

10-15-1999

Webber, Curtis oral history interview

Marisa Burnham-Bestor

Follow this and additional works at: http://scarab.bates.edu/muskie_oh

Recommended Citation

Burnham-Bestor, Marisa, "Webber, Curtis oral history interview" (1999). *Edmund S. Muskie Oral History Collection*. 402.
http://scarab.bates.edu/muskie_oh/402

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.

Interview with Curtis Webber by Marisa Burnham-Bestor

Summary Sheet and Transcript

Interviewee

Webber, Curtis

Interviewer

Burnham-Bestor, Marisa

Date

October 15, 1999

Place

Auburn, Maine

ID Number

MOH 156

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

G. Curtis Webber was born August 29, 1933 in Lewiston, Maine and grew up in Auburn. He attended Edward Little H.S., class of 1950 and one year of prep school at the Loomis School in Windsor, Connecticut. Like his father, he attended Bowdoin College and Harvard Law School. In 1958 he joined Frank Linnell's law firm and continues in the current firm: Linnell, Choate & Webber. In 1965 he was Auburn city solicitor.

Scope and Content Note

Interview includes discussions of: 1968 vice presidential campaign; Vietnam; Democratic Party in Maine; 1968 Maine Democratic caucus in Augusta; Louis Jalbert; Lillian Caron; Brennan's gubernatorial campaigns; Shep Lee's involvement with the revival of the Democratic Party in Maine; Bill Cohen; Bill Hathaway; Al Gamache; Roland Tanguay; Franco-Americans and straight ticket balloting ; John Orestis; Bill Jacques; Al Lessard; Ernest Malenfant; Al Cote; old Lewiston City Charter; George Mitchell; and the Frank Coffin vs. Reed gubernatorial race.

Indexed Names

Beliveau, John
Brennan, Joseph E.
Brown, Herbert Ross
Carignan, Jim
Caron, Lillian
Clifford, Robert
Clinton, Bill, 1946-
Coffin, Frank Morey
Cohen, William S.
Cote, Al
Couturier, Robert
Dionne, Paul
Gamache, Al
Gosselin, Lucien B.
Hathaway, Bill
Hazelton, Paul
Humphrey, Hubert H. (Hubert Horatio), 1911-1978
Hunter, George
Jacques, Emile “Bill”
Jalbert, Louis
Johnson, Lyndon B. (Lyndon Baines), 1908-1973
Kennedy, Edward Moore, 1932-
Kennedy, Robert F., 1925-1968
Lee, Shep
Lessard, Al
Malenfant, Ernest
McCarthy, Eugene J., 1916-2005
McGovern, George S. (George Stanley), 1922-
Miller, Roland
Mitchell, George J. (George John), 1933-
Muskie, Edmund S., 1914-1996
Orestis, John
Poulin, Joseph
Rancourt, Georges
Reed, John H. (John Hathaway), 1921-
Rocheleau, Bill
Scolnik, Louis
Straub, Carl
Tanguay, Roland
Webber, Curtis
Webber, John
Webber, Rebecca
Young, Lee

Transcript

Curtis Webber: Have you heard any of these names before, other than, you said you talked to (*unintelligible word*)?

Marisa Burnham-Bestor: Yeah, I have heard some of them, several of them, and I have some that I'll prompt you with... Here we are for our second interview with Curtis Webber, it's October 16th, 1999 and we are back at the law offices of Linnell, Choate and Webber. Present are Curtis Webber and Marisa Burnham-Bestor. When I came in and started setting up you had been discussing some of the changes and so forth that have impacted the community and a lot of the political figures here. Could you just tell that one more time?

CW: Well, what I told you was that I, since our last interview, I've been thinking about things that were interesting to me that had happened to me while I was more involved in politics than I am now. And one of the things that happened was in 1968 when I was involved with the McCarthy campaign. In that year Gene McCarthy ran against Lyndon Johnson [*sic* Hubert Humphrey] in New Hampshire and surprised him by getting a rather substantial percentage of the vote, not a majority but enough so that Johnson [*sic* Humphrey] was shocked. In any event, the McCarthy people were highly motivated and well organized, but we didn't have enough numbers to really be as much of a factor as we wanted to be. But what we did was we studied the rules and tried to organize locally as much as possible. This is sort of the pattern the McGovern people followed several years later. And I recall that Louis Scolnik and I, who, Louis's an attorney in Lewiston who was also active in the McCarthy group, made presentations to George Mitchell, who later became a senator and achieved national notoriety, but was then state chairman and had to make decisions on challenges to the rules. And we, I remember, appeared before George, and this is the kind of thing that people hadn't done before, people hadn't brought up these nice questions of, based on reading the rules and argument. Delegates had to be chosen in a certain manner, and George would much rather that we had not been doing this but I thought he did a very good job, given the fact that he was a Humphrey person to be fair in the rulings that he made. But this is just sort of a preamble to the incident that I wanted to tell you about.

The caucus that year was in Augusta I recall, and I remember naively thinking that I could go up there early and perhaps rally some McCarthy people. That was the year when Louis Jalbert, who was a long time legislator from Lewiston, was a very efficient and powerful political boss in Lewiston. In fact I remember the afternoon that the convention started, I was meeting with the sheriff and I think the registrar of deeds and the registrar of probate and talking with them in the motel room that they were staying in. And they were all saying negative things about Louis Jalbert, and who should walk in the door but Louis Jalbert, and suddenly everything changed, it was like night and day. It was just representative to me, uh, how strong a force he was in the party, and how feared at that particular time.

I'm not sure if it was that night or the next day that the McCarthy people realized we simply did not have enough votes within the county caucus. And the delegates as I recall were chosen within each county, each county caucus, to get even one delegate, unless we joined forces and nominated somebody jointly. So that even before the county caucus, rather late in the evening as I recall, Louis Scolnik and I met with one or two people from the Kennedy group, and that's

when we decided to do this.

Well the following day (as far as I knew, nobody knew this except the Kennedy and McCarthy people) but the following day as we all walked into the room where the caucus was going to take place, the sheriff walked by and he whispered to me, "You better watch out, something bad is going to happen." But I didn't really have a chance to find out what he was talking about. We had agreed that representative George Hunter from Durham, who was a lovable Democrat with a great Maine accent, would be the person that would nominate whoever it was. I can't remember now even who it was that we were going to nominate as our delegate. But, maybe I'm getting ahead of myself, maybe he was going to nominate the caucus chair, maybe that was it. But in any event, I've got it straighten now, he was going to nominate our delegate, and, well the first vote was: who was going to be the caucus chair and we lost that vote. We had a candidate who didn't win. Louis Jalbert was elected the caucus chair? And that was, and the Kennedy and McCarthy people were uniting on that vote. So that was a signal that we didn't have the votes to do what we wanted to do but we were going to go forward with it anyway.

So now Louis Jalbert's presiding as caucus chair and George Hunter rose to nominate the Kennedy-McCarthy delegate, and he was never recognized. And someone else, it might even have been John Beliveau, but it was someone else who was from the McCarthy-, Humphrey group, nominated a Humphrey delegate, and somebody else moved the nominations cease. And the vote was taken, and passed, and George Hunter was still standing there. I can still remember that. He never was recognized by representative Jalbert, who was just rubbing our faces in it because, he didn't have to do that. It was clear right from the beginning that he had the votes, the Humphrey people had the votes.

And I recall that Bill Rocheleau and Bob Couturier, who were attorneys and had been very, very active in Lewiston politics and also in the Kennedy campaign, were so angry and disgusted that they actually walked out of the caucus and took no further role in the convention. And actually, as I recall, basically retired from politics at that point. There had been a relatively strong wing of the Democratic Party that they had been leaders of, that was opposing the Jalbert wing. And they just kind of gave up at that point, which was sort of a turning point in Lewiston politics. But I remember being so upset and angry that representative Jalbert had just demonstrated his political power in that way, which was so humiliating to us. He really wanted to show us who was in charge.

MB: What were the differences as far as the characteristics of the two groups, the Humphrey group versus the McCarthy-Kennedy group?

CW: Well, the Humphrey group tended to be the existing political office holders. I already mentioned my meeting with some of the county officials, they were all Humphrey people. The Kennedy people tended to be the more liberal, more idealistic people, although not entirely so. They also tended to be somewhat younger than the Humphrey people were. They were the status quo political people basically.

MB: And the McCarthy and the Kennedy group joined forces for that, for that moment you were talking about, but was there a separate McCarthy group?

CW: Yes, there was. That tended to be people who were quite liberal. A lot of us were not very experienced in politics; there were some college people, some Bates people involved, locally anyway. I remember Dean Straub was somebody that we recruited as a Kennedy, I mean, excuse me, as a McCarthy delegate. We didn't really know the rules, in terms of how conventions were run and how delegates were chosen, and we had to get copies and study them to try to figure out how to be most effective. We were highly motivated, but we just didn't have the numbers.

MB: You mentioned several names in the story that you just told and, Louis Jalbert and his group. I was wondering if you could kind of characterize them and explain the difference between them and the group run by I think you said Robert Couturier and Bill Rocheleau?

CW: Well, it was, I really did answer that in part before. Couturier got active in politics very soon after he got out of Bates. He was one of the, maybe the youngest mayor ever in Lewiston. He'd been a government or political science major in college, he spoke French, and he just very quickly moved to a position of political power. Bill Rocheleau was an older person but had become interested in politics about the same time. They somehow joined forces, and they were kind of a younger faction in the party. It wasn't a Franco-American group against an Anglo group, these are two Franco-American factions of the party. But it was a younger group that was challenging the Jalbert wing that was, that represented the forces already in power.

MB: Tell me a little bit more about Louis Jalbert and some of the, you know, you said he was so feared and, what was this power that he seemed to have, like how did he come to that power and maintain it?

CW: Well he did various things. He, one of the most extraordinary things that he, that I was aware of, that he did, but this is kind of typical of his style, was that one year there were three different people running for mayor in Auburn, this is a non-partisan election. And I learned some way that each one of the three believed that Louis was supporting him. He had a way of making people, he called people up, he did a lot of telephoning, and making people feel that he was responsible for something that had happened or was doing something that was going to assist them in some way. And so he used that technique quite effectively.

He also punished his enemies, people who opposed him in various ways, by denying them recognition and authority. He warned me once in the legislature when I was there lobbying on behalf of the City of Auburn, said, "Take half a loaf or you'll get nothing at all." That was, he didn't hesitate to threaten people. I remember that day, (he also had a short temper), one of the legislators that I was trying to influence was kind of on the fence. And he didn't want to challenge Louis, but they got into an argument. Just as they went into the legislative chamber they got into an argument. So the legislator who had been a little bit timid was mad and he voted the way I wanted him to against Jalbert, which he I don't think would have otherwise done. So Louis wasn't always smart, sometimes his temper got in the way of making good political judgments.

Once in a while he was funny. I remember at a county Democratic meeting that he... There were always these rumors that he was on death's door. He was always going in the hospital for

brief periods and there would be these announcements in the paper suggesting this was, might be fatal. But anyway, after one of these things, he was there and he said, now I forget what the issue was, but he said, "If you don't do this particular thing," or no. I guess he said, "If I die, I'll come back and haunt you, if you don't do..." something or other. So he could be funny on occasion. He, I remember he called me when he first recognized that I was interested in politics. And that was also part of his style, to call people up and make them feel, as I was saying earlier, that you could connect with him and that would give you more of a presence and more authority in the party. But I somehow antagonized him, I can't remember what it was I did, I supported somebody else who was running against him for county chairman or something. And that was it. He wrote me off completely as, and the telephone calls stopped and, you know, my connection with the power center was over at that point. So he did cross people off at times.

MB: Who were some of the other people who were very influential during the time that Louis Jalbert was influential?

CW: God, no names come to my mind right now. The people in the county building certainly were. One of, there was a fellow by the name Joe Poulin who was one of the people who led sort of an anti-Jalbert faction within the party; that was different than the Couturier-Rochelleau group. That may have been at a different time.

MB: Do you know what he did, Joe Poulin?

CW: What his occupation was?

MB: No, like what he would do against Jalbert?

CW: Well, he would support people for positions where Jalbert already had candidates that he was supporting, and he actually ran against Jalbert, as I recall, for county Democratic chairman. I think I actually nominated Joe Poulin at one time for county chairman. I think that might have been the thing that sealed my fate as far as Jalbert was concerned.

MB: What was it that Jalbert was doing that was causing, what were the decisions that he was making that were causing so much kind of tension and people, like other Democrats, to disagree so strongly with him?

CW: I can't give you any examples now. One of the things that people didn't like about Jalbert was that they felt that he was not entirely honorable, that he made political decisions partly for monetary reasons. There were, questions were raised about how he got absentee ballots. I know there were questions about some of the people in nursing homes whose competency was in doubt who were, turned up as absentee voters that Jalbert had visited or had other surrogates visit. I think that the Marcotte Nursing Home, which is now the D'Youville Pavilion in Lewiston, was a place that Jalbert would at every election, get many votes from. He knew how to do it over there. I can actually remember an election in which I looked at, was looking at some absentee ballots. And I remember seeing a signature that was just totally illegible and it looked like sort of, it was just a scrawl. And I actually went to the nursing home where that person was and asked if I could talk to that person. And the attendant said, "Well, you know, this person is just," you know, "out

of it.” I remember that the person who brought that resident’s ballot was Lillian Caron, who later became mayor of Lewiston, and was a Jalbert protégé at that point in time. I think, my impression was that she was an absentee ballot headhunter. I’m not certain of this but, there was some sort of a compensation arrangement for so much per ballot. That was my impression at the time.

So it was things like that that... He also, while he was in the legislature, was actually on the payroll of I think Maine Central Railroad and perhaps other entities, it would seem like a gross conflict of interests. He had a way of calling up after something had happened and taking credit for it and making people believe that he had made it, whatever it was, happen in the legislature, even if it really wasn’t so. So that was another way in which he created the impression of great influence in the legislature.

MB: Were these the sorts of things you had mentioned earlier that, you know, people were standing in a room sort of insulting him and he walked in and everyone went ‘hummm.’ Were these the sort of things that people would discuss openly when he wasn’t around?

CW: Yes, I would say so. The people in the county building, you know, felt particularly beholden to him because they were part of the kind of the political apparatus that he was in charge of, and so they were particularly likely to be intimidated by him.

MB: You mentioned that you, you know, were having trouble thinking of names. If I were to throw out some names to you, would you maybe tell me any vignette that you can think of and kind of characterize that person for me? Do you think you could?

CW: Sure.

MB: John Beliveau?

CW: Well I’ve known John since he started to practice law here. He became mayor of Lewiston at a relatively youthful age. He got involved in politics, well obviously he got in politics to become mayor.

I remember he was a Joe Brennan person and very active in Joe Brennan’s gubernatorial campaigns. I remember, one thing I remember about John that wasn’t very positive was that there was a time when, in the Christmas season, the firefighters in Lewiston put up some kind of religious symbols at the fire station. And Attorney Louis Scolnik, who was active in the Maine Civil Liberties Union, was critical of that, feeling that that was not an appropriate thing for people who, public employees to do because it was, clearly represented a Christian religious symbol. And I remember John, I think he was mayor at the time although I’m not certain of this, was critical of Attorney Scolnik for taking that position. And I felt that he was really grandstanding there, and I was troubled by his having taken that position.

But he’s generally an honorable person. Of course he’s now a district court judge in the local district court. When he sees me there, which I’m not very often, and he tends to refer to me as Mr. ‘Webbah’. He really exaggerates the second syllable with an exaggerated Maine accent.

MB: What is Shepard Lee's political involvement and position in the community?

CW: Well, of course he lived in Auburn for many years. He was one of the persons before my time who was active in, along with Senator Muskie and Frank Coffin and Professor Brown from Bowdoin College, Paul Hazelton, bringing about the renaissance of the Democratic Party in Maine. He was always called upon as a fundraiser and was very effective in that way. He never ran for office, but behind the scenes he assisted a number of candidates. He was always a close friend of Senator Muskie and helped him, I think, in many ways.

One of the anecdotes I remember about Shep was, who was a good friend of mine, was that he was an advance man in the Muskie campaign. And I don't know a great deal about this, actually I wish I knew more about it. But the story I heard was that he became sort of an instant national media person. Because in his role as advance man for Muskie in one of the, I think it was one of the Midwestern states, he mentioned that Muskie opposed the Vietnam War. And Humphrey was, had been supporting the war effort, he was, you know, a Johnson person at least to that extent. And that caused the national media to start to question Senator Muskie as to, was he pro or con as far as the Vietnam war was concerned, which created some consternation in the campaign as I recall. I don't know if that caused Shep Lee's position to be terminated or not. But anyway, that was a very interesting, very brief interval in the Muskie-Humphrey campaign.

MB: In the long run, people thought, what did they finally decide was Muskie's standpoint?

CW: Well as I recall, he somehow patched that up. And my impression was that he was at least on paper supporting the war in Vietnam, but I certainly began to wonder how serious his support was.

MB: I remember you had mentioned that you knew Bob [*sic* Bill] Cohen personally, was that, to an extent in -?

CW: Well, you mean Bill Cohen, yes. Well, I knew him as a young attorney. And I knew who he was because he was an outstanding athlete at Bowdoin College, I actually saw him play basketball when he was at Bowdoin. And after he became a lawyer in Bangor I had some contacts with him in that capacity. He was active in the Trial Lawyers Association and I had some communication with him in that role as well.

MB: What was your impression of him as far as like his political standpoint?

CW: Well, I'd like to say I really didn't identify him as a political person while he was practicing law. I can't really, I don't really have any recollections of him as a political person until he, well, of course then he ran for congress. While he was a Republican congressman from the second district I remember, I think I voted for him, though I'm not sure I voted for him every time, but he was a liberal, independent-minded Republican congressman. He replaced Bill Hathaway when he ran for senate. I didn't really develop any negative feelings about him as I recall until he ran against Bill Hathaway for the senate. And I think I talked the last time about some of the issues that he publicly chose to make the basis of his campaign, and I didn't, wasn't

really very impressed with those.

MB: Can you tell me a little bit more about Bill Hathaway? I know that you, when you joined this law firm he was leaving this law firm.

CW: That's right. Well, I, in fact I, my short term memory's so poor I can't even remember for sure what I said about him the last time we spoke. He lived in Auburn so I knew him as a lawyer. I know him socially. We've actually played, skated some together and played hockey a little bit together. I've always regarded him as a terrific person. When he was, he's got a great sense of humor.

I think one of the things that happened to him in public life was that while he was a congressman it didn't, I don't think people in the northern part of the state, which tends to be somewhat conservative, realized how liberal he was. It wasn't perhaps, I think it was not really until Bill Cohen ran against him that it became apparent to "middle of the road" people that he really is quite a liberal person, much more than they had ever realized. He had such an efficient office, in terms of constituent service and so forth that he impressed people because he got things done for them. And he was effective in doing things for Maine. And, you know, it wasn't until... Well, I remember one of the issues that came up was, there was legislation to prohibit desecrating the flag. And, you know, that was like one of those motherhood and apple pie issues with absolutely nothing, no political gain to opposing that. And he opposed it because he thought it was unconstitutional, which I think clearly it was. But that was just one of those watershed issues where it began to show that he was really quite a liberal person, and that didn't help him when he ran for his second senatorial term.

MB: We had kind of discussed last time when we were talking, about some of the issues that Bill Cohen kind of undermined Bill Hathaway with, and then this sort of his opposing the desecration of the flag, even though there's really no political gain to be had from that. Would you say that he ever played the political game or was he just pretty much honest?

CW: Well he did things that were politically wise to do. He made friends with the same bunch of political office holders that I was referring to earlier. They liked him, so I don't mean to say he didn't do political things. He did. But what he didn't do, as far as I was aware, was he didn't vote against his conscience just because that was the politically wise thing to do. In fact, I can remember him telling me at some point in his congressional career that he'd been able to have, to vote, for something he really didn't believe in just because it would be political suicide to do it. I don't, so far as I knew, he never did vote against his conscience just because he felt that he had to politically, and I admire that.

MB: We had, you had mentioned Al Gamache last time and I said that, you know, he passed away before we had an opportunity to interview him. So anything you can tell me about him would be great.

CW: Well, I first got to know Al when he was executive director of the local United Fund, I think it was called United Fund then. I had, as a young lawyer I'd gotten involved in the Multiple Sclerosis campaign and, which any of the national health campaigns were kind of a

threat to the United Way, which was making an appeal to one solicitation, one gift. Then here are these other health campaigns coming along and making competing solicitations. So one of the things that he did was to try to reduce the effect of competing campaigns. In my case he enlisted me to, in the following year, to get involved in the United Way. And I guess I was aware that it was kind of a strategy on his part to get rid of somebody that I guess he, I flatter myself, he thought was effective in getting volunteers involved and so forth and doing things that made it a little harder for the United Way. So that was my first experience with him.

I found him to be very effective, very approachable in his position as executive director of the United Fund. He had a good way with people. He also was very perceptive about where people were coming from, what would antagonize people, what was needed to bring people together. A very gentle man, hard to find anyone who didn't like him.

And I remember being startled, I think he had some minor role in Bill Hathaway's first congressional campaign, but I was really surprised to find that he'd been hired as his administrative assistant. I'm not sure if that's the right title, but, you know, he was his principle person in Washington. So he apparently had been looking at a career change that I had no notion of. He didn't have any political experience to speak of, he just had the administrative experience that he had accumulated working with people. He knew a lot of people as a United Fund person, and he was able to translate that experience into becoming a very efficient, at least from my perception, administrative assistant in Washington. [He] moved to Washington, he, I think his wife was not very enthusiastic about leaving Lewiston and the Franco-American community that she was comfortable in. He kind of, I guess, insisted that she go and so they moved to the Washington area. And they were there all through Bill's, I think two or three congressional terms and his senatorial term. And he, of course, became very good at electioneering.

I remember he was really quite distressed during that period of time when Hathaway and Muskie were not aligned. Hathaway emerged as a Kennedy supporter, you probably have heard about that, and there was some amount of tension between them. And I remember that Al was quite worried about that, worried that it was going to hurt Bill, and trying every way that he could to try to make that schism not any greater than it had to be.

MB: What were the reasons for Bill choosing to be a Kennedy supporter?

CW: I don't know that. I don't know whether it was a matter of conscience, just that he thought that Robert Kennedy would be a better candidate. I think it's Robert we're talking about, right, rather than Ted? But I'm not sure whether it was a later, that's embarrassing, or whether there was a power struggle within the party or what. I just, I never was privy to that. I remember being worried about it myself because it was the, I could see that Hathaway was antagonizing some of the people that I felt he needed to be behind him, in taking these positions.

MB: Such as who?

CW: Well, I'm not sure I can name any specific people, but the Muskie loyalists were obviously put off by this.

MB: What did Al Gamache end up doing in his later years, after he returned from Washington?

CW: I don't know what, I can't remember what his occupation was after he came back here. There was a sort of a gap there in my recollection, then he ran for legislature from Lewiston and he was elected for several terms. He never was a person that got a lot of publicity as a legislator. And I can't, I don't know much about his legislative career, except that my impression was that he generally voted for things that I would have voted for.

MB: What were some of the major influences that you would say he had on this area?

CW: Al Gamache?

MB: Yeah.

CW: Well, he really helped to, going back to the very local things, he helped to make the United Fund a much more effective fundraising organization for local charities than it had ever been before. I think he developed a model for how it would run that persisted for many years and perhaps is I would be surprised if you couldn't find many things about the existing United Way organization that traces back to things that Al helped to establish for it when he was the executive director. I think I mentioned when we spoke before that he was, well this is not anything that had a lasting influence, but he was, he'd been a part of a local discussion group. It happened to be an all-male discussion group, people who raised issues and talked, met monthly and talked about hopefully controversial things. And he had been quite active at that. I can't say that that was a lasting influence because that group disappeared after a while. I'm not sure that I can point to anything else. There's, certainly there was an outpouring of sadness when he died. And people, there were a lot of people who expressed the fact that they admired Al and liked him.

MB: What about Bill Hathaway's influence on this area?

CW: Well, you mean, what kind of influence are you referring to?

MB: Either changing the social, economical or political scene or, you know, structure?

CW: Well, I wish I could come up with something, because as I indicated earlier I've been a friend and admirer of Bill's for a long time. But I'm embarrassed to say I can't think of a specific thing that I could say, "Bill Hathaway was responsible for that." I'm sure there are many things, but I just can't identify any of them or recall any.

MB: Can you talk a little bit about Bob Clifford, Robert Clifford?

CW: Well, he's also a former mayor of Lewiston. He was part of a large family, a number of brothers, two of them were lawyers. He joined the family law firm, he -

MB: Hang on one second.

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

MB: Please continue.

CW: At some point I think, when he was still a relatively young lawyer, I can't remember where the mayoralty fit into his political life. He probably was a councilman in Lewiston and then became mayor. He was in the legislature; I don't know if he was in the house of representatives, but I know he was a senator. He was a respected person politically, everyone regarded him as an honorable person. He managed to stay on the right side of Louis Jalbert, which was helpful, without selling his soul. I mean, he was able to, he wasn't the only one, but he was able to sort of maintain his honor and still maintain a political friendship with Louis, which was quite an accomplishment.

He was, in a group of Democrats that was somewhat socially conservative, he certainly was not ever part of the liberal wing of the party, but he wasn't identified with any particular wing of the party. Perhaps he would be more like a Clinton Democrat is now. And so he was, because he wasn't identified with any particular wing of the party, I think he, that helped him be more effective in the legislature. And he, again I can't think of specific things that he did, but my recollection of him as a member of the legislature was that he was respected and very politically effective there.

MB: I haven't heard anything about Roland Tanguay. What was his position in the community? What did he do? Anything you could tell me would be helpful.

CW: Well, he was for many years the executive director or secretary of, I don't know exactly what his administrative title was, but he was a paid person of the *la Montagnard* club, that means mountaineers or something in French. And they didn't do any mountaineering, it was essentially a large social club, Franco-American social club. And from that position, he was able to wield a certain amount of political influence in county politics. I never really knew him, you know, I just knew sort of about him. There were rumors about him that he was not always honorable, that he may have had, there were rumors that he had some connections with organized crime, even. He also operated a bar that used to be on Lincoln Street that burned down under very suspicious circumstances; arson was suspected. During that period he seemed to be the subject of lots of rumors of, that he was doing things that one would not approve of. But this is all rumor. And I never knew anything specifically that he did that was a violation of the law. He was always sort of a shadowy figure in my, to me.

MB: You had mentioned that he was part of this Franco-American social club. Tell me a little bit about the ethnic makeup of this area.

CW: Well, the, when the textile mills and shoe factories were recruiting laborers, a number of people came down from Quebec, there were economic bad times there I understood, and, to work in the mills. I think that many people... There was direct train service I think from Quebec to Lewiston in those days, so people could go and come. I think some of them only expected to be here for a brief time and go back to Quebec and resume a more agricultural kind of existence

there. But some ended up staying and so a Franco American community developed.

Even now, if you look in the obituaries you'll see that some of the real, the people who are quite old at the time of their death, were born in Quebec and then moved here sometime when they were young in, you know, in their earlier years.

If you look in the registry of deeds, and I spent a lot of time in the registry, I think I mentioned that before, when I first started practicing law in the '50s. It's interesting that before 1900 you don't see really any French names at all, but after 1900 gradually you do begin to see French names in the real estate transactions, as people began to settle and purchase real estate. And now if you look in the registry, or even look in the phone book, I think, once I made the judgment that the name Ouellette, it's O-U-E-L-L-E-T-T-E, was the name that, it was, appeared the most frequently in the phone book here.

It used to be that when I was growing up here you heard French spoken on the busses, on the streets, in the stores a lot. It's much less, spoken much less frequently now, and usually it's by older persons. I think that some of the, I think that some of the Franco-American people felt that they were, that was, the French language was a stigma. And some of the young people purposely did not want to learn French. Now I think there are people who are feeling that was a mistake, that, some people I think wish they had maintained their French and they didn't do it.

But Lewiston was always considered a mill community. The Bates Mill and several others were dominant commercial enterprises there, and so the Franco-American population was always over fifty percent there. Auburn was considered a more residential community; people lived in Auburn and commuted to Lewiston. This is, you know, a generalization with lots of exceptions. And the Franco-American percentage of the population in Auburn was always smaller than Lewiston but always, it was not insubstantial. Many of the Franco-American people settled in that part of Auburn, called New Auburn, which is separated from the rest of Auburn by the Little Androscoggin River. In more recent times there have been interesting articles in the local paper about the differences between the Anglo and Franco-American communities, some of the feelings that members of the Franco-American community had; feeling kind of like the minority even though they were in fact statistically a majority of the population.

The Franco-American community has traditionally been Democratic in the days when there was a straight ballot. And that was an issue that Louis Jalbert was very active in, as he tried to preserve the straight ballot voting in Maine. There are a lot of Franco-American people who voted straight ballot and all the county officers were of Franco-American origin. The understanding was you couldn't possibly be elected unless you had a Franco-American name, in earlier times. It's less, there are a few now, people who hold county office who don't have French names, but even now it's rare. So there's a certain amount of clannishness there, or maybe it's just sort of rallying for mutual support, supporting your own and that kind of thing. Also, the Franco-American community has had the reputation of being relatively conservative, being Democrats but also being very conservative Democrats, fiscally and socially, so that they wouldn't necessarily support people who took liberal positions on things. Bill Hathaway I think had to work hard to gain the support of the Franco-American community.

MB: You mentioned that Lewiston was kind of the, where the mills were and Auburn was where the residential areas were. What was the relationship between the two towns? You had started to talk about this a little bit last time.

CW: Well, when I was growing up here there was intense rivalry between the two cities. Auburn people kind of looked down their noses at Lewiston city government as being dominated by Franco-American people who weren't maybe all that bright. Everything was politics; the mayor was a very political person in the Lewiston form of government. In Auburn, by contrast, we had a city manager form of government, a city manager council, it was one of the early places where this city manager was appointed. And Auburn, you know, considered itself much more efficient. There was, the charter had non-partisan elections, so that Auburn felt it ran a much more efficient kind of, a less politically driven kind of a city government than Lewiston did. So there were these feelings, and there were anti-French feelings probably, that were part of it, too. Lewiston was regarded as, you know, being largely French, Auburn less so.

One of the examples that I, I can't remember if I mentioned it before. I certainly have thought of it over the years, is that the two high schools used to play basketball on Tuesday nights and Friday nights. They played double headers at the Lewiston Armory, which is on Central Avenue just down from the college. And uhm, Edward Little, which is the Auburn high school, students would stay if Edward Little played the first game and cheer whoever, for whoever was playing against Lewiston. That really was the way it was.

And the city governments would, wouldn't do anything cooperatively. I remember there was a mayor of Lewiston at some point, who talked about joining forces between the cities doing things, and he was regarded as crazy in making that kind of suggestion. And at times it was destructive, because the two cities would compete with each other for economic development and try to outbid each other for the same business. And I'm sure there are many other ways in which the fact that the two cities couldn't work together in those days was very negative. That has really been changing over the years. There are now a number of things that the cities do jointly. They operate the airport jointly, there's a pollution control authority that takes waste, sewage waste, from the two cities and processes it, there are now economic developments done jointly, and there's a whole different atmosphere. The two city councils meet periodically to develop policy. So things have changed for the better and there's much more of a regional way of thinking about things.

You know, Auburn used to cheer when a Lewiston business relocated to the Auburn mall. Now my sense is that Auburn people, many Auburn people at least, have been concerned about the success that Lewiston was having or not having in developing, redeveloping the Bates Mill commercially, which has been a struggle. And it's been a very controversial thing that Lewiston has done. And instead of Auburn people saying, "Well great, Lewiston is struggling with this and spending a lot of money. We hope it turns out bad." I think that Auburn people now realize we're all in the same boat here and if Lewiston fails in redeveloping the mill, that's going to hurt us in the long run as well.

MB: What brought about that change in attitude?

CW: Well, there was actually, I think it began with a retreat. I can't remember who was involved. Lucien Gosselin, who was the administrative assistant in Lewiston for a number of years and still is, now he's an economic development person, I think was the controller or whatever the name of the person was in Lewiston that corresponded with the city manager in Auburn. And Vernon Murphy was the city manager in Auburn. I think those two gentlemen were perhaps the prime movers in this. There was a retreat in Rockland and there was a facilitator from the University of Maine who came to that meeting. Now the top department heads from each city were part of that. I gather, I wasn't there, although I was city attorney but the city attorneys weren't involved in this. There was, it was pretty heavy in my understanding. But from that meeting some understandings were worked out. And I think that really has been identified by several people as kind of a starting point for thinking of things from a more regional, from a joint standpoint. And I think there were meetings between department heads; the fire departments and police departments began to work together in dealing with things.

You know, the Lewiston fire department backs up the Auburn fire department or vice versa when there's a really big fire, and they really, there were lots of ways, when they, what they do impacts what the other does. Dean [Jim] Carignan, in more recent times has really been instrumental in promoting regional thinking as well, and exploring new ways of working together. He was head of a joint council or committee of the two city governments to work on these kinds of things. And one of the things that's happened is the welfare offices in the two cities are run as a joint enterprise now, in my understanding.

MB: What were some of the differences in the way that the cities were run that caused Auburn to be a little bit more economically, to develop a little bit more economically successful?

CW: Well I don't know enough about that to say anything that's necessarily relevant or helpful, except that Auburn's been blessed with a community development director named Roland Miller, who has been very perceptive and very effective in persuading new commercial development here. It may be in part that outside industries looking, like Pioneer Plastics, for example, perceived Auburn as more efficient. The city manager was less constrained by political considerations than the executive-administrative people in Lewiston were, to make decisions and to make commitments on behalf of the municipality. And so [Auburn] was able to have a freer hand in negotiating with industries that were looking to settle, than the people in Lewiston, I think, were. The Auburn Mall... Maybe that was just gratuitous. I'm not sure that Auburn, that we were wiser, did things that Lewiston didn't do to make that happen, I just don't know enough about it, but it seemed to develop some momentum of its own. And as the downtowns in the two communities became less thriving commercial areas, those businesses seemed to emigrate to the Auburn Mall which seemed to grow as the, in proportion, as the downtowns seemed to shrink.

MB: Did the presence of Bates have an impact on Auburn at all?

CW: Probably, because I think that one of the, my impression, or my understanding, that one of the things that many new businesses have looked at was what sort of educational opportunities, what kind of influences in the community there would be from the presence of a college. And so they have looked at Bates as, this would be true of Lewiston as well, as a community asset that

would make these communities more attractive than some other place that didn't have a college with the standing that Bates has.

MB: When the mills closed in Lewiston and, you know, just this area in general, what happened to the economics of the city?

CW: Well, that's not any, that's not within any, an area that I feel I have any expertise in, but it certainly has put people out of work. We had a very high unemployment rate at one point. I remember that when I was representing several of the shoe unions, there was something in the local newspaper indicating that the unemployment rate had hit something like thirteen percent. And so we were in a very weak position in dealing with Stride Rite, which was, had settled, was, had established, taken over a shoe plant here. And that was sort of symbolic of the fact that we just, the economies were so weak. So many were out of work, that supply and demand was just working against our union because people were so afraid of losing their jobs that they weren't feeling aggressive in the position they were willing to take, in trying to help us organize the Stride Rite factory.

MB: What was the solution?

CW: Well, the cities have worked at trying to find other industries to replace shoes and textiles, which just went south. So there have been a number of companies like General Electric and Gates, Pioneer Plastics. Auburn developed an industrial park, and so did Lewiston, to which they worked hard to attract new businesses. Auburn tried to use the airport as an attraction. I think this has been quite successful in getting a number of smaller businesses that use the rail access and the airport to transport their products. But they've tried to attract service industries, and industries that weren't so dependent on low skilled labor, to replace the textiles and shoes.

MB: You had mentioned about the ethnic differences, we already talked about that. You grew up kind of in a Christian, Republican household, not a French Catholic household. How do you feel that that changed the way your family fit into the structure of the community and changed your experience?

CW: Well I think my parents, although they struggled to be free of prejudice, did have some prejudice beneath the surface like so many other Anglos against the Franco-Americans. And you know, [they] were guilty of stereotypical thinking of the Franco-American people as being the laborers, the lower-skilled people, the people who were less likely to be in professions. And then that probably affected my thinking as well as a person growing up. I hope I'm relatively free from it now, but I can't be sure of that.

MB: Can you think of any like social clubs that you were excluded from because you weren't Franco-American, or had that ended by the time you -?

CW: Well I, I didn't ever have the, I had never applied for membership in anything that I was refused. There were a number of Franco-American social clubs in the lower end of Lisbon Street, there still are a few there, you know. On the door it says, "Members only." And I don't know that it would be possible, would have been possible then and I don't know about now, to

gain membership if you weren't a Franco-American person. Maybe so, I just don't know. Maybe it's just that the non Franco-Americans just didn't seek membership.

MB: I do want to get back to some other people in the community that I didn't ask you about. John Orestis?

CW: John was, he was another mayor of Lewiston at one time. He, you can see pictures of most of these people you've been asking me about, Clifford, Rocheleau, or that I have mentioned, Couturier. There's sort of a rogues gallery over in the Lewiston City Hall. And John was one of them, too. He was a, I don't know if he ever held political office other than mayor, but he was kind of a "behind-the-scenes" person. I think he gained some stature as a, sort of a "behind-the-scenes" strategist. And I think that was one of the reasons that Mrs. Thompson invited him to advise her when she decided she wanted to run for register of deeds. I think he had some success as a fundraiser. And he was a lawyer here. And he got involved in representing a group that was doing low-income housing. And he became so involved in that, that he actually pretty much, I don't, maybe totally abandoned his legal career and has been involved in the housing development. I think he still is, although, wait a minute, I think he's got spun off into some other, something else. But for a number of years he was, he dropped out of the law firm, he was in the Skelton and Taintor law firm, and was just kind of doing his own thing involved in housing development.

MB: What about Bill Rocheleau?

CW: Well, I don't know that I can tell you much more than I already have. There was a time he was sort of like a light that shines brightly for a while and sort of fades. He had I don't know how many years, five or ten, he was very active in politics. He and Bob Couturier had a lot of political clout at one point in time. And he just kind of retreated from the scene and sort of disappeared from the political scene, although he continued to practice law and had quite a successful law practice. I think he's either totally retired or if not totally, primarily retired now.

MB: That was he and Robert Couturier who had challenged Louis Jalbert, and then kind of?

CW: Yes.

MB: What caused Louis Jalbert's downfall in the end?

CW: Was he, I can't remember, was he finally defeated running for legislature? Somehow I think he was, that he actually lost the last, his last election. I just don't know. He seemed somehow to become sort of an anachronism, sort of a political boss that, you know, whose power base had eroded. Some of the offices that had formerly been subject to his control no longer were, you know. The Thompson election for registrar of deeds was just one of those. He had supported the retiring legislator. I'm not sure he really did anything much for him, but when Mrs. Thompson was able to get elected, she owed him nothing and he couldn't tell her what to do. It was that kind of thing I think, that happened, that tended to erode his power base. Maybe people simply began to realize that some of what he did he was doing with smoke and mirrors, you know. He was like the man behind the screen, he really didn't have the kind of political

power that he had made people think he did. He had some, but he created the impression that he had a lot more than he really did, and perhaps some people finally realized that was true. And his age and his health also hurt him, he, I think he may have had a drinking problem. So his health deteriorated and I think that made him less effective as well.

MB: After his sort of the end of his political career, did Bill Rocheleau or Robert Couturier show any interest in getting involved in politics again?

CW: Not that I'm aware of.

MB: What did they do after that? They just -?

CW: Far as I know they just sort of concentrated their energies on their own legal careers.

MB: Did you know anything else about Robert Couturier?

CW: Well he was one of the people who worked with me to help Mrs. Thompson get elected as registrar of deeds. He also has had the reputation of being a person who supported the continuation of Franco-American social institutions, the use of French wherever possible. And he ultimately, I think he became the, yeah he did, he became the register of probate, I believe. He practiced by himself, which is a hard thing to do, and whether he saw, he also had a lot of probate business as an attorney I believe, whether that was part of his thinking I don't know, but ultimately he became the register of probate. And so he sort of disappeared from the local legal and political scene as any kind of a real active person.

MB: What about Paul Dionne?

CW: Well, he's another ex-Lewiston man. He was a, kind of a fair-haired boy, in a sense that he was an outstanding athlete at Lewiston High School. He was, I think I knew him first as kind of a young lawyer with the firm of Isaacson and Raymond, which was at one point in time quite a large law firm in Lewiston, by Lewiston-Auburn standards. Then he was in a, I'm not sure if it was before or after he, probably it was after he was mayor of Lewiston, that he was in a group of two or three or four lawyers that split off from that firm and formed his own firm. And then, later he became a workers compensation commissioner. That kind of took me by surprise, that he made that career change decision.

He was also chairman of the board of the Central Maine Medical Center hospital, and I remember hoping that he might be effective in that position. In fact I even lobbied him in that regard, to do something about bringing the two hospitals closer together. Some of the rivalries we've been talking about existed, and still exist, between the two hospitals. St. Mary's identified with the Franco-American community, the Catholic community, and Central Maine Medical Center being identified with the Protestant community, the non-Catholic community. When Paul became head of the board of CMMC, I thought, "Now this will be the moment in time when the two boards can somehow go on a retreat or..." You know, find ways to work together instead of with the kind of destructive rivalry that they still seem to be persisting in, which is the way the cities used to operate.

MB: Did that happen?

CW: I don't, not that I'm aware of. That hope glimmered and then it didn't seem to ever amount to anything. And I never had a chance to talk to him and find out what happened there.

MB: Who was Bill Jacques?

CW: That's Jacques, J-A-C-Q-U-E-S. And he still is. He's a person who, I think his occupation is some kind of audio equipment perhaps. There's some sort of a technical competence that he has, but he's held various offices. I'm pretty sure he's been city councilman, or alderman as they used to be called in Lewiston. He was a legislator from Lewiston. He was part of the local political establishment, particularly in Lewiston, for many years. More recently he was a county commissioner for the Androscoggin County. He was always a very political person. I remember presenting cases to the county commissioners and I worried that he was sort of counting constituents in the crowd in terms of determining how he might vote on the outcome of the issue. But I always, even so I always liked Bill and I always felt he was a pleasant person; a very political person, but still very likeable.

MB: What sort of influence, or any stories of anything in particular that he did to impact the area?

CW: Nothing comes to my mind.

MB: What do you know of Al Lessard, Alton Lessard?

CW: He was a person quite a lot older than I and so he and I didn't practice really at the same times. He became a superior court judge about the time, if I recall correctly, that I started to practice law, and so I really didn't have much contact with him, you know. I had the impression from things I heard that he was an effective politician of the Franco-American community. He was certainly articulate, you know. I think he was sort of regarded as sort of the modern Franco-American politician who could move easily in, outside of the Franco-American political circles, and had a wider range of influence for that reason. As a judge, he wasn't, he didn't ever have a reputation as being a deep thinker or a hard worker, and he died relatively young. He didn't live to be an old man, so he didn't leave a real legacy here. But there are others who would know a lot more about him than I.

MB: What about Ernest Malenfant?

CW: Well, I really didn't know Ernest Malenfant at all. He's another former mayor of Lewiston. He had, his work was something fairly menial, he always had a very, very strong Franco-American accent, he was always identified with his Franco American heritage. He was, I think, sort of the stereotypical politician that, stereotypical in the sense that the non-Franco-American people in the area would regard him as the kind of politician they really looked down on, you know; not regarded as being very intelligent and just being sort of a person who reacted viscerally to issues. I don't know if he's, if he was the person who was a railroad gate tender at

one point in time or not, but he had some success in, as a local politician. But I don't think he ever, his influence ever went beyond the city of Lewiston.

End of Side B, Tape One

Side A, Tape Two

MB: This is tape two of the interview with Curt Webber, side one of tape two of the second interview. I also wanted to know about Georges Rancourt?

CW: I know nothing about him. The name is familiar, I just can't tell you anything about him.

MB: And the last person is Al Cote.

CW: Yes, I know a little bit about him. He was a legislator from Lewiston for many years. He didn't ever run for senate, as far as I know. He also was an alderman in Lewiston for some period of time. And he was another one of the kind of classic, no, that's not the right word to use, a Franco-American politician who really didn't have a great deal of influence beyond his own political environment. He was an extremely fat man, and actually he, his reputation will, those who remember him will remember him basically as an extremely fat person, he had to have some special automobile.

I remember presenting something to a committee that he was a senior member of in the legislature. And he mentioned, as I was beginning some presentation, the custom, which I didn't know about of, that a person in my position should present a box of candy to the committee, sort of like a rite of passage or something. And I, my impression was that his, that was something, the candy was something that he was particularly mindful of, interested in. So, I don't know that he ever had a lot of influence in the local area beyond the city of Lewiston and local city politics. He certainly never distinguished himself in the state legislature as far as I know, even though he served many terms there.

MB: Can you think of anyone else in the Auburn community, or, you know, a higher position that had a lot of influence on this area?

CW: Well, if I had two or three days to think about it I perhaps could... In Auburn the city managers have really been perhaps the most influential people. And department heads, they, particularly community development or economic development people that they have appointed, have been the most influential people I think in the development of the city. Traditionally, until fairly recent times, the city managers would propose policy to the city councillors. In more recent times the, more policy seems to be coming from the mayors. We have a, under the charter here, the mayor has been a rather weak position in Auburn, and the city manager has been the strong position in city government. It's not been true in Lewiston up until recently when they revised the charter, and the city administrator now is a much more influential person. So that the directions of the city have been, over the years have largely been influenced by city managers here. Right now we have a very strong mayor. Mrs. [Lee] Young who is perhaps, (well I don't know, I'm not in the inner circle so I'm not sure, but I have the impression that she really is), has quite a strong role now in promoting policy. She's particularly anxious to develop the Auburn

downtown and so forth, perhaps more so than the city manager.

MB: You mentioned the change in charter. Could you tell me a little bit about when that happened and what they changed, and then what the results were?

CW: In Lewiston?

MB: In Auburn.

CW: Well actually it was, if I said that I perhaps misspoke because the charter in Auburn, Auburn adopted a charter that had a city manager form of government sometime in 1917 or some date like that, it was a long time ago. And there have been charter changes since then, but it hasn't really varied in terms of the essential structure of city government.

In Lewiston on the other hand, there was corruption as I understand it. This was well before my time perhaps in the '20s, I don't know, maybe that was it. And they developed a charter, which is rather unique in which they tried to split up political power among several strong committees. The finance committee was the strongest one; the controller, who was the administrative person who provided administrative assistance to the finance committee, was the strongest administrative person in city government at that time. And the mayor was a relatively strong person and could make important political appointments in the city government there for many, many years. And it's only quite recently that they have had, I can't tell you how recent, that they've changed that completely. The mayor is now a much weaker figure in the city government. And the city administrator, I think they chose not to say city manager because they didn't want to be like Auburn, you know, is a real strong administrative person now in city government in Lewiston.

I can remember once, I think it was back when the controller was the strongest administrative person, I met with the controller, I think it was about the airport, where the two cities were involved. And this person was just so timid, he wasn't willing to make any commitments of substance without first checking with the aldermen in Lewiston to see if that would be okay with them. And that was so different than Auburn where the city manager really had enough administrative authority to make commitments on behalf of the city.

MB: You mentioned that you knew Senator George Mitchell during your years at Bowdoin. Can you tell me anything more about your relationship with him, or what, you know, his political action has been like?

CW: Well, at Bowdoin, knowing him at Bowdoin I never would have believed that he would become majority leader in the Senate, because he was a pretty low profile person. He belonged to a fraternity that was heavily athletic, I guess he was known as one of the brighter people in that fraternity. But he really was not a person who was very well known in college.

I knew him primarily because we were on the basketball team together; he was a class ahead of me. He had two brothers who are older than he who had been outstanding collegiate basketball players, I think one of them went to the University of Rhode Island. And he was not an athlete

like them and he was kind of a mere shadow athletically, but he was a very scrappy guy. And, you know, not very tall, but he really was aggressive and played hard and made the most of his ability. He played quite a lot, he was like the number six person on the team when he was a senior.

Actually, the thing I remember most clearly, I don't know if I can explain this, but I thought, "This guy really has a lot on the ball." We were practicing a fast break offense and he was, typically he would be on the red shirt team, you know, the defending team. And in this offense we'd try to get the pass, pass the ball out to somebody out on the flank who would be, that would be the first step in the fast break. Well George, I can remember more than once that person would get the ball and turn, and George would be right there. So he would just crash into George and it would be a charging violation, the break would be demolished. And, in fact, they had to change the rules. Not just because of George, but that sort of tactic. They said you can't do that any more, you've got to get the person, give the person a little room. But I thought, this is really impressive. Well, that's just one thing that I observed about George as a college person. But afterwards I thought, "Hmm, I should have realized from that that this young person really had a lot of ability."

And I, you know, I sort of next met him as the state chairman of the Democratic party, as a person who was presenting him with things he didn't want to hear on behalf of the McCarthy delegation. He's another person like Hathaway who, I never felt that he was telling people things he didn't believe and voting against his conscience. If he didn't agree with something he just wouldn't say anything, or he might say something oblique, but I never felt that he was misrepresenting how he felt about things. He would try to, if he knew what he felt was politically unpopular you try to find a way not to have to say it, you can understand that. But I thought, I've always thought of him as a very straight person. He didn't use the same sort of political rhetoric always that turns people off a lot. Oh, he did some, but he just, he always came across to me as a much more believable straight-talking political person than so many are.

MB: You had mentioned that your parents were friendly with Frank Coffin. Tell me about him and about that relationship.

CW: Well, you know, it's only hearsay as I was not, he had already, he may have been practicing law in Lewiston the very first of my being here, but I didn't really have any contact with him. And it wasn't long before he joined Verrill, Dana, which is a very large firm in Portland. My father recommended him actually. My father was talking with one of the top people in that firm, who expressed an interest in having another lawyer who could do certain things, and my father thought of Frank Coffin and mentioned him. And he did take that position. He was one of those people who helped to bring about the renaissance of the Democratic Party, along with Senator Muskie. He's a wonderful person and very intelligent, idealistic. As a congressman he was, I think, quite well respected; he was able to get Republicans to vote for him because of that.

He, everyone believed that he was going to become governor when he ran against John Reed. And Shep Lee was his campaign chair, or one of them, as I recall. I remember, that was the beginning of political debates, and I remember sort of being torn because I was still shedding my

Republican background and watching the debates between Reed and Coffin. Coffin had been a Bates debater, so it was, there was really no contest, but. And in fact I've heard people speculate that people felt sorry for Reed because he was getting so creamed in these debates, that they sort of voted for him out of sympathy because Coffin was so knowledgeable, so articulate. But Reed came across as kind of a "down home" kind of a guy with, interested in race horses and, you know, coming from the northern part of the state with a strong Maine accent. I think Coffin was so sure he was going to win that he actually spent the time campaigning for other candidates. It was just a crushing defeat for him, and lots of people like me who admired him, when he lost that gubernatorial race.

MB: How was he involved in politics locally?

CW: I don't know, that was before my time. But what I understood was that he and Prof. Herbert Brown of Bowdoin and Ed Muskie and perhaps Shep Lee and some others got together and just helped bring the Democratic party out of the stage it was in which was, as a party, regarded as dominated by Franco-Americans, a party of mill workers. They showed that it had a broader appeal than that, that there was a real intellectual base to the Democratic Party in Maine, and helped to dispel that stereotypical image of the party as being purely an ethnic one. They had ideas and just turned the political world around, made the Republican Party begin to seem conservative, hide-bound, lacking in new thinking ideas.

MB: You had told me last time that your father was a superior and a supreme court judge. Had you ever been interested in following that?

CW: Well I have given it passing thought over the years, and I... Once in a while another lawyer has asked me if I'd be interested in being appointed to superior court. And I've had the, I've reflected afterwards how arrogant of me to even have thought about getting appointed as a judge, because I don't think I ever could have been appointed. I just didn't have the kind of clout that was needed. But even more than that, although it's sort of appealing to think of being able to participate in shaping the law, superior court judges have less opportunity to do that than the supreme court judges do. The judges are so into scheduling by others, they don't have control over their own time the way I like to feel I do. Because I'm actually, there are many times I don't feel that I have control over my own time, but I, in general I can decide I'm going to take this block of time off, I'm going to do this, I'm not going to do that. Judges don't have that option.

And then too, I don't have any criminal law. Superior court judges have to spend a lot of their time dealing with criminal law matters, that it always troubled me to imagine that I wouldn't be competent. And then another thing, one other thing, is that judges have to make decisions and move on. You can't be thinking, "Well, is that right or wrong?" That ruling on evidence or that thing that I did ten minutes or an hour ago. And I just don't think my personality is right for that. I'm afraid I would agonize, I'm too much of a bleeding heart. You've got to have enough self-confidence, first of all. You've got to have terrific instincts because you're spread so thin over many, many areas of the law. My practice has narrowed to essentially two areas of the law now. So you've got to deal with everything. Lawyers can help you some to gain some knowledge but then you've got to make all kinds of rulings. And then you've got to live with those, and you can't go back and agonize over that. I've just felt that that wasn't me.

MB: Last time we also never talked about your family. How many children do you have?

CW: Three.

MB: And what are their names?

CW: Rebecca who is, you may actually have heard her laugh in the distance, she's my oldest child. My second child's name is Peter, my youngest child's name is John.

MB: And what do they do now?

CW: Well, Becky is a lawyer in this office, and Peter works for an advertising agency in Portland, and John works in Boston and he is involved in marketing and public relations [Marketing Director, The Investext Group].

MB: Where did they attend their earlier education, for their earlier education.

CW: Well they all went to Auburn schools, and then they switched over to Hebron at one point or another. It was actually Becky who started that. She was not really challenged at Edward Little and she had friends at Hebron and she persuaded us that it would be a good idea to switch over as a senior, which she did do. And her experience there was so positive that we kind of leaned on our sons to make the same change, and they, we pushed there a little bit to get them to do it. I think now they feel it was a good thing to do.

MB: What's Hebron?

CW: Hebron is a private academy located in Hebron, Maine, which is slightly west of Auburn. You go to, Auburn to Minot, Hebron's the next town.

MB: What values did you think that were important for you to instill in your children?

CW: Well, anything I say is going to sound just like, sort of the mushy moralistic thinking. I always hoped that they would scrupulously tell the truth. I wanted them to be concerned about other people, wanted them to be loyal. Those are the things I can think of right now.

MB: Is there anything else that you feel that you could add about politics, the Auburn community, yourself, or state politics, Muskie, anything?

CW: No, I think you've actually exhausted my memory and even jogged my memory between this interview and the prior one. Because I had really forgotten about the traumatic experience in 1968 up in Augusta that I spent, probably, too much time talking about.

MB: No, it was great.

CW: It was very, it was fascinating at the time but not a lot of fun.

End of Interview