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York, Robert oral history interview

Stuart O'Brien

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Interview with Robert York by Stuart O'Brien

Summary Sheet and Transcript

Interviewee

York, Robert

Interviewer

O'Brien, Stuart

Date

September 2, 1998

Place

Orr's Island, Maine

ID Number

MOH 042

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Biographical Note

Robert Maurice York was born on June 10, 1915 in Wilton, Maine. His parents were Josephine Myra (Brown) and Maurice Asa York. His father owned a meat market in Wilton, and his mother was a homemaker. York went to Bates College, graduating in the class of 1937. He then went on to Clark University to get his Masters and Ph.D. in History. After graduating, he enlisted in the Navy, and saw active duty in the Pacific. Japanese Kamikaze planes sunk the boat he originally served on, so he returned stateside and worked for the Office of Naval History.

In 1946, he returned to Maine and taught History at the University of Maine at Orono, becoming an expert on the state's history. In 1956, he was appointed Maine State Historian by then Governor Ed Muskie. He remained in that position for forty years, playing an active role in the creation of the Maine State Archives. Upon leaving the Orono campus in 1962, he took a position as Dean of Academic Affairs at Gorham State College, now known as the University of Southern Maine. From 1970 to 1978, he served as Dean of Graduate Study at the University of Maine at Portland, now also part of the University of Southern Maine. In 1984, he retired as Professor Emeritus of History at the University of Southern Maine.

Scope and Content Note

Interview includes discussions of: York's appointment to State Historian; the Committee for Destruction of Old Records; Vermont conference on historic preservation in the late 1950s; the

influence of other historic preservation programs on Maine; the formation of an advisory group for historic preservation and tasks and preservation efforts of the first advisory group; the ownership of Fort Kent; Ken Curtis' historic preservation efforts; overburdening the advisory committee on historic sites with the National Historic Register; Muskie's support of the National Register of Historic Places; change in the State Historian's role with the creation of a full-time state archivist; John Reed's support of historic preservation; Western state preservation in the 1970s compared with Maine's; the creation of a Maine State Museum; Ed Muskie's change from college; changes in Maine's education system; the Sinclair Act; under funding of the university system; major issues of Muskie's gubernatorial administrations; Maine's geography as a burden; Muskie's impact on the environment; rivers in Maine and their heavy industrial use and pollution; Muskie as a statesman; sales tax and income tax; budgeting in the university system; the significance of putting the university under a board of directors; and John Reed's election.

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Transcript

Stuart O'Brien: September 2nd, 1998, Tuck O'Brien on Orr's Island, interviewing Bob York. Mr. York, the last time we were talking, we were talking about your political differences with Ed Muskie, and also you were starting to get into how you became connected with Ed in terms of Maine history. Could you elaborate a little bit more on that for us?

Bob York: You mean how I happened to become appointed state historian and things like that?

SB: Yeah.

BY: Well, as I think I said before, I got into Maine history accidentally but I got into it fully when I committed myself and I developed a course. And I got invited to speak to various groups around the state of Maine, service clubs and women's organizations and historical societies, especially because my message at that particular time was that Maine ought to be doing a great deal more in identifying and preserving its historic properties, public and private. Because the state of Maine was doing virtually nothing to do, to help preserve, improve the historic sites that it owned, most of which were forts like the, Fort Knox on the Penobscot opposite Bucksport, Fort Edgecomb on, opposite Wiscasset, and places like that. As a matter of fact, the state of Maine had owned Fort Kent for over fifty years and didn't even know it owned it. And you know, they hadn't been doing anything to it. When I found some of these things out, I became very interested and began to push for more support for the idea of historic preservation and interpretation of historic sites. And I'm sure that Ed Muskie knew about that.

¶ We did not have any personal conversation about my being appointed historian until I got a note from him asking me if I would be interested in becoming the state historian. And I didn't know at that particular time much about what the state historian did. I knew that he was supposed to help push interest in Maine history and Maine heritage, and I certainly was doing that probably, surely more than anybody else in the state of Maine at that particular moment. And, as I say, Ed and I had always had a good relationship. We were on opposite sides of the political fence, but I was one of his strong supporters, nevertheless. And so, when he asked me if I would be historian, if I'd be interested, I said yes I would and he appointed me.

¶ And at that time the state historian theoretically, at least as far as the statutes were concerned, he had quite a lot of responsibilities. I discovered right off the bat that one of my duties was to be chairman of the committee for destruction of old records. Well, that's a heck of a title for a committee for a historian to take charge of. But when I investigated it I found that that meant that I was to meet quarterly with the commissioner of finance and education, commissioner of finance and administration, not education, the attorney general and the state auditor. And it was our job to pass on requests from the various departments of state government for permission to destroy state, certain state records. Well now, you and I both know that there's an awful lot of state records that should be tossed out right away, records of all kinds for everybody. But they hadn't been doing anything until that duty was given to this committee, and I was chairman of the committee.

¶ And I discovered quick on that the attorney general and the state auditor were interested in the legal aspects. They wanted to make sure that no records were destroyed that would be useful in

protecting the state of Maine in a legal sense. They had no great sense of historic value of records and they were inclined to say, dump 'em out. Well, as I say, most records should be destroyed, but there are some that are really of historic value. And the commissioner of finance and I agreed pretty much on that, and when we pushed hard enough we were able to not prevent the destruction of old records, but certainly to delay and to identify records. But actually, you see, we had no archivist, state archivist at that particular time. The secretary of state was custodian of documents that were of prime importance in Maine history, like the constitution and big things like that. But a lot of the little things that provide the information behind the scenes of why we did this and so on and so forth, they had been indiscriminately tossed out over the years.

Well, we started to say no and the auditor and the attorney general went along with us on some of it. But their general attitude was we've got to, we just don't have any space to keep this, and there's no storage facility that has climate control or anything like that. So if you say, save them and you store them in a warehouse, they're going to rot anyway, you know. But I got in on that and we were really making some progress.

¶I was asked by Ed early on to go to a conference at Vermont which was being held on the general topic of historic preservation, everything: records, buildings and artifacts and so on and so forth. And when I got there I discovered that it was really a fine conference. Most of the properties that were taken care of by state governments were in the form of memorials like the Bennington Battlefield Monument, this was in Vermont, and old jails and things, military installations and things like that. And in most states there was no historic preservation commission or anything like that. The state park commissions or whatever they had, park services, would be the custodians. Well, that's pretty much what it was in the state of Maine, and we were doing absolutely nothing.

¶I came back, I was really motivated after I'd been over there for several days. I came back and I talked to Ed about it and I said, Ed, we ought to get a historic sites preservation commission that would take a look at all the historic sites, public and private, around the state of Maine, and develop a program for some systematic caring for those sights and their interpretation. So people, keep them open, have people visit them and appreciate what we had.

¶Well, he thought that was a good idea but he let me know quite soon that he didn't think that given his political condition with a strong Republican legislature that if he went to the legislature and asked for another independent commission, they probably would get beaten back. But he hit on the idea of why don't we start in a modest way, create an advisory committee made up of citizens to the state park commission, which was the custodian of the state properties that were of historic significance, and develop a program that would preserve those properties and would be an example and an inspiration to private organizations to organize themselves and do the same with local historic sites that weren't really the responsibility of the state of Maine, which would be cared for by either town governments or by an organization within the town.

¶And of course this was now getting late in his second administration and his big interest now was making the jump from the governorship to the senatorship, which he did and did it very, very successfully. But he had me draw up a list of names of people that would be broadly representative of the spectrum of Maine citizenry who would have significant input into an historic sites program. And we had the list drawn up but he didn't act on it before he left the

governorship, so it turned to Governor Clauson. And I didn't know Governor Clauson, I'd met Governor Clauson a couple of times and he was in favor of the idea. And in fact at the time of his unexpected death at the end of 1959, the plans were all drawn up, the names were all ready to be announced. And of course we had now not a Democratic governor but we had a Republican governor, John Reed, who was the president of the senate. Because in the state of Maine we don't have a lieutenant governor. If a governor passes away or is incapacitated, it's the president of the senate who takes over.

¶And there it was on John Reed's desk. I didn't know John Reed either. I'd met him but I didn't know very much about him. But he became enthusiastic about the whole idea and so early in his administration and his historic sites advisory committee to the state park commission was appointed, and I was, as state historian I was chairman of it. It included people like Mildred Burrage, she was the daughter of the first official state historian; she had been active in historic sites preservation in the Kennebunk area, in the Portland area. And at that time was, I called her the chief gunner. Somebody has to make some of these organizations run and usually it's one person. And she was the one who made the Sagadahoc Historic Preservation group in Wiscasset really run. And she was responsible for saving the Pownalborough Court House up on the Kennebec, and she was on it. Wendell Hadlock who was the, at that time was a leading archaeologist in the state of Maine. Ambrose Cramer from Rockport, a retired architect. Mrs., oh, what was her name, well, a very prominent club woman from Augusta, wife of a gubernatorial candidate who didn't make it but she was very prominent in DAR and activities like that. And William, Joseph William Pepperill Frost who lives in the William Pepperill House in Kittery, and Frank Hatch of Castine and Boston area. And, well, a couple of other people like that. Doris Isaacson, I don't want to forget her because she's a very prominent Democrat from Lewiston, wife of a leading lawyer, Peter Isaacson, and they're both passed away now. But she had been the one who edited the Maine volume of the American Guide Series. It was a WPA project in all the states, which was a guide to historic sites in the various states. And she'd done a great deal of work with that and she was a dynamo.

¶Well, we got organized and we were active for eleven years. And we, the first thing that we did, we had to find out what it was that the state of Maine owned, and that's when we discovered that Fort Kent had been owned by the state of Maine for fifty years. And they didn't know it, and of course they had never spent a penny on it. If it hadn't been for a Boy Scout troop up in Fort Kent, that would have fallen into the ground years and years before. Well, we went around to the various sites and we started a repair program and an interpretive program. And the interpretive consisted of a series of panels, I don't know if you've seen them in any other place now, but big panels made by a man who was very skillful in wood working. He had owned at one time the Woodworkers of Weld, Severence Hilton, and he created these panels. It was my job as chairman to make sure that the historical content was correct. And we put those in places like Fort Edgecomb, Fort Kent, at the mouth of the Kennebec where the Arnold expedition began, up on the Kennebec where the Arnold expedition left the Kennebec and went over through the Dead River country to the Chaudiere and so on, and at Fort Knox, at the fort in Castine, and in Kittery. And this program was so good that it was given an award, a major award by the American Association of State and Local History. And it was our intent from the very beginning that this program would be a model for local historical societies to emulate, and it proved to be that way. We were in business for eleven years. I think we did a very good job,

but remember, we were volunteers, we all had, we had other interests or other jobs.

SB: As Maine state historian, that wasn't a paid position?

BY: No, I had travel expenses up to five hundred dollars a year. The state of Maine wasn't very generous with lots of things in those days. And then Ed Muskie, of course he went to the Senate in '58, and we think of Ed in the Congress, in the Senate, as being particularly active in environmental problems, air and water pollution. But he was also active in historic preservation. He was one of the key figures in getting legislation passed which created a national register of historic sites, and at two levels: those that are of truly national significance and then those that are of state significance.

¶Well, at this particular time, Governor Curtis was in office. And Governor Curtis, he was interested in historic preservation, but when it came time to name a body or a group to make the nominations to the national register, he turned to the advisory committee on historic sites. Now as I said, we were a citizens group who were donating our time. And in order to get a particular location, building, whatever it was on the national register, you had to do an enormous amount of research. You had to have photographs and measurements and you had to have an historic resume and things like that; we had no staff. And reluctantly we took on that job, but with each passing month it became more onerous and we in effect self destructed. Beginning, well, it didn't happen until 1971, we were in business for eleven years, but that burden literally broke our back. And by that time there were a lot of other people who were on that historic preservation band wagon. And the times had changed to the point where it was possible, we were pushing this very strongly, where we needed an arm of state government that would be known somehow, maybe the historic preservation commission or something like that. And finally in 1971 it happened.

¶Now, Governor Curtis was a good governor and he was a generous man in many respects. And the most qualified person in the state of Maine to head that at that, well, at that particular time it was, let's see, who was it? I think Jim Mundy from the Bangor area. Also at that time we created a position of state archivist, somebody to manage the official records of the state of Maine. And Sam Silsby, who had been doing some of that work in the secretary of state's office was named as the first state archivist. Well, that meant that no longer did the state historian have any responsibility for the preservation of old records. But it had gotten to the point where it was absolutely ridiculous for a committee of four people to be doing that job headed by the state historian. You needed a professionally trained person who would take a look at the records and decide which ones should be thrown out and which ones should be kept, and I had been pushing that very, very strongly. I had a student at the University of Maine who came from Old Orchard Beach, Jerry Plante, I don't know if you've ever heard his name or not ?

SB: No. And all this time you were teaching while you were state historian?

BY: Sure, sure. I was, see, in '62 I went from full time historian to a part time historian in a sense because I became the dean down at, the academic dean down at Gorham. But this was all ancillary to my, what my job, my paying job you see. And so my duties were reduced significantly with the creation of the position of state archivist and also with the creation of the

advisory committee, I mean with the historic preservation commission, a regularly appointed commission of a state government.

¶In the meantime, I want to throw this in here because... In 1960 I was asked to teach in the summer session of the University of Wyoming. And John Reed had become a rather enthusiastic supporter of historic preservation and of the state of Maine doing more with its heritage. And he knew when I was going out to the University of Wisconsin, I mean University of Wyoming

SB: Where is that, Laramie?

BY: In Laramie, yeah. He asked me if I would... My family was going with me and we were going to spend a lot of time on the road afterwards, and he asked me if I would visit historic museums and offices of the state historian in the various states, in as many states as possible, which I did to the tune of over twenty states. And when I got back to Maine, I reported to Governor Reed that the western states were doing a lot more with their heritage, which was much more limited than ours, than we were doing with a heritage that went all the way back to the early 1600s. And in fact the state of Maine was being bled white by these people from these other states coming in and buying up our historic artifacts of one kind or another. And my report to him was that we needed to do a great deal more. We needed a state museum that was something more than live fish and stuffed moose and deer and a few items that would be representative of the leading industries in the state of Maine: textiles, pulp and paper. But at that particular time the state museum, have you been, you've probably been to the state museum, it was crowded in the south wing, bottom floor of the State House. And actually it was nothing to be proud of at all. You could... everything they had you could view in ten minutes and be gone.

¶And we, I made that report to him and that helped to spark a movement to create a real museum in the state of Maine. We've got a good one now. They've done a beautiful job over a period of thirty years or more. So in my position as state historian, even though I wasn't paid, I feel that I helped make a contribution in putting the state of Maine on the map as far as its devotion to trying to do a lot more with its heritage and the proper preservation of it. I also from the very beginning, and I'm sure that Ed Muskie knew all about this, in my speaking around the state of Maine I urged not merely historic preservation but the creation of historical societies, which would have a general interest in the whole business of heritage and history. And it's hard for anybody who knows the situation at the present time to realize that there were just a handful of active historical societies, and that there were hardly any people who were seriously researching Maine history from one end of the state to the other. And now, there are dozens of historical societies and museums. And there are innumerable people who are finding that Maine history and Maine heritage is a gold mine of opportunity.

SB: Okay, so, going way back to when you first started to be state historian, how had Ed Muskie changed since you knew him in college?

BY: How had he changed?

SB: Un-hunh.

BY: You know, I don't think he changed very much. I don't think he changed very much throughout his whole life. As far as I was concerned, he was the same guy that I knew in the 1930s. He was, I thought he was down to earth, he was straightforward, I think he was practical. He realized from the beginning that he had a hard row to hoe because the state of Maine was so strongly Republican. But I, right up to the end, I never, well, as I said, I always had a good relationship with him.

SB: Did you have a social interaction with Ed Muskie?

BY: Not very often. If we were at a Bates alumni affair or something like that, we always greeted each other and chatted and asked about each other. I knew his, I had his daughter in Gorham in Maine history, believe it or not. And I think we had, I won't say it was a mutual admiration society but I think we had a respect for our relationship always.

SB: As state historian did you see him, business wise, talking about trying to get things done with getting the state historical society in (*unintelligible word*) ...

BY: Oh, I talked about things like that, yeah.

SB: ... with him frequently, very frequently, or?

BY: Well, whenever we bumped, I didn't request appointments to go down to see him. We'd always talk about those things when we met. And we bumped into each quite frequently as a matter of fact.

SB: How do you think that the Maine higher education system changed from the '50s through the '60s and into the '70s?

BY: Well, it's, the Maine educational picture has greatly improved at all levels. You didn't ask about the elementary and secondary, but it was in his administration that the Jacobs Report, decrying the huge number of very small high schools and scattered, well, still, district elementary schools and things like that. And out of that, the Jacobs Report, came the Sinclair Act which created these school administrative districts all over the state of Maine which has eliminated most of the small schools. And at the same time raising the minimum salary for teachers, improving the programs for teacher education. And especially through bond issues and other regular budget appropriations, improved the University of Maine system.

¶I could tell you a lot of sad stories about the University of Maine as far as financing was concerned. It was always under-funded. And it was in Ed's administration that bond issues were passed which benefited the University of Maine particularly, and benefited the teacher's colleges also. There were two reforms in teacher education that did not come until John Reed's administration. Well, they didn't really come until the university absorbed, or the teacher's colleges became a part of the University of Maine system. But Ed was well aware of the problems of education from the lowest level to the highest level, and the improvement was not spectacular but it was nevertheless substantial. And it bespoke, I think, well of him because he had in both administrations an overwhelming Republican legislature. And my impression

always has been, and I saw this from Muskie's side, I saw it from Bob Haskell's side. Bob Haskell who was the big wheel in, the Bangor Hydro Electric, was the president of the senate. And they worked together pretty well for the benefit of education from the lowest level to the highest level. Bob was a strong advisor of Arthur Hauck who was the president of the University of Maine during most of the time that I was there. Substantial progress was made, but we had a long, long way to travel, and we haven't really got there yet. I think when you look at Ed Muskie's administrations overall, that it's surprising that as much was accomplished as it was. Because after all, he didn't have the legislative support that he would have had if he'd had a strong Democratic legislature. He always had a Republican legislature to deal with.

SB: You mentioned education, looking back as an historian, what do you think were the major issues of the mid '50s during the Muskie administration?

BY: What were the major issues.

SB: How would you characterize that time period?

BY: Well, then as now, economic development, economic stability was a big problem. Our economy was heavily dependent on textiles, pulp and paper, shoes and agriculture and so on. And we, our salaries were low, wages were low, the state of the economy was always a problem. Education, as I said, we had a good record in the number of people graduating from high school, taking all the states into consideration. But we had a lousy record on the number of people who went on to higher education. And the state was generous in its support of highways, because we have an awful lot of roads to maintain. But the gas tax is a dedicated tax and that helped certainly the road construction and road maintenance program. Education didn't have any such favored position in the state government, and whereas in an earlier time about a third or more of state expenses were associated with education. That went down dramatically as we moved through the 20th, as we moved into the post WWII era, and funding and how to fund. Voters of the state of Maine, generally conservative. We had a long, long struggle to get a sales tax. We had a long, long struggle and a difficult struggle to get an income tax. You can imagine that the monied interests fought the income tax with all the power that they could muster. The state of education... I'm going to stay away from economic development. Well, let's see, what else. Highways, health and welfare of course. The big items in state government today are: education, highways, health and welfare. And health and welfare was most of the time pretty much a local responsibility. The selectmen were the assessors, they were the overseers of the poor. The federal government through its Social Security Act has helped out enormously in improving that situation.

¶I think a lot of our problems stem from our location geographically, where its the extreme northeastern end of the United States of America. We're the only state that's adjacent to only one other state in the whole union so we're kind of out of the mainstream as far as transportation is concerned. Our shoe industry has collapsed, the textile industry has just been completely wiped out. When I was growing up, the woolen mills and the cotton mills around the state of Maine were the mainstay of the economy of just dozens of Maine towns. And there's nothing, hardly any of that left now. Pulp and paper of course concentrated on the big places on the principal rivers. We used to say, when I was a kid, we used to say that the state of Maine was

run by Maine Central, which was the railroad, and by Central Maine. Well, by the time Ed Muskie was governor the state of Maine was pretty much run by the power interests and by the paper industry and by the textiles. Now the textiles collapsed, you know, you live in Lewiston and you know. You just can't imagine the difference between what it was like to live in Lewiston when I was a college student and you now. The textile industry, there's nothing there. I got, I used to go down Saturday afternoons, a lot of Bates students did, Saturday afternoons we'd go down to the textile mills and we'd sweep the floors, clean up on the weekend for Saturday and Sunday work. The textile industry sustained large immigrant populations, they really built up Brunswick, Biddeford, Lewiston, Auburn, Waterville, Augusta and places like that. It just doesn't exist. To attract industry, to keep the industries that we want, that's a problem today just as much as it was all the way along.

¶I think Muskie addressed those problems. Of course, when I think of Ed Muskie, I think of, particularly, of his interest in cleaning up the rivers, the environment. And as it turned out, after he left the governorship he had an opportunity. . . . You know he and LBJ didn't get along well, and, Ed has always had an independent streak about him. I think that's been a characteristic of the good Maine politicians down through the years: Margaret Chase Smith, William Pitt Fessenden, Eugene Hale, and others that I can think of. When Ed got to Washington and was looking for political assignments, they just tramped all over him. But unwittingly they gave him a forum when they put him on that public works committee and he got appointed to a subcommittee that was dealing with water and air. And that became his forum for cleaning up the air and cleaning up the rivers nationally. Of course, he honestly came by that because living in, growing up in Rumford and living in Waterville, he was on the banks of two of the most polluted rivers in America.

¶You have no idea, I probably said this before, last time, you have no idea what it smelled like in Lewiston and Auburn, in July and August, every single year. When you think of all those chemicals that went into the Androscoggin River, from the Brown paper company up in Berlin, down through Rumford, Jay, Livermore, then down, and all the textile mills in Lewiston and Auburn. The slaughter houses, there were several slaughter houses on the banks of the river in Auburn. I know about these because my dad was a meat man and we bought a lot of meat from Penley's and from John P. Sutton and other companies like that. And all of that blood and all that waste went right into the Androscoggin River. We seemed to have an idea that you could, the river would purify itself. And the textile mills were just as bad. You could always tell what color blankets or whatever color they were using by the condition of the water that would be in the streams down below the mills. That was true in my home town. The basic industry, we had the Bass Shoe Factory, yes, but the basic industry was the Wilton woolen company; they had two plants and some days the water would be red, some days it would be blue, some days it would be khaki, and the pollution was awful. And Ed, I think that's going to be one of his great enduring accomplishments. How we doing?

SB: I'm going to flip it right here.

End of Side One
Side Two

SB: ... the rivers as being one of his great contributions. What else would you say would be Muskie's greatest contributions to the state of Maine, or his single greatest contribution?

BY: Well, I think that his devotion to the environment will probably be the one that he'll be best remembered for. But politically speaking of course he is the one who rejuvenated the Democratic Party and gave us once again effective two party system in the state of Maine. Because I think I pointed out before that for a hundred years the Republican Party had dominated the politics of the state of Maine. It had gotten old and tired, it was very difficult for young men to break in to the party. You had to serve a very, very long apprenticeship before you could get to the top. We had some good people in state government, but I think Muskie's personality and his dedication, his sincerity, they all propelled him on the road to fame, there's no question about it.

¶I remember, I think I may have said this last time, but my first father-in-law was a very prominent Republican and he'd been in the house and the senate, and he was on the governor's council. And I think he was on the governor's council when Ed first came into the legislature as a representative from Waterville. And I remember his saying, he was very impressed with Ed as a young legislator. And I remember him saying, now there is a young man who would go far, too bad he's not a Republican. And of course Ed left after he had been in the legislature, he went back to Waterville and practiced law. He was not wealthy of course, he came from a very ordinary family, immigrant family in Rumford. And he needed to make a living, he had a growing family. But I know also that in that election of 1954, my father-in-law, who was really very active in Republican politics, he said that Ed Muskie deserved a career in government. And I strongly suspected that he frequently contributed to Ed Muskie's campaign. I can't prove that but I, but he always had good words to say about Ed.

¶He [Ed Muskie] conducted himself, I think, very much in the guise of a statesman. Sure, he was a politician, but he, I don't, I never thought of him as being petty and mean as far as his devotion to politics was concerned. I think he comes in the tradition of the great senators from the state of Maine going all the way back to George Evans in the period before the Civil War, and William Pitt Fessenden, and Hannibal Hamlin and William P. Frye, Eugene Hale, Margaret Chase Smith. I was always proud of our senators when we had Margaret Chase Smith and Ed Muskie together. Well, I've been proud, I think the state of Maine has been blessed. I was not particularly impressed with George Mitchell initially, but he certainly grew in the job as a senator and he was a good man. And Bill Cohen, I like people who have a little bit of independence in them, he's the one who defied Republican leadership at the time of Mr. Nixon's problems. I think Ed is going to, his legacy is going to be a strong one. I think he ranks right up there with the more notable ones down through the years.

SB: Having said that, what do you think were his biggest political and public shortcomings?

BY: Well, I never did understand what happened in New Hampshire. That really cost him, well, he was a serious candidate for the presidential nomination up to that point. I don't know. Ed, there was a side to him that, he was emotional at times. I think I mentioned that the night he came to Boys State and it was just when the, Paul Fullam had died, and he was very, very much upset. But he overcame it, went on and I'm sure that the boys never had inkling whatsoever that,

of the emotional turmoil that he was experiencing at that particular time. And I wouldn't have been if I hadn't been outside when he was waiting to go on and he was really beside himself. Oh, I guess like everybody else he had, he must have had his shortcomings, but . . .

SB: Well, I was thinking more along the lines of, not so much personal and private, but more along the lines of having to do with issues, things, issues and political stances that you saw that he made that maybe possibly hurt his career or anything like that. Looking back as an historian. Maybe there isn't anything.

BY: No, I'm having a hard time to think of anything. I don't think he made any major boo-boos that I can think of. Actually, Carter thought enough of him to make him secretary of state, which I think bespeaks volumes for his general standing.

SB: Okay, on another note, what do you think were the most important events in Maine in the 20th century?

BY: Most important events in Maine in the 20th century. Yumpin' yimminy. Well, I think the Sinclair Bill that was passed in his second administration that reformed elementary education in the state, elementary and secondary education in the state of Maine is one of them. Now let me see, I think the passage of the sales tax and the income tax; up to that time everybody depended on the property tax and the property people were, all the home owners and all the business owners, they were carrying the burden. I think the legislation that established a unified higher education system in the state of Maine, that grew out of the Coles Report that put the state colleges and the university under the same board of trustees. I would have gone even further; I think they will eventually. I think I would have put all of the technical colleges under, put them all under the same umbrella, but we've gone that way. I can tell you personally that when the teachers colleges were under the state board of education, they were hamstrung as far as any flexibility in appointments, in financial management.

¶If I had fully realized the limitations, I probably never would have left Orono in the very secure position of a professor of history and gone to Gorham as the academic dean. The very first year I was there, within weeks I discovered that we had a faculty member in the art department who was teaching thirty two hours a week. And I went to the president and I said, we've got to hire somebody to take over some of this load. He said, you can't do it, and I said, well why can't we do it? Can't we take some money from here and put it there? No, we're under line budget, if it isn't, if the money isn't there in this particular line, you can't spend it. And if there's no money in the personnel budget for a particular position, you can't have that position. And, boy, that brought us up short. And then I discovered not only we were on line budget, but we were on legislative count of positions. And what usually happened was the legislature would give, say Gorham, two new positions in a two year period. And if you surveyed the situation, you might really need, we'll say fifteen, you couldn't do one doggone thing about it. And we were hamstrung with that position until we became a part of the University of Maine system when we got the flexibility that the university had. Of course I'd been in the university situation and if you made your case strong enough, you could usually get some action. But you couldn't do a thing. Now, putting the state colleges under the board of trustees, that was a very significant piece of legislation.

¶I think we, when we went to four year terms for governor, that provided for... Well, you know we had annual elections in Maine until 1880. And then until 1958 we had, let's see, Governor Clauson, I believe I'm right, Governor Clauson was the first governor to have a four year term, and of course he died before he finished his first year.

SB: So it was Reed who had a seven year term?

BY: Yes, seven year term.

SB: Last three of Clauson's and four of his own.

BY: That's right, yeah. And the only difference there was that Reed had to run for election in 1960 because less than half of the four year term had passed, and if it's less than half, then you will go to the polls. But he got seven years, you see. Then he aspired to run again, and if he had been he would have been governor eleven years. And I don't think the Maine people wanted anybody to be governor eleven years, but one year is much too short and two years, well. The tradition was early established that a governor would have reelection. Oh, 20th century, what are we thinking about? Um, they used to think that the bill that prevented the sale of electric power outside the state of Maine, that was a big thing but that's gone by the board. Um, help me out, can you? I hadn't thought in terms of. . . I mentioned education. Well, in 1913 the creation of the state highway commission, that was a recognition, of course, of the growing importance of the automobile and of our roads, and out of that came eventually the department of transportation as we know it. But of course we had to take into account the growing need for good highways in the state of Maine because we're such a big state and we have a lot of roads to maintain. Um, education, highway, well, the creation of an effective health and welfare system for the state of Maine would have to be a key program.

SB: Do you remember the lobster strike of 1957 at all? With Leslie Dyer and the MLA?

BY: No, I don't remember much about that. I've read about it but I have no strong recollection of it. Failed, didn't it?

SB: Yeah, it did.

BY: Yeah, it failed, yes, that's what, well, ...

SB: Well that's all I have.

BY: That's all you have?

SB: Yeah.

BY: Well, I think we pretty well covered the waterfront, don't you think?

SB: That's some good work. All right, thank you very much.

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