricks up out off sides of people's row houses and they were throwing them. And basically the way I went to work was I lived on 25th Street by the Whitehurst Freeway, which is like I said not far from the Watergate, and I walked up New Hampshire Avenue to Dupont Circle where the machinists union headquarters was. And that would typically take fifteen minutes or so. The place was just packed with people and all, I don't know, I remember the metropolitan police. And I think they may, when we got to Dupont Circle there was like the National Guard jeeps end to front all around the circle and inside of it were these big cattle cars basically, in which anybody that even

resembled someone that was anti-war,- and people usually, you could tell by the looks of them, by what they were wearing and what they were saying, and you know, the signs they were carrying,- were basically taken by the scruff of the neck and the back side of their pants and thrown bodily between these jeeps into Dupont Circle and then rounded up and put into these cattle cars.

Well, and meantime, you know, the helicopters are, thump-thump-thump-thump-thump all, you know, just over and over. And they took all those people as I remember to the Robert Kennedy Stadium on the northeast side of the city I think and just threw them in there. They weren't arrested, they, I mean there was none of the proper technicalities.

AL: They were just sort of corralled?

MT: They were corralled and rushed away, so much for the Bill of Rights. So later these very same people did sue the government, and they, for these illegal arrests, and they did win. I remember there was a great demonstration of people on the steps of the Supreme Court, and the same thing happened, it may have been the same day.

But what I can remember most, as I said, was, one little vignette out of that is there was an anti-war protestor's, a rather tall young fellow, he was standing in the middle of the road with his legs sort of spread out, and he was yelling at this metropolitan policeman on a motorcycle. And the next thing he knew was the motorcycle driven right up between his legs and carried him away. It was the most amazing thing I've ever seen. They threw him between the jeeps and into the cattle car.

So I mean, it was right down, I mean, but what I do remember is to me was how close we are in our, how we live. I mean, it was a complete view of, I don't know, anarchy and sort of fascism, one beating against the other. I mean, there was government, the Hell with your rights, we know you're guilty, we know you are, you're going to go, and these anarchists were saying basically, we're going to shut the government down. So to see something so of both of those extremes, to see it, you know, overhead with this helicopter and down under on the road.

Yeah, we that were going to work made very carefully sure that we looked like civilians yes, yes, you know. Like I wore a skirt and a pair of high heels or something, you know, rather than sandals, because it didn't take anything. If you were wearing a pair of sandals you'd have been thrown. So, yeah, it was very, and it was two or three days, you know, that the helicopters flew over and over and over.

AL: And do you remember or have any impressions of Senator Muskie and his view of things at that time and his stance on Vietnam, sort of how the, what was, did he keep the same stance or did he modify it over time? Do you remember that specifically?

MT: I can't particularly. I don't put him in the same category as McCarthy and McGovern who were early out. I think, though, you know, when the Kennedy got killed there, Robert Kennedy, I mean it was sort of like there's an establishment person who's against the war so

maybe it's safe to say something. There was, not that that was Mr. Muskie's stance, but that was sort of the feeling that once somebody leapt over the wall then others could come along.

I believe, I think he was, he was persuaded after a while, Mr. Muskie. Like most grown adult Americans of that time that remembered the Second World War and the Cold War and the Russians and the Communists. I mean that's the kind of stuff all of us were fed early on in that war, that we were keeping the world safe from the Communists by going into this jungle where people had been fighting for forty years anyway without us. And it took a long, long time for basically the head set to change. And I don't think Mr. Muskie was any different than, like I said, most people except that he was broad minded and open and could see that there was some validity in what people were thinking and doing and saying. But not to say that he agreed wholeheartedly with going out, throwing bricks through windows, or, no, nothing like that.

But he was there, I think his opinion was valued, people would come, not just ordinary people but other leaders in the congress. They all talked together and perhaps he was one of the people they came to, because he was obviously a leader of the party since he'd run on the ticket. I don't have any recollection that he didn't think, like I said, that there wasn't some validity to what was happening. But there was and this, you couple this with the Watergate where you had a president who was obviously telling everybody to lie, he was spying on his enemy list people. I mean, the whole environment led to, and I don't think the country's ever changed back, to a total disappointment I think is sort of a too light a word.

AL: Skepticism of political -?

MT: Skepticism, cynicism, that the government in and of itself was out of control. Basically the *Washington Post* thought it was the only thing that could bring the government back into control. But again, in that time, I was a newspaper person and I was exceedingly interested in, and like I said, every afternoon there was an afternoon paper. There was two Washington papers in the morning, and you could read them from cover to cover, and you could talk about them over lunch, and you would, you know, it never let up. And there was, like I said, this growing, the other big thing I remember of that era is when those, the National Guard shot those five students at Kent.

AL: At Kent State.

MT: At Kent State. And to me that was the end, you know. That was, you know, I wasn't that far from college age myself, but to think that armed soldiers would shoot at unarmed people regardless was, you know. And then to kill them and then sort of then go into shock, it just was a symbol of how far things had gone. So, as I think I've told you without the tape, things were getting paranoid. There was like this environment totally. We were all mesmerized. We think Monica Lewinsky was something, you should have tried the Watergate, you know. Every day new things were coming out of that committee.

AL: When you were in that time period and experiencing those things, did you know that it was extraordinary?

MT: Yes, I did, yeah.

AL: So you were grounded enough and understood what was around you to know that those things didn't happen to every generation.

MT: Oh yes, yeah, I don't think it ever happened before. I was of that generation of the, so, where was I? All right. The fall of 1973, the congressional hearings were, you know, had almost found what they needed. And they called it the smoking gun. They almost had found something that would lynch basically, Mr. Nixon, something that he with his own mouth would have said that would indicate that he was not only part of but the mastermind behind the cover up, which when you compare it to the break in of the Watergate with the red headed wig person and the tape on the doors, there was quite a long contrast. I mean here was. So anyway, the era was, I mean he was certainly paranoid, and he had reason to be, I mean.

So in the fall I believe of '73, it was revealed that there was a gap of eighteen minutes in this tape that was a conversation of the president with someone who's, Haldeman, Erlichman, who knows who it was? One of those, in which basically it was alleged that he acknowledged what was happening and in some way indicated that he knew it had been happening and that all Hell was breaking loose and so forth. And this is what the congressional committee felt that they needed. And so when they found there was an eighteen minute gap in the tape that was supposed to have contained this information, they naturally assumed, as did everybody else in the United States, that it was no accident that the eighteen minutes was blank, that, you know. Nixon had finally got his head screwed on long enough to try to protect himself.

So, I was living with a friend of mine, I think it was on, right off Pennsylvania Avenue, not quite into Georgetown. And this man had dropped out after spending the beginnings of a good career in the CIA. He had seen and heard and, at least this is what he said, enough about what was going on over there that he didn't want to have any more to do with it and then immediately dropped out.

AL: When you say over there, are you referring to Vietnam?

MT: No, CIA.

AL: Oh, the CIA, okay, okay.

MT: And that he had, had been married to a woman who had worked in the Pentagon and was now working in the White House and she was about, I can almost remember her name. I know she came from Barry, Vermont, I know she had a big family, brothers and sisters, I know that she was like an academic genius, but I can not remember this poor woman's name. Anyway, this roommate of mine had been married to her, and she was, as I said, working in the White House at that time. Well, I went home one night, or one afternoon, and I found a yellow telegram stuck in the door of the apartment, and I took the telegram over to my roommate, who upon opening it burst into tears and said that his former wife had died. And we asked for all the details, the

telegram had come from his former brother-in-law, who I guess was a military man in the Pentagon. And it said that the wife had died of a heart attack right there in the White House, and efforts to revive her had not worked. This woman worked for a man named Steven Bull whose name was bandied about quite often with reference to this eighteen minute gap because he basically worked and knew who came and who went out of the Oval Office, and this woman worked directly for him.

AL: She worked for him.

MT: And she was in the vicinity, like, say, this was Bull's office, that's the president's, and maybe she had a desk over there somewhere, I don't know, anyway. According to everything we could find out, and I guess there was some validity to it, the woman had said that, to several people, perhaps her own brother, that things were getting too much for her over there in the White House, and she didn't know how to get out of it. She was, you know, if she left or if she stayed. If she stayed, she couldn't stand it and she didn't know how to get out of it in any kind of graceful way, the implication being that things were quite wild in the White House in those days. That she had gone to work leaving a list of things to do or things to buy on the kitchen table, and the brother went over to her house, I think she lived in Alexandria or something, after she died. And the list had a lot of mundane things on it like a dozen eggs, two pairs of panty hose, cat food, make your will.

AL: Make your will.

MT: Uh-hunh, or draft a will.

AL: And she was what, about forty?

MT: She was about forty years old, and she was a small woman and might have weighed, I don't know, according to my roommate she might have weighed a hundred and twenty pounds max and was in perfect health. Well, as I was saying earlier, the environment in Washington was such that, you know, even people like my roommate and me and anybody that knew us could feel sort of like a, holy Hannah, you know. It did not occur to any of us not to think that there was foul play, that's to the degree that the environment had become.

So several weeks went by, and, I said, being the journalist that I was, ha-ha, I said, "Richard," Richard was my roommate's name, I said, "Richard," I said, "it won't be long," I said, "before the *Washington Post* is going to be after your ass to find out anything they can find out about her, and anybody else that knew her in any way, shape or form." So I went home for Christmas to Maine, and when I came back, the phone had been jingling off the hook, and Richard wasn't even listed as the owner of the phone, I was listed as the owner of the phone, so. And I remember taking two calls myself. One was from the *Denver Post*, and I think the other one was from it might have been the *Los Angeles Times*, and Richard had been wined and dined and, you know, whole thing. Apparently, it ran its course and it came up against a dead end, you know. But again, what I was trying to say is that in that era something like someone dying at work, if you happen to be at work at the White House, that lent a whole different slant on how to look at this.

AL: Did they close the case, saying that there -?

MT: There was never any case, it was just -

AL: Oh, it was never -

MT: No, I mean the papers never printed anything. What they were doing was investigating to see if there was any validity to this sort of thing. And had there been, and had they checked it twice with everybody, then they would have printed it. That's just the same way they had with the earlier Watergate stories. I mean, lots of news stories don't become news stories if they don't, if they aren't. I mean, but they do have to be looked into. Then these were like the top newspapers of the country that were, all of their people were looking in it. And I, I guess, to me for some reason that was just too much and I decided I'd come back to Maine and I've been back ever since.

AL: Good for you. Now why don't we talk about the eightieth birthday?

MT: Okay, the eightieth birthday was, what would that have been, six or seven years ago?

AL: That would have been in 1994, in the spring.

MT: Five years ago, six.

AL: Almost six.

MT: Almost six years ago. Ginger Hillier I believe was, she was like the coordinator, she set the whole thing together, and she's a great friend of mine and Mary Mac's and Annie. She was put in charge to find one person from each county to go interview some of the contemporaries of Mr. Muskie to give to him as a gift for his eightieth birthday party which was held in Lewiston. And Ginger asked me if I'd do it for Waldo County because I lived there still, and I said, "Yes." And, oh, so that brought me back into where you, I guess that's where you got my name anyway. I interviewed Eben Elwell whom I think you have already interviewed, and I'm glad you got him while you can. He probably has, he is more of a contemporary in experience and age. I think he's almost eighty now, with Mr. Muskie, and he did a lot with him, you know, side by side traveling all over the state and working on various things. And Eben kindly agreed, and he, I think he did at least a two hour tape, and it's, it was presented to Mr. Muskie during his birthday. And there was a real cozy feeling that day. I mean it was a luncheon so that people such as himself and his older people, older friends and colleagues could come and get home in time for supper, you know, instead of having it late at night and go, you know. So the room was packed, oh, I think there might have been five, six hundred people I think. And I got there real early with my friends, and we sat at the table that was sitting in front of the head table, so we had a good view. In back of us was all people we knew, you know, from various walks of life but definitely the Democratic party. So, it was wonderful. I think Mr. Nicoll spoke, I had heard a lot about him. He was a great, I think he really liked Phyllis Murphy. Don, and my grandfather

Guy.

AL: He's talked about them very fondly.

MT: Yeah, I think, and he was like a young, young fellow when Muskie ran.

AL: Yes, because he's only in his very early seventies now, so.

MT: Yeah, so we're talking fifty years ago so, yeah, he was in his late twenties, maybe. And so he spoke, and a lot of other people did.

AL: Frank Coffin must have spoken?

MT: I think he must have. I don't know whether Elmer Violette did, but I remember his name. But I remember Mr. Muskie. It was so nice to see him; I hadn't seen him, you know, in the flesh for a long, long time.

AL: Did he say a lot, was he up and about?

MT: He was, yeah, he talked wonderf-, you know, he just, that same, that calm, caring voice. You know, talked a little bit about his life when he was a child and going up through and how honored he was to be sitting in the same room with everybody that wanted to celebrate his birthday. It had been a surprise as far as I remember. It was, I don't, the whole event may have taken an hour and a half, maybe. But, and I think we got out like at one thirty, two, and everybody could go home. And I went up, and I shook his hand, and I think I told you that he had the softest handshake I've ever felt, just the palm of his hand. I think it was my Aunt Helen who said, when I mentioned that to her, she said that that was a sign of a man who never made his living with his hands. So, that's the last time I saw Mr. Muskie. His wife was there. I don't, some of the children were, but not all of them I don't believe. But I felt really good to have had that opportunity.

AL: What would you say, looking back over Senator Muskie's career and your time living in Maine, what his biggest influence was on Maine?

MT: Well, that the values of the Democratic Party were more than just what I had heard my folks talk about, that they were grounded in reality. And because of Mr. Muskie, there was actually a reality that could make a difference, because there was a party big enough in the state of Maine to influence the type of leaders we elected. I mean, up until that point, I mean it was just, you went Republican, as I meant earlier, I mean, there was nothing. Nothing good came from a Republican. And that's a very, you know, extreme way of looking at things, but when Mr. Muskie was elected into office it gave the values of the party substance. So that's what I will remember.

AL: Is there anything else that you'd like to add at the end here?

MT: No, other than the fact that I'm very pleased to have been asked to talk.

AL: Great, and we appreciate your doing it, too.

MT: Good.

AL: Thank you very much.

MT: You're welcome.

End of Interview