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Wilson, Ruth Rowe oral history interview

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Interview with Ruth Rowe Wilson by Don Nicoll, Stuart O'Brien and Rob Chavira

Summary Sheet and Transcript

Interviewee

Wilson, Ruth Rowe

Interviewers

Nicoll, Don

Chavira, Rob

O'Brien, Stuart

Date

July 22, 1998

Place

Lewiston, Maine

ID Number

MOH 034

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Biographical Note

Ruth Rowe was born in Waterville, Maine on June 6, 1914. Her parents were Hope [Chandler] and Harry Rowe. Hope was a housewife and Harry was the dean of Bates College. The family moved to Lewiston when Ruth was very young. She attended Lewiston public schools, graduating from Lewiston High School in 1932. She then went to Bates College, where she was active in the YWCA, debating, and student government. She majored in sociology and economics, and took several biology classes. She graduated from Bates in 1936, the same year as Edmund Muskie. She married Val Wilson, a Bates graduate, and moved across the country while he worked as a college administrator. In 1956, they invited Ed Muskie to speak at Skidmore College where Val was president. She eventually returned to Lewiston and became editor of the *Bates Magazine*. At the time of the interview, she edited the class notes section of the *Bates Magazine*, and remains active at Bates.

Scope and Content Note

The interview discusses such topics as Lewiston history; Dean Harry W. Rowe; Rowe family politics; “Townies” at Bates; Bates from 1932 to 1936; Ed Muskie as a classmate; Harry Rowe helping Ed Muskie pay tuition; Brooks Quimby; lessons from Bates Debate; racism in Lewiston; the relationship between Bates and Lewiston; religion in Lewiston; high school activities; professors at Bates; her work for the YWCA after college; social activities at Bates; 1956 Bates reunion at the Blaine House; the history of African-Americans and other minorities at Bates; gender divisions at Bates; the Bates Outing Club; Betty Winston Scott’s relationship with the Muskies; dining halls at Bates; the career of Val Wilson; fundamentalists in Baptist education; Democratic policies; the Bates alumni magazine; Ed Muskie’s visit to Skidmore; Frank Coffin; the development of Democratic politics in Maine; the Cribbage Club in Parker Hall; her relations with the Muskies through time; comparing Bates in the 1930s to the 1990s; and Muskie’s legacy.

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Transcript

RC: Will you start by stating your full name and spelling it?

Ruth Rowe Wilson: Ruth Rowe Wilson.

RC: Will you spell it for me?

RW: Oh, the whole name? R-U-T-H, R-O-W-E, W-I-L-S-O-N.

RC: Sounds silly but it just makes it easier when we transcribe so we make sure everyone's name is spelled right.

RW: Oh, I see, I got it, yeah.

RC: Where were you born and when?

RW: Beg your pardon?

RC: When and where were you born?

RW: I was born June 6, 1914, long time ago.

RC: And where?

RW: In Waterville, but came here when I was three months old, so it's really, I'm a native of Lewiston.

RC: Did you grow up your whole life pretty much in Lewiston?

RW: Yes.

RC: What street?

RW: We lived on, at 35-, well, we lived on Nichols Street when I was an infant, across the street from where College Relations business is. One day I walked out of there and realized that this was the first home I had had. And then we lived at 350 College Street, which is across from Page Hall, for many years and lived on White Street a couple years and then my folks bought 374 College Street.

TOB: Now, your dad at that time was a dean?

RW: Beg your pardon?

TOB: The dean emeritus?

RW: Well, he was many things. He was originally director of grounds and buildings, and he was also in charge of the SATC program, the Student Army Training Corps. He drilled the guys for WWI out in back of Parker Hall. And he was alumni secretary for twenty-five years. He was dean of men, although he was called assistant to the president it was sort of two jobs, for a long time and then became dean of the faculty until he retired. I'm not just sure of the date, in 1957, along in there somewhere.

TOB: When he retired, in 1957?

RW: I think so. You'd have to check it.

TOB: What did your mother do?

RW: My mother was a very smart woman, but she was very modest and quiet and, but she did everything. I mean, she canned all the vegetables that my father grew in his garden, she made a lot of our clothes, she entertained college students, and we had them helping my mother with housework also. And when dad was dean, he always invited the candidates to come to lunch, my mother always served lunch. This is interesting, he always insisted that the wife come, too, because he felt that it was very important in those days to meet the wife of a candidate. Couldn't do that now.

RC: What were your parents' names? What were their names?

RW: My parents? Harry W. Rowe. My mother was Hope Chandler Rowe.

RC: Now when you were growing up, was this during the Depression years?

RW: Well, before that.

RC: It was before that?

RW: Yeah, well, from late teens through the twenties, the Depression hit us in 1929 of course and so I came to college just post Depression when nobody had any money. You've heard the expression, a Bates man is known by the patch on the seat of his pants? Okay, well that was coined by one of the graduates.

TOB: By a classmate of yours, right?

RW: No, no, it was not a classmate of mine. It was a debater. I'll think of his name in a minute [the late Gordon "Pop" Jones, Bates '35].

TOB: So you were how old when you entered Bates?

RW: Eighteen, same age as most everybody, right out of high school.

TOB: Where'd you go to high school?

RW: Lewiston High. Yeah, I went all through the Lewiston schools.

TOB: Where was Lewiston High at that point?

RW: It was down where the Jordan apartments are? It was Jordan High School.

TOB: That's where he lives.

RC: I live there now.

RW: You live there? How neat.

RC: It's an apartment complex.

RW: Oh, that's interesting.

RC: It's really interesting, it's still set up like it's a school.

RW: Is it? In my senior year, we were the first class to graduate from Lewiston High, which is now the Junior High, isn't it?

RC: What were your parents political affiliations?

RW: Oh, they were rock-ribbed Republicans. My mother came from Aroostook County, which is a very Democratic county, and she must have made some adjustment. As a matter of fact, we, well a couple of stories about my father and his being a Republican, you want this?

RC: Absolutely, yes.

RW: He voted for Muskie for governor, he would not have done anything else, of course, but I think he felt a little guilty about voting a Democratic ticket, then he started splitting his ticket after that. And we teased, my children and I are all pretty much in the Democratic persuasion and we were having dinner at my house in Auburn one time with my parents and my kids were getting after my father about Nixon, giving him a real hard time. And my father says, "We will not discuss politics tonight." that was it. He didn't want to be put on the spot.

DN: Where was your father's home?

RW: My father was brought up in Mercer, Maine, which is a little town up, oh, near, maybe near Skowhegan. And he was, his parents were older than the average parents and he didn't have much childhood, as we have now, anything we've heard about. And he was farmed out to a rooming house probably during grammar school days and, then he went to Maine Central Institute, MCI, and that was really the making of him, and he ended up as chairman of the board of trustees there, so.

RC: Growing up during the years you grew up, was it, was the financial situation really difficult? I mean for everybody.

RW: Yeah, yeah, it was everybody. You'll be shocked but it cost my dad two hundred fifty dollars tuition, it was five hundred dollars I guess maybe a year, and it was costing half because we lived at home, but three of us were in Bates at one time, and he made about three thousand dollars a year.

TOB: You didn't get free tuition because your dad was the dean?

RW: No, but he got half price. No, there was no such thing as free tuition, even then, I'm sure there was not.

RC: Didn't your father help Ed pay off one of his years?

RW: Yes, yes. When I wrote this article, you'll find it in that, I had understood from something Dad said that Ed ran out of money last semester of his senior year. And everybody worked their way through college in those days, and I don't remember what he did in the summer, but everybody had a job of one kind or [another], he was head waiter over at Commons in JB.

RC: Can you tell us a little bit about exactly what that, what the dining hall was like at that time? What do you mean he was the head waiter? Did the students actually sit down at tables for dinner and have other students wait on them?

RW: Oh, yeah. I don't know whether this is in that piece that I did, but the students all lined up outside the double doors and the woman, the dietician, was Ma Roberts and she was quite a, authoritarian, and Ed sort of had to lean against the door as the head waiter to keep them from pushing in the door. No, this was, this came out when I, we did a, Jane Lindholm and I did a thing on Evelyn Phillips. And one of the men at the time was a waiter then, he remembered the

Phillips' coming, but when Ed came to Skidmore to give a lecture, my husband introduced him as having been the head waiter, when he was a waiter.

RC: Oh, head waiter?

RW: Yeah, Val waited on tables all through college, plus other things [sewing machines].. But the story you asked about, the financial thing, Ed went in to see my father, you know, he said he had no money, and the story goes and I think it's true, that Dad said you just go back to class and don't worry. Well, I wasn't about to use that until I was sure, so I went to see Norm Ross who still has the most amazing memory. He may be frail in body but believe me he's the only one left here, except maybe Dean Lindholm and Bob Wade over in Auburn, who know all these things. And so I asked Norman and he said that was true, that, and I suspected that George Lane, who was college treasurer, had put up the money, Lane Hall is named for him, but I wasn't sure. And he said, oh, yes, he said, George Lane liked to help out "worthy students," that's a quote, worthy students. And also, quote, "we didn't go to the well too often," Mr. Ross said, and I think that's in that book.

TOB: You used that in your piece, yeah.

RW: I did, yeah, okay. But Brooks Quimby taught me well and I wasn't going to use that unless I checked it out.

TOB: So, what year did you enter Bates College?

RW: Thirty-two to '36, same class as Ed.

TOB: When did you meet Ed Muskie?

RW: I really don't know. He was, you know, a tall, lanky, skinny guy and I think rather shy, and came from up the river in Rumford, and, but I wasn't, went out for debating and he was also in debating and I think that's where we first met, but I didn't know him terribly well through college. We got to know each other better over the years in Washington, and at class reunions, and the trip to Skidmore was fun. They stayed with us and we had a very nice old home week sort of thing along with the students who were fascinated. And that's when, one of the exciting things for our children was to have a car in the driveway saying, Maine U.S. 1, he was number one senator, so

RC: How would you characterize how Lewiston's changed socio-economically, religiously and ethnically since that time period? How is it different?

RW: We had quite a discussion about that this morning. I think, as I was growing up, the word you'd use now probably would be racist. Lewiston was very, the thing that, until I was an adult I didn't even think about it or realize, but there was something like twenty-seven different nationalities here in Lewiston. Because I worked in the YW and through the international institute and I knew this, but the Franco American population was probably the largest, and the Wasps who were around here, you know, didn't realize that. You know, we thought we were

probably more important or whatever. But I don't think the relationship has ever been very good until recent years and the efforts that Dean Carignan is making and people like Peggy Rotundo on the school board, and people who have served on the school board before. Lindholm was on the school board way back . . .

TOB: The relationship between . . . ?

RW: The city and the college, is that what you're talking, asking about?

TOB: Yes.

RW: Yeah, but somebody went into one of the stores down on Lisbon Street and said, "Isn't there a college in this town?" And they said, "Oh yeah, out there somewhere." You could do that today someplace down on Lisbon Street and probably you'd get the same reply. But I think that the town-gown, it's not a bad relationship, maybe never was, but it was just misunderstood.

RC: Do you feel like a lot of the dissension between Anglos and the French were Catholic - Protestant related?

RW: Well, French Canadians were pretty much blue collar, mill workers, and the Anglos were the professional class and college educated and college faculty people and so forth. And I'm not sure that that attitude prevailed among faculty per se, you wouldn't, you'd expect maybe a little bit, not much there, but other people in the community probably had that. You asked about the churches, and of course the Catholic churches were predominant. And the United Baptist Church was the most liberal church in the two cities. It was called the college church, and in my day we had a youth fellowship every Sunday night and college kids went down there in droves, and a lot of students went to church on Sunday. In fact, if you went to church with the guy you were dating, you were announcing your engagement, get that.

TOB: Now was Bates, Lewiston was mostly a Catholic enclave.

RW: Pretty much, except for these other, many other denominations, other nationalities that, you know, everything from Polish and Czech and Italian and many others. As I say, I understand there were twenty-seven different nation-nationalities, Greek, a lot of Greek people in town.

TOB: Was Bates mostly made up of Protestants?

RW: Yes.

TOB: Mostly kids from Maine in 1932, or kids from, a lot of kids from other New England states?

RW: Well, there were I don't know how many local students. We were called townies, and there was a little feeling there, too. You felt as though, well, I don't know, we probably had a

complex of some kind. I don't think, but I made my friends among people in dorms and lived at home, but I sort of forgot I was a townie. It was almost a pejorative term.

RC: It still is today.

RW: It's still that way?

RC: Do you think the distinctions still persist in Lewiston that existed in ...?

RW: Well, I think so. Probably always will because a lot of people just don't understand what the college is all about and until we were getting a little better press, all they knew was what they read in the paper, which was not always very good.

RC: What were some of the things that were written about Bates?

RW: You mean as news, local paper picking up on, oh, anything that went wrong, that was against the line, and of course this whole stuff ...

TOB: It's still that way (*unintelligible word*).

RW: This whole spring, all this business, I'm sure it was grist for the mill of a lot of people.

TOB: I've noticed, though, that back in the '40s, '50s and '60s reading newspaper articles, they would, there would be a lot about Bates. There would be, a Bates Winter Carnival Queen would be announced in the Sun Journal, if the Bates debating team won, it would be announced in the paper. It seems like today the only time they ever pick up a Bates story is when it's more negative.

RW: Well, and I think occasionally people write letters to the editor and say why haven't you picked up, instead of your horrible headlines, why don't you pick up something positive.

TOB: Now getting back to when you entered Bates in 1932, what was a normal day like for a first year student in 1932?

RW: Oh, ...

TOB: Tough question.

RW: Well, you had four classes and it seems to me some were Tuesdays and Thursdays, some Monday-Wednesday-Friday. You had compulsory chapel six days a week at 7:40 in the morning. You had 7:40 classes and chapel was at 8:40 I guess and went for twenty minutes or more. And two days the choir sang, there was good music Tuesdays and Fridays. Faculty members spoke, I think somewhat reluctantly, and some were more interesting than others, but, and then students spoke. I'm sure Muskie spoke many times as he became a student leader. And of course visiting lecturers and so forth. But it was a time for the college all to get together, five hundred and fifty students in one place for twenty minutes. There was a feeling of community I

think, nobody would have labeled it as such, but it was, a feeling of solidarity and community. And they sat alphabetically A to Z for a semester and Z to A for second semester, and you got to know the people on either side of you in your alphabet very well. In fact, a lot of people married people who sat next to them. That's true. I can tell you the people.

TOB: Batesies have a long history of marrying other Batesies.

RW: Yeah, yeah, they still, probably the computer would kick it out for you, you know, you probably can get a list of all Bates couples and compare them with ...

TOB: (*Speaking over RW*) . . . I think it's something ridiculous like fifty percent.

RW: Well, maybe so.

RC: Thirty.

RW: Thirty now? Or was it thirty always? You've evidently checked it out.

RC: I think it's thirty now.

RW: Perhaps more in my day than now. But you read your mail and ...

TOB: You ate at JB?

RW: No, I ate at home.

TOB: Oh, but if you were living on campus?

RW: Women ate at Rand Hall on the second floor, that whole second floor was a dining hall.

TOB: And the men at JB?

RW: And the men at JB. And only once a year did they have coed dining, and that was the seniors, I think. Men were allowed to go eat in Rand Hall.

RC: Stepping back for a moment, you said your parents were really rooted in the Republican tradition. Did you sort of follow that growing up?

RW: Oh, probably, yeah.

RC: And when you got to Bates you would characterize your ideals as being Republican.

RW: I remember my husband and I had great discussions about, he always teased me about it and he didn't always know how I voted but, I voted for Kennedy and left to go pick up one of my daughters at school to go on some college tour, he never knew how I voted. I'm sure he figured it out, but.

TOB: Now was Bates as a whole a very Republican institution?

RW: Yeah, I would think so.

TOB: Very conservative?

RW: Yes. Yeah, really conservative. We had a lot of, too many rules. We had an awful lot of rules. Even though I lived at home, you know, there were all kinds of rules. They didn't trust us, you know. A little of that might go a long way right now, but ...

TOB: Well, I think they're returning a little bit to a little more stricter policy.

RW: Well, Prof. Cutts who was head of physical education department used to monitor exams and he said, "You're on your honor but I'm watching you just the same."

RC: Were you raised religiously at all?

RW: Was I what?

RC: Raised religiously?

RW: Yeah, we were members of the Baptist church. My husband and I later saw the light and became Congregationalists.

TOB: Tell us about the debate team.

TOB: Did you join right away when you came to Bates?

RW: Yeah, I debated in high school so they reached out and pulled me in freshman year, and also freshman, I think I won the freshman prize speaking which they had in those days. And had no idea I'd win and when I left home I said to my mother, "Wouldn't it be funny if I won," and I did. But I guess Caron¹ asked me this morning about faculty relationships and children, faculty children, and a couple of faculty wives were judges and one of them said if she'd known I was going to compete she wouldn't have felt easy being a judge. I don't know.

But I debated four years on the women's team, and I have to say that Brooks Quimby probably influenced me more than anybody else. Dr. Zerby did, too, but Quimby, this is something that I realize now that I didn't realize then, but if I had known that I was going to be a college editor for instance, I might have paid more attention, but the thing that we learned in debating was to document everything. You never assume and you always look it up and check it out, you know, apropos of this Muskie story. So, when I got into this kind of business, it's just built in, but I know that it was due to Brooks. Because debating was different then, you know, you wrote a brief, and you wrote out, especially rebuttal on index cards, and you got up and gave your speech and sat down, you know, back and forth. It was not the informal Oxford method of debating that they do now, which I think probably requires more, you have to think on your feet a lot more. You don't have a brief with everything down.

¹ Caron Pelletier was a student interviewer working on the Bates Oral History project in the summer of 1998.

RC: What other extra curricular activities did you do in high school?

RW: In high school? Oh, I was in debating, I was a class officer, I was always pushing what might be called the agenda for change and, I was considered sort of left wing by one of my teachers. But, I'd been brought up in a home where, you know, in spite of the Republicanism, we had foreign students, especially a couple of students, Japanese students who came and helped my mother and one of them, Kohe Nagakura worked for other faculty members. He was an older student and came to Bates and tended to work very hard to get through. Did you ever take biology here?

RC: No, I haven't.

RW: Well, you missed something. There's a, I think they're still over there in the lab, there's a set of clay models of mitosis, do you know what that is? You know, cell division, yup, which Nagakura made all those years ago. He was in the class of '25, a very famous Bates class. So we had contact with all different kinds of people as we were growing up, and, as my children did, I mean, we had all kinds of people in our home and that makes a big difference.

RC: Why did you decide to come to Bates of all places. It was right down the street.

RW: I always wanted to come to Bates.

RC: You didn't want to get away from here?

RW: No, my sister didn't want to come here, but did. But I ...

RC: It must have been a pretty comfortable atmosphere given that you grew up here, your father was a (*unintelligible word*).

RW: Well, I just, you know, I always wanted to come here and it was no issue with me.

RC: Once you were here, other than Brooks Quimby, who are some other really influential ...?

RW: Well, Dr. Zerby in particular. I had, I was not a good Latin student, but I had Freddy Knapp for Latin and he was, you know, one of the older faculty members. I'm not sure but I think he, Prof. Robinson who taught public speaking, everybody had to take public speaking, and I wish they did now because students get up and they are not very articulate. And he had my parents as students, so, you know, this is a rather interesting thing. And I think maybe Freddy Knapp did, I'm not sure.

TOB: What about Pa Gould?

RW: Pa Gould probably influenced Ed Muskie more than any other faculty member because he majored in political science which was history and government in those days, and I think Ed has credited him with that, too. I had one course from Pa Gould and it wasn't particularly my basic interest, but he was good. He had a twinkle in his eye even though he was a real tough teacher.

TOB: What was your major?

RW: My major? Soc. Economics and sociology but economics they can keep, you know, I'm not, it was required or I never would have taken it. And I just can't get over admiring the women who major in economics these days. It must be much more interesting because the professor was not.

TOB: It, I think the major that, it's off the bat one of the more financially rewarding.

RC: It's the more lucrative major.

RW: Oh, well yeah, nowadays I understand that. But, I took all the biology I could get because I had never had any and I was fascinated by it and Dr. Sawyer was a wonderful teacher. I had Prof. Pomeroy just for basic freshman biology, but I had, let's see, two more years and I started out with it in my senior year with embryology and histology. But I had to give it up because I was president of the Y and debating and co-educating up to here, so I just had to drop it, but I really enjoyed the biology. Vertebrate anatomy, invertebrate, all of that.

RC: You mentioned that if you had known that you were going to be an editor, you might have done something different. What did you want to be when you were in college, what were your aspirations?

RW: Well, I worked in a YW for three years out in Ohio. It was in those days called a Girl Reserve secretary, that's a pretty militant title but it was social group work with high school kids and some young adults. And the interesting thing about it, I got very much interested in race relations in college and integration as they called it in those days. And my, we had, everybody had a big sister and little sister, and my little sister my junior year was the first Black woman to live in the dorm at Bates, Ellen [Kinloch] Craft Dammond². And we've kept up all these years, but, the liberal attitude in my family probably contributed to my interest in this. But when I went to Ohio I discovered that I had, this is also on the other tape, I had the girls club of Black students and a young adult club of Black women, young women, and on the Y board there was no Black woman to represent this other group. So my father's parting words to me were, "don't try to amalgamate the Blacks and the whites the first week you're there." It gives you a pretty good idea of, you know, how I was brought up. Well, I didn't do it in the first week, but in three years I did. And, you know, I came from Maine and they thought I was some kind of curiosity when I was working out there.

TOB: Getting back to Brooks Quimby and debate, Brooks Quimby and debating, did the men's and women's debate teams compete together or were they separate?

RW: No, no.

² Bates College graduate, class of 1938. First black woman to live in the dorms at Bates College.

TOB: So you didn't have very much interaction with the, with debating, were there debate dinners?

RW: Not a lot, but there was a debating council which everybody belonged to and we'd have meetings, you know, the debate council would have meetings.

TOB: Was Ed Muskie on a debate council?

RW: Oh, yes, sure, everybody was that debated.

TOB: What were your impressions as, with Ed Muskie as a debater?

RW: He was very good. He was just smart, bright, fellow on his feet.

RC: That doesn't, he's always described as shy, Ed was always described as being a really good debater, it seems sort of ...

RW: Yeah, he was shy, well, the two don't necessarily contradict each other, you know. He, I always thought he was kind of shy, but he was, you know, tall and gangling country boy and ...

TOB: He lived in Parker?

RW: Yeah, the person to talk, is, if you haven't talked to Dean Lindholm, you should talk to Dean Lindholm about him. And some of Ed's roommates are not living any longer, but there were people that lived in Parker with him. You could probably get Kurt Kuss or somebody who helps him out, dig out somehow some of the people that, some of Ed's roommates or classmates, people that knew him really well.

TOB: What were the big social activities?

RW: Well, probably the biggest one was the Saturday night dance in Chase Hall, because that's when everybody went and that's where you met lots of people, and of course they were chaperoned, every ...

TOB: What was it like? Live band?

RW: The Bates Bobcats. They can really still swing it. They've come back for reunion a couple of years ago, and they put on a real swinging band concert at Chase Hall. Toe tapping wonderful. And they've gotten together the old Bobcats.

TOB: Like big band swing music is what they'd play?

RW: Well, at our, and we had proms, you know, we had a junior semi formal, well there was a, semi formal tea dances. This dates us, you see. When you wore long dresses, and then there was a junior prom and a senior prom, and a graduation dance commencement night and you'd dance until three in the morning at Bates College in 1936! But Woody Herman played at one of our

proms, one of our dances, when he was first starting out. I remember that, I remember it was a really good band.

TOB: Now, you mentioned in your article the room eleven in Parker Hall cribbage games.

RW: Okay, well, I was not privy to that but I must have mentioned the person who quoted that and you should get in touch with him.

TOB: I don't know if there was a name, you just kind of mentioned it vaguely in the article.

RW: I didn't mention him by name?

TOB: You might have, I don't know though. We could check.

TOB: You didn't have first hand experience with that at all?

RW: Heck no, women weren't allowed in the men's dorms. The men were invited I think to visit the senior women in Chase Hall, and in Rand Hall, maybe like an open house once a year, like once, the time when they had coed dining, but ...

TOB: Do you remember having any classes with Ed Muskie?

RW: I'm not sure. I didn't know him that well, you know, in college. We just sort of, someone, he was class officer and, but quiet and just not somebody that you got to know. But we began to know him when he became governor of Maine.

TOB: You mention in your article around '56 when they had a reception for your twentieth anniversary at the Blaine House.

RW: Yes, and the bald headed men all, did I put that in?

TOB: No.

RW: He had all the bald headed men lean over and took their pictures.

TOB: Well, tell us about that reception.

RW: It was lovely, you know. We got to more or less see a good bit of the Blaine House. The children were real, his children were little and they were running around upstairs ...

TOB: That was open to your whole class?

RW: Yes, everybody who came back for reunion, we all went up to Augusta, to the Blaine House. I still remember Jane Muskie's wonderful flower arrangements of peonies, and I've told her that since, I just ...

TOB: You mentioned that in your article, too.

RW: I did? The sort of thing that impresses you. Yeah, it was great, you know, to be able to do that and, by the way, if you haven't talked to Frank Coffin, you should.

TOB: Talked to him yesterday.

RW: You did? Good. There's a really great guy.

TOB: Did Muskie do a lot of work with the alumni, as class president? Did he, was he the one who wrote all the letters for reunions?

RW: No, no, I don't think he was, I don't remember, he was president of the class while we were undergraduates. I don't remember whether he was class president, he might have been. But he came back as often as he could and then of course he was a trustee for many years, and I think that's when he had a closer relationship with the college.

RC: I have a couple of questions. You said, was it your first year that the young Black woman was the first Black woman ...

RW: No, my junior year. She's the class of '38.

RC: Class of '38. Before that were there any Black women at all?

RW: Only one, and she lived off campus with her family. It was Margery Arlington whose father, stepfather maybe, was George Ross, who had the famous ice cream parlor down on Elm Street. See, the big sister thing, seniors had little sisters, juniors did, I guess, oh maybe all three classes did, and there were certain things that you did with your little sister. For instance, one class took them to Ross' for ice cream, they had the old fashioned ice cream round tables, the wire chairs and homemade ice cream. And George had gone, was a, I think he was a Bates graduate, well maybe he drove around here in a horse and buggy and called out the ice creams originally. And he always had a verse, if you went to get ice cream he'd always know you by name and my sister's name was Esther and he always said, "Esther, have you got any money to invest?" I mean, that, so Margery, his daughter, came to Bates but she lived at home, so Ellen Dammond was the first woman to live on campus.

And the, let's see, in our class there was Owen Dodson, the poet, a couple of other men that I can remember right off hand, but there weren't very many Black students. There was a woman from France in a class, maybe class of '37, and a woman from Germany, but we just didn't have many international students. And of course when the war came, ah One of our classmates whom I forgot to mention this morning was Hirasawa, you know that name from the Hirasawa Lounge, Kazushige, and he was editor of the Japan Times, the English newspaper in Tokyo, and came here and joined our class for the last two years.

TOB: There was three Japanese students here when the war (*unintelligible phrase*), so that's interesting.

RW: Yeah, and we kept up during the war. You know, the word was we remained friends regardless of the war, and I think Muskie and Hirasawa were probably good friends. Ed may have been in Japan and seen him, I don't know.

DN: After the war, yes.

RW: After the war he did, yes. Then their daughter [Yoko '65] came here to Bates and graduated, and I think he came back once or twice.

DN: Had you seen Ed between the time he graduated and 1956?

RW: Not very often.

DN: How different was he in '56 when you went to the Blaine House?

RW: Oh well, he was a governor and he sort of gotten his feet under him and, but he was always a very modest man. I suppose it has something to do with his Maine background. And if you wanted a reasoned, sensible argument in the Senate, Muskie was one of the ones who could do it. His, Brooks Quimby's whole theory was persuasion, you know, you do things by persuasion, and Muskie was a master at it. And so when he had to tackle some of those birds in the Senate, he did a good job of . . . And I think what, we used to take our children on a pilgrimage to Washington once in awhile and we would look him up, and Margaret Chase Smith and people like that. We got to know him better in later years, and of course he also has a summer place in Kennebunk and we were sort of neighbors.

DN: I'd like to take you back to Brooks Quimby because of your comment on persuasion. Was he explicit about the art of persuasion? Did he use that term?

RW: Oh, yes, and he used it with us.

TOB: With both women's and men's debating?

RW: Yes. You know, I don't think he made much distinction, I'm sure he felt the men's debaters were more important than we were, but, there were some very interesting women who were women debaters along in there.

RC: One of the things you've been, one of the things I've noticed with talking about Bates in general in the '30s is that gender repeatedly comes up, how everything was separate, how it was very, they had distinct things for each group. How did you feel about that in the '30s, was it just such a part of normalcy that ...?

RW: Yeah, you took it for granted I think sometimes. Well, the only thing I can think of coed was seating in chapel. You know, they didn't, probably for the practical reason that they had to take attendance and they had people sitting alphabetically so Bobby Berkelman could find out who wasn't there with a blank space in the seat. He sat up in the balcony and took attendance, and my father sat in the balcony a good bit of the time and he, it was anathema to him to have a

student come in chewing gum, and he could tell by the way their ears were wiggling whether they were chewing gum or not. They'd go into his office chewing gum and he'd hold out a waste basket.

TOB: Who did you debate, what other schools?

RW: Well, I don't remember too much about it. We debated, we went to University of Vermont and we went to Middlebury, and the only trips that I can remember were those, otherwise there were debates here on campus.

TOB: For Bates, Bowdoin, Colby (*unintelligible word*).

RW: Well, I'm sure we didn't debate Bowdoin.

TOB: No?

RW: The women didn't. No women at Bowdoin in those days. I would, the way to find out is to look at my yearbook and the list of debates are in it. I didn't do my homework, you see, before I came down today. And also who the women were who debated. Elizabeth Gregory was one of them, who's one of the best pediatricians in the Boston area, she's retired now but . . . When we had the hundredth anniversary of debate at Bates a couple of years ago in the fall in Chase Hall, it was great because so many people came back and there were lots of tales about Brooks Quimby. Of course, Muskie was gone by then, so.

RC: You said sort of offhand that you think Brooks probably thought that the men were more important. You say you took it for granted, but even so, did you ever feel as though you were being, getting a second ...?

RW: Well, colored by my attitudes now, I must have resented it some.

RC: But at the time you didn't?

RW: But at the time it was the status quo, that's the way things were, and you didn't buck the system really.

RC: And at that time there was no sort of collectivity trying to break through that?

RW: You just, no.

TOB: No student activism?

RW: No, well, we got out of our systems I guess, the leadership roles we had on campus on the women's side, like I was president of the YW and the president of women's physical ed and student government. We were all very, very close and we'd cooperate and did things together, but that and debating and, as I said, co-educating keeps you really busy. Plus, you know, studies which you really had to put first.

RC: You were a sociology major. In my experience of sociology, it's one of the more liberal disciplines.

RW: Yes, I think so.

RC: It directly addresses things like gender and so forth. Was that part of the curriculum then in sociology?

RW: Not a lot. Andy Myhrman was the chairman of the department and somebody, we adored Andy, he was really great, but I think the courses were not what you would find in soc today. There was a course on marriage and the family, for instance. And somebody else I should mention, too, is Peter Bertocci. Taught psychology. I had Peter for one semester but he was excellent. And he's the person that probably influenced my husband more than any other professor at Bates. And his brother Angelo, you've heard of cultch? Cultural Heritage course? I don't know what you have that compares with it now, but ...

RC: Is it just the history of different ...?

RW: Well, it sort of covers the cultural spectrum in a way and Dr. Zerby inaugurated that and Angelo Bertocci taught the classes and alumni still write back if they've gone on a tour, an elder hostel trip or somewhere to European countries, they say that reminds us of cultch, of the wonderful course they had at Bates.

TOB: Frank Coffin mentioned both of those men, too. Peter and Angelo.

RW: Yes, they were absolutely, they were brothers and quite dissimilar but just, you know, teachers like Tagliabue has been now, just exciting teachers.

TOB: Who?

RW: John Tagliabue.

DN: John was not on the faculty when you were a student?

RW: Oh, no. Wish he had been. No, I had Bobby Berkelman for a semester and was scared to death of him.

DN: I'm fascinated by the number of names you've mentioned of faculty members whom I knew in the '50s and '60s.

(RW and DN speaking at once.)

RW: ... who were elder statesmen by then probably, but, well, yeah, the ones that I think of, that I mention, I mentioned Fred Knapp who taught Latin, and he was of the old school, and that was not my strong suit at all. I squeaked through thanks to him, I think. But ...

TOB: Was Prof. Robinson one of your teachers?

RW: Yeah, he taught public speaking and everybody had to take it, it was required.

RC: Normally perhaps I wouldn't ask this question but we have plenty of time, so, I'm fascinated by the difference in a class like family and marriage in the '30s and now. Was it just really misogynistic or ...?

RW: No, no, it's just that, there was nowhere else to go except to Saturday night dances. Hardly anybody had a car, you know. Nobody went off campus because everything was right here on campus. You know, everything, all the sports events and the Saturday night dances, carnival. Carnival was a really big thing in those days.

TOB: Yeah, huge, the whole scrapbook's just pages and pages of ...

RW: The whole college turned out for carnival. And most of it was out of doors, too, and the Outing Club's the other thing that I was in that I really enjoyed and stuck with. I didn't ...

End of Side One
Side Two

TOB: ... maintained all these miles of Appalachian trails, built all these cabins, it must have been amazing.

RW: There was a cabin out on Sabattus Mountain, the Henry Rich Cabin that burned, and we had a cabin at Thorncrag which . . . Cabin parties were great, you know, you could, I remember going up there and pulling our food up on a sled and cooking in a ...

TOB: We have a cabin at Mt. Abraham now, near Kingfield ...

RW: Oh, you do?

TOB: ... and one in a place called Fisher Farms.

RW: Have you talked to Dick Sampson?

RC: No.

RW: Well, he's, I know that Caron has talked to him, but he was head of the Outing Club for years and years and years and knew a lot of students. But I don't think, Muskie of course was a good student, you know, he was an excellent student along with everything else, and ...[all students were automatically members of the Outing Club and of the respective women's and men's student government.

TOB: Well, this is interesting because he in later life was really into hunting and fishing and things like that in the outdoors, and I was curious if he was in the outing club.

RW: Yeah, but he may have done a little of that when he was growing up.

TOB: The fact that you didn't know him really well is probably even better for the purpose of this. What were the perceptions of Muskie? Was he a very, like, public sort of person on campus? Did people know who he was and so forth?

RW: Probably. I think the men knew him probably, and the men in Parker Hall especially, and this cribbage club was a real big thing and that continued, as you know, through the years. But there were, and I, he hadn't, Betty Winston Scott probably was the closest friend he had here. Because as Catholics, there were very few Catholic students, and they used to, they went to church together and so they became very close friends. I don't know that they ever dated or not, you could find out.

TOB: You mentioned the story about how he washed her hair once, (*unintelligible phrase*).

(*Speaking at once.*)

RW: Yes, Betty told us that story, yeah. Well, she's been in touch with him. She went with them on the campaign plane and made sure that Jane had her clothes all together and everything and sort of go along with Jane. And you know they really were probably as close friends as anybody in the class. She would give you some really interesting perspectives, she lives down in Cape Elizabeth.

RC: Would you say Muskie was respected even at that young age?

RW: Oh, yeah. Yes he was. Probably because of his scholarship, because of his debating, because of his leadership. And everybody knew him as head waiter in JB in the dining hall, of course.

DN: That was the dining hall where only men ate, or ...?

RW: Yes, yes.

TOB: Did they have waitresses at the women's dining hall?

RW: Yes, that's one way you earned your way through college is waiting on tables, and the men did the same thing, my husband ...

TOB: You had to wait on your fellow students, huh?

RW: Yeah.

RC: That sounds, that doesn't sound very nice.

TOB: So there was a sit down dinner and did, could you order from a menu or was it, it was just set.

RW: No, the menu was set for, believe this, the menu was set for six weeks and you knew that every Wednesday night you'd get spinach and you'd get ice cream, Sunday you'd get ice cream and I've forgotten what it was, but every single week it was the same thing and, I ate in the dorm very seldom of course.

RC: Deliberately or (*unintelligible phrase*)?

RW: It was just not imaginative. What you've got here you just, there's no comparison, what they do over here in food services. I mean, you couldn't compare it any way. But I suppose they did the best they could and I suppose, you know, budgets were tight, nobody had any money. Your main entertainment was what was here. But I don't remember Ed as being particularly social and I was active enough so that our paths would have crossed in some ways, but particularly in the debate council.

DN: I'd like to go to the Skidmore program and ...

RW: Connection.

DN: ... and that connection, and lay the groundwork for that in part by your talking about your husband and his career and where you and he went after Bates.

RW: Oh, you want to know that? Well, he had two more, he worked two years before he came to Bates because he had [no money]. His father was a, worked in the American Optical Company and they were Scots, and they came over here in 1920. And this will interest you fellows, they came on a ship from Glasgow in December of 1919 and were on board twelve days crossing the Atlantic in the winter, and arrived at Ellis Island on the 20th I think of January, and so he came from a very simple background. But proud of being a Scotsman, let me tell you, you never ...

DN: And he was about four or five when he came?

RW: He was five and he doesn't remember. His brother, older brother remembers a little, but all he remembered was a little car that rolled back and forth on the deck. And so, incidentally, ...

DN: And they came from Glasgow.

RW: They came from Glasgow; he was born in Clydebank where they build the big ships and his [grand]father worked on, in the Brown Shipbuilding Yards where they built the Queens. And my daughter and I have been there and we've seen the block where he lived and, very simple beginnings. But he came to Bates in the class of '38 and he was very musical so he was into everything, he was very active in the YMCA, was in the choir. And he waited on tables in the summer with a couple of other Bates people including Barney Marcus who worked up here at Centennial Spring House in Sabbath Day Lake. And after he graduated from Bates he went to Yale Divinity School and got a fellowship to stay on at Yale to get his Ph.D., and then he worked for a couple of years for the American Baptist Convention working with university pastor groups across the whole northern part of the country. And then we went to West Virginia University for

three years in Morgantown, and from there we went to, we lived on Long Island a couple of years, but that was existing, it wasn't really living because he was gone most of the time, and then we went to Colorado Women's College from '49 I think to '57, then we went to Skidmore.

DN: Was he teaching religion?

RW: No, he always said he was an educational administrator, which he really was, but he did, he organized, he worked with these college chaplains and youth groups in the colleges all over the country. You asked about the Baptist connection and everything, and he was also raised in the Baptist denomination but I think a fairly liberal one. He wrote his dissertation on, it's a long title, "*The Attempts of the Fundamentalists to Gain Control of the Baptist Related Colleges in the United States*," and it's not a nice story at all because the Fundamentalists, you know what they are?

TOB: Fundamentalists? Yeah.

RW: Yeah, all right, they used any means available to try to infiltrate the colleges and to gain control of the colleges, force faculty members to sign creedal statements, I mean, it's totally against everything that we stand for. And that's what this is about. And when Richard Crocker was a chaplain here he read it and he said it was not a happy story and it should be published. And I haven't, I guess I haven't talked to the other chaplains enough, but I think they'd be interested in it. And Kurt Kuss is helping me get all that researching stuff ready to send out to Colgate Rochester which has the Baptist library, so Kurt got really interested in that and so I'm putting that together.

DN: Now, you were at Skidmore and when was it that you invited Ed to come there?

RW: Well, he was still senator, I don't know the exact year³, but, in fact, Mrs. Muskie, his mother, came too.

DN: So it was fairly early in his

RW: So it was fairly early, yes. We had some really neat people there; we had Eleanor Roosevelt at Skidmore [1961] and my children will never forget it because they met her, you know. We had tomato juice or [and dinner] something at the house before the lecture and I must say I'm one of her chief admirers, I think she's a great lady.

DN: She was, yup, great.

RW: Absolu-, I read everything. Doris Kearns Goodwin's commencement address is one of the best we've had in years.

TOB: You thought so, huh?

³ Ed was invited by Ruth Rowe Wilson to come to Skidmore, and the date was: October 28, 1959.

RW: I thought so, and I know the students must have liked it.

TOB: Mixed reviews. Some people really liked it, some people thought it was pretty pointless. But that's neither here nor there.

RW: Well, it wasn't intellectual enough for some people?

TOB: It wasn't motivational enough for some people.

RW: Well, I thought it was refreshing for a change and of course her book, No Ordinary Time is a wonderful book.

RC: Okay, so you graduated college and you got married and you had children, and you said the first time you ever saw Muskie after that was when he invited everyone to Blaine House for the reunion. Before that, though, during his campaign and so forth, he must have been in the public spotlight.

RW: He was in the public eye but we were not here, we were not in Maine, and if we had been we'd have been, you know, supporting him.

RC: Were you a Democrat at this point? By that point?

RW: Was I what?

RC: Were you a Democrat by the time Muskie became governor?

RW: Oh sure, sure, long time before that. Well, my father represented a different era, though, you have to realize it and this was a Democratic town. My mother came from a Democratic county, my dad must have come from Republican little, Republican town in Maine, and he was ...

DN: I suspect your father's Republicanism was Lincolnian.

RW: Probably; it was nominal but he, you know, the older he got the more liberal he got. It was really quite fascinating. He never would have said or done some of those things as the dean of men that he did and said in later years, you know, he became much more liberal. And he didn't have a chance with my children.

RC: It's interesting to me how different people, how people differ. Some people are pretty liberal as young folks and as they get older they become more conservative, and then there's the opposite, too, I've seen that.

RW: Yeah, right, yeah, well I think I'm the opposite. I would hope so. I mean, this whole thing about, we talked a lot this morning about, and you've mentioned this business about women and men, and it probably always disturbed me but there was nothing I could do about it. But once I got a chance to be a little more independent, well, and of course I had to be, I mean, I was a

single mother very suddenly with five out of six kids, still responsible for that many kids, and you just do what you have to do. And coming here to Bates was, I still don't know exactly how it happened, I'm still trying to find out, but they offered me the job of editor of the magazine and it was perfect because we were close to my parents but we didn't live next door or anything, and the kids were all in Auburn schools which are very good schools, and had a wonderful relationship with the grandparents, which a lot of children never have.

RC: When you got the job, did you really enjoy it right off the bat?

RW: Oh, yeah. I had to learn, you know, I had, I had edited, anything my husband ever wrote or any speech he ever wrote, he always gave them to me to go over and we had some arguments about things once in awhile. But I'd had very good training in high school English and I always liked to write, and I still do, and I think that makes a difference. And my mother was a stickler for English and for grammar. We didn't get away with anything with her.

DN: Was she an English major at Bates?

RW: Who?

DN: Your mother?

RW: No, she didn't, she only went one year but then she taught school. But somewhere along the line she had gotten some excellent education because I found a bunch of the themes that she wrote as a freshman and they were beautifully written things.

DN: Where was her home in The County?

RW: Presque Isle. Great place. I'm digressing but, you know, there's something about people from The County, it's called The County, and they just gravitate together. Or you'll meet somebody and say, of course, he's from The County. But ...

RC: What sort of things were you covering for the alumni magazine, what were some of the things you enjoyed (*unintelligible phrase*)?

RW: Well, I did, I just did the class notes and obits and stuff like that to start with and I had one of the, a Bates graduate in my father's class actually was the publications advisor and he was pretty much my boss, and President Phillips also wanted to see everything that we did.

TOB: What year was this?

RW: Sixty-four, '64-'65.

TOB: So was this, this was before or after Muskie's visit to Skidmore?

RW: Oh, it was after.

TOB: Could we go back and talk a little bit more about his trip to Skidmore?

RW: Well, I just remember we had an awfully good time. We talked about Bates things and the students, of course, were excited and enthralled to have him there and it was a big moment because he's a busy man and we were lucky to be able to get him to come at all. But I think they drove over from Maine probably and the Senate probably wasn't in session at the time.

TOB: Did he give a lecture?

RW: Yeah.

TOB: Do you remember what it was about?

RW: No, but I probably could find out.

TOB: And he stayed with you?

RW: Yes, he stayed in our home. We had a gorgeous house, eighteen room Greek revival house.

RC: How had he changed since he was twenty-one?

RW: Beg your pardon?

RC: Had he changed a great deal since he was twenty-one?

RW: Oh yeah, well, he was a U.S. senator after all, and a big man, and big in every way, not just physically. But, and he'd had a heart attack at one time and always was supposed to be a little careful after that. Jane used to chide him at reunions about, you know, you really shouldn't eat bacon for breakfast or something, but. And I think he respected his Catholic heritage and, um, nobody ever made an issue of that.

RC: Well, it was mentioned as a definite anomaly, the fact that he was the first one and so forth. It didn't seem to kick up any dust ...

RW: There weren't too many Catholics in Bates at the time, except some of the local students.

RC: Or as the governor, for that matter.

RW: Oh, yeah.

RC: But nobody seemed to get angry

(Speaking at once.)

RW: Nobody made, in fact that probably was a bonus for a lot of people in Maine. But I don't remember it ever being an issue. Frank Coffin campaigned for him as he's probably told you.

TOB: It hurt, Kennedy's being Catholic hurt Coffin, supposedly, when Coffin was running for governor in 1960, but, with the voters in Maine.

RW: Oh, yeah, that could be.

RC: And Kennedy personally called him and said, I apologize if my coat tails dragged you down.

RW: Oh, really?

TOB: But it's interesting Muskie escaped all that anti Catholic sentiment.

RW: Yeah, I think so because he was judged on who he was and not what he was.

RC: What do you think, what do you think he brought people? The fact that, you know, the first Democratic governor in twenty years, the first Catholic governor, what do you think he brought people, to the state of Maine?

RW: He turned the whole thing around in Maine. He turned the political system around in Maine.

RC: Into the two-party system?

RW: One of my friends said a Republican couldn't even get elected dog catcher, in Auburn for instance, but, well, you know, Maine, Margaret Chase Smith was a Republican senator and for all those years. And I think that's one reason probably the party was strong, and my father was a strong supporter of her and that's probably fifty percent of his being a Republican. She was something else, I mean, she, she also came to Skidmore and lectured.

DN: When you were seeing Ed in those later years from the early '60s and on and you were just chatting, reminiscing, what were the things that interested him?

RW: I'm sure the cribbage club had a lot to do with it because they were still doing it with some of his classmates. But he was much more mellow, you know, at our fiftieth reunion for instance, we all mellowed a lot, but, you will [laughter] you pick up where you left off at all these reunions. That's the wonderful thing about it because all the years slip away and you're more or less back where you were, you know. And, he was just one of us, he was not a senator or a secretary of state or anybody else, he was just one of the group when he was back here. That was, I think, part of his charm, maybe, was the fact that he was just one of the guys.

TOB: Now, did you go to the five, the ten, the twenty-five as well? Were you responsible for organizing any of them at all?

RW: No, I was lucky. When we lived in Denver I was lucky to get here. That twentieth reunion I guess is, I flew back from Denver with a couple of my kids ...

TOB: So the twentieth is when the reception was at Blaine House.

RW: Yes, I think so.

RC: You mentioned earlier that you, or you said something that indicated to me that you were friends with Jane?

RW: Yes.

RC: How did you meet ...?

(Speaking at once.)

RW: Well, I got to know Jane probably through the reunion up there, that's the first time I probably met her and ...

RC: And you just stayed friends?

RW: No, we weren't close friends at all, but I think we've gotten on a little more personal terms in the last few years. But again, Betty Scott is the one that you might want to try to, she's a former trustee and she'd probably come up or have you come down there. But she's the one that probably has the most intimate contact with both Muskies as anybody I know, except for one of these cribbage players, maybe. But this is on a different plane and I think she was quoted a lot in that article and I think she'd be perfectly willing to talk to you, but I think you want perspective on Ed really through his political years, well, even from college on. Because I didn't realize until she told me that they had gone to church together because it was so few people of that persuasion, you know, to get together. And because Bates was pretty much a Waspish school, pretty ...

RC: It still is.

RW: ... white, Anglo Saxon, Protestant whatever.

RC: It's very interesting to me because it sort of has that, I don't know if it's an auspices or not but it presents the attitude that we're very, very liberal school, and we have been since 1855 and so forth.

RW: Well, we have been in many ways. I think the conservatism probably relates more to behavior and that sort of thing, but Bates has always had . . . Well, I think some of these professors I've mentioned, you know, they were on the front line of, cutting edge as you people call it, of opening up horizons for us that we just never had had opened up before. Because most everybody who came to Bates came from New England small towns, small high schools, a lot of, some people were from other states, but pretty much plain, ordinary down-home people.

DN: Now you had grown up as the ...

RW: Right here on this campus.

DN: ... child of a member of the faculty administration, and ...

RW: And it wasn't easy.

DN: I suspect it wasn't.

RW: No, it wasn't.

DN: And, but you also knew the faculty ...

RW: Yeah, from growing up.

DN: ... from growing up. What kind of an impact did they have on you going into the class?

RW: Well, I knew and respected them, they were family friends, knew them as family friends and colleagues of my parents first, before I knew them as teachers. And you know the stories that we heard about them were interesting, anecdotes and stories, and nothing to do much with the classroom. And of course a lot, some of them I had as I said, Professor Robinson at least had my parents and I think perhaps Freddie Knapp. I don't know if you call your professors by names like that now, but there was a very affectionate term for him.

TOB: Freddie?

RW: Freddie Knapp, yeah. He knew his Latin up and down and across; I certainly didn't.

RC: _____ high school . . .

RC: One thing I read was that a big time for that where professors were becoming really personable and first name basis was in the '60s when everything became notably liberal. And I read in the book before I came to college saying how to act in college, it said, well, you know, don't forget all those students in the '60s have grown up and they like their titles.

TOB: I call most of my professors Professor so and so, I don't call anyone by their first name.

RC: I do too.

RW: Well now, did you have, I'm turning the tables here. Did you have a major professor or one or two professors that you got to know really well?

RC: No.

RW: You didn't?

TOB: No, but I'm not a good person to ask. I think most people did. I switched my major a bunch of times, didn't get along with anyone in the department in my first major, so.

RC: I haven't either, and I think it's because a lot of professors, as brilliant and as inspiring as they can be teacher-wise, they just don't want to bridge that gap a lot of times, they don't want to have lunch with you in commons.

RW: Well that's interesting because I think professors had a lot of students in their homes before that and, some of them still do, but there was a certain barrier beyond which you'd not go. And some of the, a few of the professors were a little arrogant.

TOB: I bet in that respect it hasn't really changed that much. I bet it really, a lot depended on individual professors.

RW: Yeah, I think so.

TOB: And the amount of effort that the individual student put in to being personable to the professor.

RW: Well also I think it depends on maybe the department. I got to know, through the, I was very interested in the foreign students and I always have been and I used to have them come down to the cottage, I guess I mentioned that. And some of the new young faculty would bring them in their cars because we didn't have bus service, van service then, and they'd bring their little kids. And, you know, we'd have fifty, sixty people there and have a picnic and so forth, and I thought they had a pretty good relationship. For instance, a couple of foreign students that I got to know, one of them, we were the American family for a fellow from Turkey [A. Dilek Barlas, Bates '73], and one of his real close buddies was, his father was in the Iranian embassy but he'd been born in this country and I got to know them quite well. And the physics department with George Ruff and Jack Pribram for instance, they knew those, that was a very small intimate department, and those students had a great relationship with that faculty.

RC: What time period are you speaking of?

RW: Physics, oh, '62 or '63 I guess. No, wait a minute, wait a minute, couldn't have been then, it was early '70s, I think Dilek Barlas was in the class of '72 or '73.

RC: Is George Ruff still here? Because I know there's a professor of physics named Ruff, I'm not sure what his first name is.

RW: No, he's, one of them [Kambiz Safinya, Bates '73] graduated *summa cum laude*, he [Dilek] graduated *magna cum laude*, both Phi Beta Kappas, bright guys in theoretical physics.

RC: Wasn't the easiest thing I've ever read.

TOB: Now, you mentioned the fiftieth reunion and how Ed was just one of the class again. Can you tell us a little bit about what happened during the fiftieth reunion, what it was like to see Ed again?

RW: Well, as I say, we just picked up where we left it, and we had an awfully good time and of course people get older and people like Ed had to watch his ways and what he ate and so forth, a lot of them did.

TOB: What'd you do?

RW: Well, we took part in all the activities, sat around in JB in the lounge and talked a lot, you know. You had a chance to really visit with people. We called up people who couldn't be there, they had an open phone line, that year they had it from the dorm and we could call people who couldn't come.

TOB: Did you stay in JB?

RW: No, I stayed at home, I like to sleep in my own bed.

RC: After all the accolades that Ed received and everything he accomplished ...

RW: He still was old Ed.

RC: After all of that, how would you, what, if you could characterize him with a few words, what would they be?

TOB: Who, what is old Ed? Who was old Ed?

RW: Oh, yeah, well, with us he was himself and I'm sure that in any public forum or occasion or anything else he was either the senator, the governor, the secretary of state or whatever. He said once, you know, the secretary of state was the best job he ever had. It's too bad it didn't last a little longer, but he enjoyed what he was doing. And I'm not a political scientist so I don't know how much trouble he had getting elected to the senate, but I think it was pretty hands down, wasn't it?

DN: It wasn't that hard, no.

RW: It wasn't that hard, no.

DN: He always had more trouble with the campaigns where he was way ahead.

RW: Yeah. Well were you here when Jimmy Carter, when we had Muskie Archives dedication and Jimmy Carter was the speaker? He said Ed should have been president; brought down the house.

TOB: What was that dedication like?

RW: It was great, it was an academic occasion over in the gym, over in Merrill, academic procession, the whole works. Carter got an honorary degree and gave a speech and Ed made some kind of response I'm sure, but it was just fun, it was really nice. It was one of those rare occasions here at Bates when everybody just felt so good about it, you know, students were there and in fact I think they invited in school kids from town, people from town to fill in some of the bleachers. It was just an, there are a few occasions here at Bates that I remember in the last few years that stand out and that was one of them for many reasons. I think when Eli Wiesel was here was another one.

TOB: Yeah, I was just going to mention that, I think, I can relate to that night, that was great.

RW: That was one of the top occasions that I can remember from being here.

TOB: Did you come when Rostopovich spoke?

RW: Yes, and that was another one, see. I don't know how they managed to get those people here but ...

TOB: Last year they didn't get anyone, that was a little disappointing.

RC: Wasn't Maya Angelou supposed to ...?

TOB: Yes, she canceled or something.

RC: That would have been fantastic, too.

RW: Who was that?

RC: Maya Angelou was supposed to speak.

RW: Yeah, she, well, actually as that turned out, Helen Papaioanou got her, had her day and deserved it. She got the honorary degree, and the Black students who participated more than made up for her [Angelou] missing the appointment. I'm sorry she couldn't come, and I don't know exactly why yet, but the program that we had more than made up for it, especially because students were participating. But there have been, you know, there are these things that stand out in the last few years.

RC: I want to take you back to the question I asked a little earlier, after everything Ed's done, if you could look back at him, not necessarily, just the qualities that struck you first when you think of Ed.

RW: Well I, honesty and integrity. He was forthright in what he had to say, he certainly stood up for his principles, and I'm sure it wasn't altogether easy in the Senate. That enough?

TOB: What do you think was Ed Muskie's biggest contribution to the state of Maine?

RW: Well, I think he has worked off the environmental programs that he supported and the Clean Air Act and so forth that he got through Congress, which according to the morning papers still isn't good but those were national programs that he got through. As I say, I'm not a political scientist and I don't remember it, and I wasn't here at the time he was governor so I don't remember all of the accomplishments that he made here but Coffin can, probably has filled you in.

TOB: How about this, what do you think his biggest contributions to Bates College were?

RW: I don't know. Being Ed Muskie, I think.

TOB: That would be enough.

RW: I really think that's the biggest contribution.

RC: Well, if Don and Tuck agree, I have just one more question. You retired in '80, is that correct?

RW: Who.

RC: From the ...

RW: Oh yeah, but then they unretired me shortly after that. They called me back to do a couple issues of the magazine, I'm still doing it.

RC: I read a quote that said you'd really like to get to your gardening or something like that.

RW: Oh yeah.

RC: Have you had an opportunity to do that?

RW: Yeah, I was gardening all day yesterday. Probably wait until tonight until the bugs get bad. Tomorrow.

TOB: The day might fry all the bugs.

RW: What?

TOB: I think the bugs might be going away with this heat.

RW: Well, I hope so but the mosquitoes love it in the evening. Oh well, come up and see my garden sometime.

RC: Okay, well Ms. Wilson, thank you very much for your time, we really, really appreciate it.

RW: You're welcome, I'm glad to do it.

End of Interview

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