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## Nicoll, Don oral history interview

Andrea L'Hommedieu

## **Interview with Don Nicoll by Andrea L'Hommedieu**

*Summary Sheet and Transcript*

### **Interviewee**

Nicoll, Don

### **Interviewer**

L'Hommedieu, Andrea

### **Date**

April 2, 2004

### **Place**

Lewiston, Maine

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MOH 429

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### **Biographical Note**

Donald Eugene "Don" Nicoll was born in Boston, Massachusetts, on August 4, 1927, and grew up in the West Roxbury section of the city. He is the son of George and Mary Nicoll. He attended Robert Gould Shaw Junior High School and Boston English High School and graduated from Colby College in Waterville, Maine in 1949, majoring in History with a minor in Government. Don met his future wife, Hilda Farnum, also a Colby student, when they worked in the resort town of Ocean Park, Maine, in the summer of 1944. Nicoll began his graduate work at Pennsylvania State College in 1949, where he received a teaching fellowship in the Department of History. His graduate studies concentrated on American history, specifically the period from the Revolutionary War to the Civil War. His M.A. (1952) thesis was on the Alien and Sedition Acts.

Starting in 1951, Nicoll and his family settled in Buckfield, Maine where he picked apples and taught part time at Stephen's High School, located in Rumford. Nicoll began working as an announcer for WLAM radio in Lewiston, Maine. He became a reporter and then news editor for WLAM and WLAM-TV. In June 1954, Nicoll left WLAM to become Executive Secretary of the Democratic State Committee at the request of Frank M. Coffin, who has just become chairman. Mr. Coffin was elected to the U.S. House of Representatives from Maine's Second Congressional

District in 1956 and Nicoll went to Washington, DC, as his administrative assistant, continuing in that post until December 1960, the end of Congressman Coffin's second term. Mr. Coffin ran for governor in 1960 and was defeated. After the election Senator Edmund S. Muskie asked Nicoll to join his staff as legislative assistant and news secretary. Nicoll served in that position until 1962, when he became administrative assistant. He continued in that post until 1971, when he became personal advisor to Senator Muskie. He left the senate office in mid-1972.

From 1972 until his retirement in 2005 Nicoll worked as a program and policy planner, first as a consultant (1972-73), then as chairman and chief executive officer of the New England Land Grant Universities Joint Operations Committee (1973-1975), then as coordinator of planning and vice president for planning and public affairs for the Maine Medical Center (1975-1986), then as a consultant (1986-2005). His clients were primarily in the non-profit sector and included universities, libraries, education associations, health care organizations and social service agencies. He also worked as a volunteer, heading a variety of public policy projects, including the Maine Task Force on Government Reorganization, the Maine State Compensation Commission, the Maine (Mental Health) Systems Assessment Commission, the Maine Consortium for Health Professions Education, the Southern Maine Community Television Consortium, the Maine Special Commission on Government Reorganization (co-chair), the Board of Visitors of the University of Southern Maine's Edmund S. Muskie School of Public Service, the Maine-Aomori Sister-State Advisory Council and the Governor's Allagash Wilderness Waterway Working Group.

From 1998-2005, Don Nicoll was the Director of the Edmund S. Muskie Oral History Project at Bates College.

### **Scope and Content Note**

Interview includes discussions of: Muskie's appearance on the Today Show; traveling to fundraisers for the Democratic Party; Muskie's inaugural period as governor; Muskie dealing with the Republican majority in Maine politics; the State Committee; active Democrats in Maine in the 1950s; Frank Coffin's run for Congress in 1956; and the 1956 Democratic campaigns.

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## **Transcript**

**Andrea L'Hommedieu:** This is an interview with Donald E. Nicoll at the Muskie Oral History Project office at the Muskie Archives at Bates College on April the 2nd, the year 2004, and this is Andrea L'Hommedieu. Don, last time we left off talking about the 1954 period and labor relations in the state of Maine. And if we could go back a little bit during the election period in the fall of '54, and you wanted to talk a little bit about travel.

**Don Nicoll:** Yes, after Ed Muskie was elected governor in September of 1954, that was September the 13th, the demand nationally, for his time, spiked. Because you remember that Dwight Eisenhower was president at the time, and the Democrats were trying mightily to increase their hold on the House and on the Senate, and they were gearing up for the 1956 campaign and trying also to expand the number of Democratic governors in office. And so Ed Muskie was in great demand as a speaker. And there were a number of folks in the Democratic National Committee and in other states who wanted to hear from Frank Coffin about how we had won the election, and this had been quite unexpected.

So immediately after the election we had an invitation from the Today Show which was in its very early stages, Dave Garroway was the host of the show, and they wanted Ed Muskie on. So, and in addition to that, there was a Democratic National Committee fund raiser and conference in Indianapolis about the same time. And so Ed and Jane and I headed for New York first so he could appear, and Mrs. Muskie, too, could appear on the Today Show. And I remember that the Gannett Company made available their plane to fly us from Maine to New York, and as I recall we flew out of the Waterville airport and flew to LaGuardia. There were just the pilot and the three of us on the flight. And I remember that flight vividly, looking out the window as we headed south and down at the landscape of Maine and saying, "Oh, now we're responsible for all of that." This had been a great lark in a sense, the campaign, and we hadn't expected to win but there we were and we were responsible.

So, we got to New York and Ed and Jane went on the Today Show, and then Mrs. Muskie headed back to Maine after the program and he remained. And Frank Coffin and Dick McMahan, who had been his campaign manager, arrived and we spent an afternoon and an evening with Ted Granik, G-R-A-N-I-K, who was a television producer, a lawyer by profession

but I'm not sure whether he ever practiced law, he was primarily a television producer. We went to his apartment and spent some time on the roof of the building where he had a kind of patio, and had some drinks and chatted for a while. And we have some, I have some great pictures of Ed and Frank and Dick and Ted Granik on that patio; Ed primarily relaxing, resting on the chaise lounge. And I remember also Frank, who was at that time a practicing lawyer, looking at Granik at one point and saying, "You're no lawyer, you don't practice law." And they had a bit of a by-play on that issue.

And then we headed off for Indianapolis. And somewhere near Cleveland the TWA plane that we were on, one of the old Lockheed Constellations, a triple tailed, four engine prop driven plane, developed a problem in one engine and they landed in Cleveland late at night, it must have been toward midnight. And we had to hang around until another flight was ready to take us to Indianapolis, because the original flight we were on was out. And we were still working on Ed's remarks to the Democratic National Committee that he was to deliver the next day in Indianapolis, and some material that Frank was going to present. We had a portable typewriter which we put on top of one of those insurance dispensing machines. I'm not sure they have them now in airports, but it used to be that you could buy flight insurance at these machines. And there are pictures of Frank and me working away on those remarks late at night in the airport, typing away and using the portable typewriter on a boxy machine. And this is not untypical of the way we had to operate in those days.

We got to Indianapolis very late at night, got a little sleep, and then plunged into the round of meetings and informal discussions with party leaders from the state and the national level. And Ed spoke, Frank spoke, to very good responses, because Maine Democrats were heroes of the time, and everybody else was getting ready for their November election.

**AL:** That's right, because Maine had theirs early at that time.

**DN:** That's right. So that was the beginning, and from then on through October, late September into October there were a number of requests for governor-elect Muskie to come and speak at fund raisers for Democrats around the country. He campaigned primarily in the northeast, and in fact I can't remember him going outside of the northeast. Washington at the farthest south, and Buffalo, New York I think, and maybe Chicago farthest west.

The trip, the two trips that stick in my mind most were one to Baltimore and one to Buffalo. I traveled with him, because he didn't have any staff on several of these trips. They were all sandwiched in between the governor's budget hearings, because in those days the governor held hearings in the fall of the election year on the proposed budget for the biennium. And all of the recommendations from the different departments came to the governor, and staffed by the Department of Finance as I recall the title of those days, the budget that the governor would submit at the beginning of the first legislative session were put together, was put together. So we had to get back from these trips in a hurry to give him time to go to the budget hearings.

And I remember particularly the Baltimore trip where we had been campaigning there, spoke at a

big, he spoke at a big fund raiser, got through, it must have been eleven o'clock at night and were driven to the airport for a chartered flight back to Waterville, and getting in about two o'clock in the morning, going to the Muskie's little house on Silver Place I believe it was, and, or Silver Terrace, I think it's Silver Terrace in Waterville, creeping in late at night. And I slept there overnight and then the next morning we went to Augusta, and there I had a car and went back to Lewiston to the office before going home. But the other thing I remember about that trip was the feeling going in to the rooms at the hotel and then the reception area and the banquet hall in the hotel in downtown Baltimore and feeling the tension in that area and the conflict. And almost feeling you had to watch your back at all times, because this was a very unhealthy political environment where the long knives were out - not for us, but, so much, for everybody . . . .

**AL:** Was this nationwide or was in Baltimore?

**DN:** This was Baltimore.

**AL:** Baltimore politics.

**DN:** Baltimore and Maryland politics. [Harry Clifton] Curly Byrd, a former coach and president of the University of Maryland was running for governor that year, and the internecine warfare in Maryland politics at that time was something else, and something we had not experienced. But ah, we got whiffs of it in the Bangor area where there were lots of divisions, but nothing like Baltimore. I remember, and that's what I remember most about that trip.

The other trip to Buffalo, I remember a little bit about the combination of Democratic enthusiasm and Polish-American enthusiasm for Ed Muskie. Buffalo was Mrs. Muskie, Sr.'s home town, Josephine Czarnecki Muskie had been born in Buffalo and grew up there. A number of her relatives were still there, and we were greeted royally by them, as well as by the Democratic organization. And at one point went to a Polish restaurant and bar, and there I was introduced to boiler makers, boiler makers and kielbasi. That was a heady period for us and for Ed, but a period in which you didn't, other than getting a feeling for the mood and the way people related to each other, you didn't get a lot of information about what was going on in the states, or the links between the political parties and the social and economic problems of the states.

We were also at that time starting to work with people at the Democratic National Committee. The Democratic National Committee had taken a great interest in the Maine campaign, Steve Mitchell, the chairman of the National Committee was very generous with his time and worked very hard at getting funds to us, even though we didn't spend a lot of money in today's terms, only eighteen thousand dollars for that 1954 campaign. We got support, financial support, because we had very few resources in Maine.

And after the election we started to work with folks at the National Committee on ideas for boosting membership in the party at the state level and improving party organizations. And that came into greater prominence in the period following the 1956 election when Paul Butler, from

Indiana, became the chairman of the Democratic National Committee. But once the general election was over, the national election was over in November, then our attention turned fully to party work in Maine and the governor's inaugural and his first session with a legislature and an administration dominated by Republicans.

**AL:** And do you have recollections of that inaugural period?

**DN:** Yes, in several, several ways. Ed was putting together his staff. The secretary, his principal secretary, personal secretary and office manager was an easy one, Marjorie Hutchinson, who had been his secretary in the Waterville law office was the logical and enthusiastic choice as the senior secretary. Marjorie was a lovely, lovely lady. She was bright, warm, and very, very good with people as well as being a very efficient secretary. And others who were recruited at the time, the ones I remember most were Elsie Bowen, who had been working in state government, and Joan Williams [Arnold] who was a young woman in Augusta, came from a family, her father was a contractor, I believe he was building, a building contractor, general contractor, and McPherson, I'm trying to remember, Ann McPherson, was another secretary in the office during that period. She later worked for the Democratic Party.

The professional, the so-called professional staff positions, administrative assistant and news secretary were a little more problematic, because we didn't have people with a lot of experience in the Democratic Party. And Ed selected Maurice, M-A-U-R-I-C-E, Williams, no relation to Joan, who was the deputy in the Department of Finance and the chief budget officer for the state. He had worked very closely with Ed on the budget development and was a true civil servant and knew state government inside and out, and Ed very wisely hired Maury to become his administrative assistant. His news secretary was Floyd Nute, Floyd T. Nute, who was known sometimes as Floyd and sometimes as Tom. He had been the UPI, Universal Press Inst-, huh, I never thought what the "I" was for.

**AL:** International?

**DN:** United, no, it wasn't Universal, it was United Press International, and he was the bureau chief in Augusta and had been an enthusiastic writer in some columns he did for Ed Muskie and his campaign, and Floyd became Ed's press secretary. Another very knowledgeable person about state government and the people around the State House, Floyd's wife Alice was a, an assistant librarian in the State Law Library. And she and Edith Hary, H-A-R-Y, put together, Edith was the director of the State Library, the Law Library, and Edith and Alice put together a collection of governors' inaugural and other principal addresses and gave them to Governor Muskie, Governor-elect Muskie.

They formed two rather massive volumes stitched together. And I think, as I remember they were each about two inches thick and they were, the smaller size about five-by-eight in dimensions, and then as I say two inches thick. And before his inaugural address, Governor-elect Muskie poured through those documents and chose pertinent quotes from them for his inaugural. And it was a signal, I think, of the enthusiasm that state employees had with this new governor who was not part of the standard tradition going through the chairs as Burton Cross and

his predecessors had. But with that small staff, and with assistance from Frank Coffin, Tom Delahanty, Irving Isaacson, others and I, the team that was going to help with his legislative program started work before January, and then after January.

A couple of funny things; first, one of the big events around an inaugural is the inaugural ball. And in those days, I'm not sure what it's like now, but in those days the invitation list was a crucial matter. And for us it was important to invite all of those who had helped with the campaign, starting with the members of the state committee, the county committee, and then the volunteers in the sixteen counties of the state.

And the amusing part of this that I recall, because we got the responsibility of putting together the list of names and addresses associated with the party, and getting them to Marjorie Hutchinson and she in turn worked with Catherine Rines, the social secretary, and Mrs. Muskie, to get the invitations out. We asked the members of the state committee to send us the names of people in their area who should be on the list, and we used that to supplement the legislative candidates and the others that we were familiar with. We got those lists, and one of them came from Margaret Murray of Brooklin, Maine, known as Peggy, who was the state committeewoman from Hancock County. Peggy sent in a fairly long list and that was put into the mix and invitations went out.

And about two days before the inaugural Peggy called me at the Democratic State Committee headquarters, chewed me out because she had not gotten an invitation. I said, I apologized and said I would check into it. But by then the list had gone to the governor's office, so I called Marjorie Hutchinson and told Marjorie the problem and she took care of getting the invitation out to Peggy and George Murray, her husband, post haste. But she called me back and said, "The reason Peggy didn't get the invitation, Don, is that she didn't include her own name on the list." So I was able to tell Peggy that she was the root of the problem, and we very carefully reminded everybody to be, henceforth to be sure to get their own name on those kinds of lists. That was one amusing incident connected with the inaugural.

The other was the swearing in of the governor, which is done by the clerk of the house, I believe that's right. Well, in any event, it was Harvey Pease who was either clerk of the house or secretary of the senate, and I think he was clerk of the house. And part of that routine is for the clerk to read the oath and the governor to repeat it, and then at the end of the swearing in there is the phrase, "God save the State of Maine." And Harvey, who was a curmudgeonly old Republican, when he got to that phrase, said with great feeling, greater than he'd exhibited in previous swearings in, "God save the State of Maine." But I think nowadays the chief justice of the supreme judicial court administers the oath, but in those days it was the clerk.

**AL:** Was Harvey still there when Ed Muskie ran the second time for governor, do you recall?

**DN:** Yes, he was I think.

**AL:** Now, after the inaugural period, the new Governor Muskie and his small staff had to work

in terms of their first legislative session. Do you have recollections of that period and how Ed Muskie approached being in the minority?

**DN:** Well he always approached these matters in terms of building up as much collaboration as possible. He had to deal really with three separate, or four separate groups: one was the Republican majority in both houses, the second was the Democratic minority in both houses, the third was the governor's council or executive council, and the fourth was the collection of state department heads, the commissioners of the different departments.

The legislative folks were relatively easy to deal with in many ways on the Republican side. Bob Haskell, the president of the senate, was a very realistic, pragmatic politician with very little ideology. And in an earlier interview I described the great battle and negotiations with the Republicans on the economic development issue. But Bob Haskell was someone you could work with, and was very straightforward. Jim Reid, his, the majority leader in the senate, was a bit more difficult, but Jim was an honorable fellow, he simply was very conservative and much more rigid about these things than Bob.

On the house side, the speaker was Bill Trafton, William [*sic* Willis A.] Trafton of Auburn, whose son and daughter-in-law are now, are very active Democrats and have served as Democratic legislators. Bill was a very forthright, very nice guy who was well known in the community here, and in today's terms a moderate Republican and easy to work with. He ran against Governor Muskie in 1956, I think in some ways pushed into it by the Republican Party. He was not, as I remember it, he was not an enormously enthusiastic candidate but he did his duty. I don't remember the house Republican majority leader at the time.

The Democrats were a little more difficult in a sense, because they were so much in the minority that they couldn't carry much weight, but after all they were Democrats and the governor was a Democrat and they wanted some attention, and they didn't want to be simply brushed aside. So there was a lot of hand holding and cultivation of the minority Democrats during that period, and I remember, particularly, the sometimes difficult periods of dealing with Louis Jalbert who had his own maneuvering on both sides of the aisle. And there were a number of ideas that the Democrats advanced, some connected with the platform and advanced by the governor, some advanced by individual members, and there were times of difficult negotiation there.

But Ed, as always, tended to keep his eye on what the long term goal was and to work very hard at persuading people to come around to a consensus position, and very seldom would he exert overt pressure on people by going to the public and pushing his point of view and embarrassing the opposition. And that's what happened a little bit with the economic development legislation.

The executive council was a holdover from the days when Maine was part of Massachusetts, and during the colonial period the executive council, or governor's council, was set up as a way of checking the power of the royal governor, who was appointed by the king. And during that period there was a very deep seated suspicion of the executive branch of government, this is in the pre-Revolutionary period, and it carried over. And so when the new constitutions were

drawn for the states, states like Massachusetts, New Hampshire and others continued the election of an executive council in virtually all cases I believe, certainly in Massachusetts and in Maine, elected by the majority in the legislature.

All seven members of the council in Maine were chosen by the majority in both houses in a joint session. So during Ed's terms of office the members of the governor's council were all Republicans. They were responsible for agreeing to pardons, for example, gubernatorial pardons, the expenditure of funds that the governor controlled, and most notably approving nominations to department heads and other positions in state government.

**AL:** Did that include at all the court system?

**DN:** And the judges, and the judges. And they didn't hesitate to resist the appointment of Democrats, and I remember that there was a big fight, for example, over Dick McMahon whom Governor Muskie nominated to become a member of the Public Utilities Commission. And Dick was treated as unqualified by the executive council because he did not have the, supposedly the requisite degrees or educational background. He was, in fact, an accountant and a very good accountant, had been treasurer of the city of Waterville, and was probably one of the best members of the Public Utilities Commission that we ever had. He worked hard at it and he was bright, and he was absolutely committed to both the fiscal integrity of the electrical and telephone, telecommunication systems, and to protecting the interests of the consumer. And it was a protracted, as I recall, protracted set of negotiations before the council agreed to confirm his nomination. But that was a constant source of difficulty for the governor.

An amusing footnote on all of this, one of the members of the executive council was David Nichols, N-I-C-H-O-L-S, of Lincolnville, and David was a lawyer, a Bates graduate, a bachelor, rather humorless I'm sorry to say, but a perfectly decent human being and a very bright lawyer, but very conservative, and some people used to say of him that he was born old. And sometimes David would get mail that was addressed to me, whoever was sorting the mail didn't check it very carefully, and mail would come to me at the governor's office because I was around there so much. And he would come out of the executive council chamber and slam the letters down on Marjorie's desk and say, "This is not for me!" He was insulted to be confused with me.

But the council chamber was right next to the governor's office. It may be useful for those who weren't around at that time to know that the governor's office in the 1950s was located on the third floor of the state capitol, counting the ground floor as one, the same floor as the senate and the house chambers. It was at the end of the south wing of the capitol in the southeast corner. The governor's office itself, that is his room and his little bathroom, were on the southeast corner. Immediately adjacent to it at the south end of the building was a room about probably ten by fifteen feet in which three secretaries sat, and that was the reception room and secretaries' room, and immediately north of the governor's office was the executive council chamber which was a larger room, somewhat bigger than the governor's office and certainly bigger than the secretaries' office. And there was a dais and a desk there, and then a horseshoe of desks for the councilors, the governor sat the dais and the councilors sat in that horseshoe. And immediately

next to the executive council room was the corridor, and beyond the corridor, this is going west, was the senate chamber. Today the governor's office is occupied by the president of the senate, and staff use the executive council chamber and the former secretaries' office. And the senate chamber is still there, and the governor's office has been moved down to what amounts to the west wing of the capitol, on the second floor of the capitol. But I can remember watching the executive councilors floating in and out while going to talk with him. The press secretary and the administrative assistant at one point shared a very small office just beyond the executive council chamber, Maury and Floyd.

Well, we worked through that spring, winter and spring of 1955, on legislative work for the governor, questions of appointments, sort of an informal kitchen cabinet. And in July of '55, early July of '55, Gov. Muskie and Frank Coffin, Maury Williams and Floyd Nute and I went on a three day voyage along the coast of Maine and the Sea and Shore Fisheries research folk, and it was a combination mini vacation and a, sort of relaxing time to talk about strategy following up on the first legislative session. And we went from East Boothbay where the Sea and Shore Fisheries department had a research station, out and along the coast, we stopped in Rockland I remember and went all the way down to Eggemoggin Reach between Deer Isle and Brooklin, and around there and back. And during that time had a lot of fun, and poor Floyd Nute found it very difficult because Ed Muskie and Frank Coffin loved puns and Floyd hated puns, and when he exploded one day about the, being sick and tired of hearing all the puns and said that at least they couldn't do limericks, then the two of them turned to limericks and composed limericks for the rest of the trip.

I should have mentioned that earlier, that spring and June I believe it, yeah, I think it was in June, I went on a trip with Gov. Muskie, and Maury was on that trip, so was Dick McMahon and Perry Furbush, up to the Allagash. There were some questions that had come up about the protection of that area. At that time it was focused primarily as I recall on the lakes area. We flew up in State Fish & Game planes, landing -

**AL:** Let me pause right there and flip it.

*End of Side A*  
*Side B*

**AL:** We are now on Side B, and you were just starting to tell me about a trip to the Allagash.

**DN:** Yes, it was early June and we were going up, again, it was one of those events where the governor was getting a chance to relax with friends and do some state business. We flew to Chamberlain Lake and stopped at Nugent's, that's N-U-G-E-N-T-apostrophe-S Camps, because he needed to talk to Mr. Nugent who owned the camps at that time about some of the problems associated with the area. It was not the Allagash Wilderness Waterway at that time, although there was some agitation building up to create a, at that point people were talking about creating a national park there. And we sat in on a session he had with Mr. Nugent, and then flew over to Allagash Lake and stayed at the forestry camp on Allagash Lake and fished there, fished Johnson

Pond, and a little pond the name of which I can't remember. Dick Dubord was the other person who was on that trip, and I spent a lot of time with Dick fishing and just relaxing. I remember particularly getting up one morning and doing some spin casting from the dock in front of the forestry camp, and as I reeled the line in, stripping ice off the line. It was just cold enough so that as you brought the line in the cold air would freeze the moisture on the fishing line. And I had a chance to really get to know Dick Dubord on that trip, he was an extraordinarily bright man and great fun, one of the funniest people I've ever known, and was a marvelous person to have around Governor, then Senator Muskie because he was so bright, so incisive, and yet so relaxed and relaxing that it was good for the senator, governor and then senator, who sometimes got very irritable about his situation and the pressures on him, and Dick could defuse that situation. It was a great loss in 1970 when Dick died suddenly.

But that, those two trips in the spring and summer, June and July, were respites in a very busy period coping with being in the minority and yet responsible for the administration of the state. We were beginning to think already during that period about 1956 and Gov. Muskie's reelection, and the congressional races. In '56 there would be three congressional seats to fill, and that was obviously going to be a tough campaign. It was also going to be the campaign where we'd test the proposition of whether the Muskie election of '54 was a fluke or something permanent. And Frank Coffin as the state chairman, and I as the executive secretary were concerned about building the institution of the state committee.

This may be a good time to talk a bit about what was going on at the state committee. In the '54 campaign we had met where we could. Our office for the campaign was, as I've mentioned in an earlier interview, located on Lisbon Street, second floor. It was a single, small room, smaller than this room in the Archives, and we had a chair, a desk, and a pile of newspapers for the second person to sit on, and that was it for a long time in the office. After the election, however, we moved to 460 Main Street in Lewiston which had been the home of the late Judge John Clifford, and Jeanne Delahanty Clifford, Jeanne Clifford Delahanty who had married Tom Delahanty. It was converted into an office building, and still is, and we were able to rent the suite of rooms on the second floor front of the building. The large room was the state chairman's office and conference room where the state committee met regularly; the second room, good sized, was the executive secretary's office; and a small office between the two, which I think at one time had been a closet but it was a good sized closet, was the secretary's office. And then we rented another room across the hall which we used for a copy, what would today be a copy center, and our copying at that time consisted of a mimeograph machine and we bought an addressograph machine for keeping out addresses and handling mailings. No Xerox copier, and no printing, no laser printers, no computers. The, but the office was very comfortable and we managed to get attractive furniture, and that's where we set up shop after the election when it looked as if we might have a permanent operation.

**AL:** Do you recall the address, is it something like 260 Main Street?

**DN:** No, 460.

**AL:** Four-sixty.

**DN:** Four-six-zero Main Street in Lewiston, opposite the intersection of Frye and Maine. And I think, well I can't remember the name of the street that goes beside it, toward the river. The state committee that had been elected in April of 1954 had thirty two members, a man and a woman from each of the sixteen counties, and it was a mix of old and new. In Androscoggin County, for example, Frank Coffin was the male member and Rose Gilman, who was a long-time Democratic activist and an active union member in the textile workers, was the woman on the committee. And I remember among some of the older members was Guy Twombly, T-W-O-M-B-L-Y, and Phyllis Murphy from Waldo County, and Guy was probably in his late seventies at the time, and Phyllis was in her early sixties. Phyllis was his housekeeper, and she had gone to work for and lived with Guy after his first wife died and was, became a member of the family. And Mary McAleney, who is at the present time the SBA Office director in Maine, and was for a number of years, she was administrative assistant to Senator Mitchell and worked for Senator Muskie, is his granddaughter. And very interesting, because it's obvious from comments that Mary has made that Phyllis was very much regarded a part of the family as if she had been formally Guy's wife. And Guy represented sort of old-line tough minded, rural democracy, and was not one of your modern and bright urban professionals in the party, and was a liberal in many ways but in a populist sense. Then you had Peggy Murray and Roland Guite, G-U-I-T-E, from Hancock County. Peggy was a native of Jersey City, New Jersey, her father had been a reformist activist in Jersey City fighting against Boss Haig, and was married to George Murray who had been a roommate of Prescott Bush at Yale. And Prescott Bush is President George W. Bush's grandfather.

Peggy and George used to tell a funny story about the days at Yale. In their senior year, George Prescott Bush and their third roommate had finished all of their requirements for graduation and had an open course. They had to take a course, but it could be anything they wanted, and they decided as a lark that they would take the introductory course to U.S. government, and all three of them took it. George and the other roommate passed, and Prescott Bush failed. Peggy and George used to like that because by this time Prescott was, Prescott Bush was a U.S. senator.

But Peggy was very different from not only Guy Twombly but a number of other old-line Maine Democrats. And Roland Guite was a real estate broker and an insurance, he came from Waterville and certainly was not your quintessential downeast Yankee Democrat.

One of the great qualities that Ed Muskie and Frank Coffin had and shared was their ability to meld people from very different backgrounds, and to keep engaged in the party both the old timers who had been through the lean years and newer people who were coming along and wanted to get active in politics, and many times had very different views, different approaches than the old timers.

**AL:** Do you have any examples of how they did that? Did they make sure that some of the young people had opportunities to get involved?

**DN:** They engaged them in such things as platform development, and in campaigning, and encouraged them to run for office, always recruiting younger people with energy to run for office, and giving them assignments on committees. It was that sort of thing. While, and not shunting aside the older folks. It was sometimes difficult for some of the older Democrats to get used to the changes. I remember Louis Labbe, for example, Louis was the state committee man from Cumberland County from Brunswick. Interestingly enough, the state committee man in Cumberland County was not from Portland but from Brunswick. Louis was probably in his sixties at the time, he was a baker by trade, and he was also a very fastidious man. I never saw him without a suit, and frequently he wore a vest as part of the suit, and a tie, and his hair was slicked down and he had a little moustache. He was one of those fellows who looked like a nineteenth century burgher, if you will. He had a very round head and a round body, but it was compact, and he was compact in the way he acted.

Louis had been and was the treasurer of the state committee. When the campaign got under way, into 1955 and on, Louis suddenly discovered that instead of a few hundred dollars flowing through the treasury there were thousands of dollars. Again, not much by 2004 standards, but a lot of money from Louis' point of view and it made him very nervous. He also found that the new state chairman was making commitments for spending that money that always was slightly ahead of where the cash was. And I can see him now standing, see him and hear him now standing before the state committee, giving his treasurer's report which would go something like this: "We had receipts of three thousand, two hundred and fifty dollars, and expenditures of three thousand, nine hundred and twenty nine dollars, by which we have a deficit of . . ." And you could see Louis' mind turning, and he had visions of going to jail or something worse for being so profligate in handling the state committee's finances. But he was brought along, respected, and felt very much a part of the campaigning and part of the party leadership.

And that was also true of Thelma Lasalle who was from Winslow, a school teacher who was the secretary, and Dorothea Rickards, R-I-C-K-A-R-D-S, I should say Thelma Lasalle, L-A-S-A-L-L-E. Dorothea was the vice chair, or as it was called in those days the vice chairman, of the state committee. She came from Pittsfield, I don't recall that she had a professional or business life, she was a homemaker and had been the vice chairman of the committee before Frank continued on.

But we were busy during that period recruiting additional town committee leaders, holding meetings around the state, recruiting people who could run for office, particularly the legislative seats, and getting ready for 1956. Through the fall of '55, one of our principal goals was to be sure we had a full slate, both at the major office level and at the state legislative and county office level. We didn't quite make it at the legislative level or the county offices, but came much closer to a hundred percent. And we were struggling with the congressional seats. Both Ken Colbath and Tom Delahanty really wanted out, they had run reluctantly in 1954. Jim Oliver in the first district was eager to run again because he'd come reasonably close in '54. Paul Fullan, who had run for the United States Senate in 1954, was seriously looking at the prospect of running for Congress in the second district and we were headed in that direction when in the winter of '55-'56, I'm not sure of the exact date, Paul died suddenly. He had had cardiac

problems that had come up once or twice during the 1954 campaign, and after that campaign we had been told that he had cardiac problems and his doctor was advising him to take it easy, to focus on teaching and take care of himself. But he was very eager to run. He'd been approached pretty much as a courtesy, as well as because there was a feeling that if he ran he would stand a very good chance of winning, he'd made such a good name for himself in the '54 campaign. But without any pressure, we were very sensitive to the fact that he had a health problem, that he had a young family, and did not want to pressure him into feeling that he absolutely had to run. But Paul died suddenly and to a certain extent unexpectedly in mid winter, and then we were faced with the question of how to fill both the second district slot and the third district. In the end, Frank Coffin reluctantly agreed to run for the House, and Ken Colbath agreed to run again in the third district.

**AL:** Did you have any behind the scenes influence in urging Frank Coffin to run?

**DN:** Well, I'd been after him since 1953 to run for the House and felt that he still should do it. And he, by then he was ready to run. And there were interests from the national committee in getting Frank to run, a feeling that he'd be a very good member of the House. And at that point, in the winter, early spring of '56, Roger Dube, who had run for the United States Senate in 1952, was a county commissioner, was a flamboyant character, he'd been brought up by his grandparents who had a fair amount of money, and Roger always had a string of girls trailing him and had a girlfriend who was very active in the Democratic party and traveled with him a great deal. I believe Paul McDonald in his interview refers to Roger and his girlfriend, in his interview, and it's worth going back and getting the flavor of the campaign with Roger and his lady. Roger decided that he was going to run for Congress in the second district; he had not been active in the '54 campaign, not terribly active in the party, but he was well known in the Lewiston-Auburn area. Frank decided to run after Paul Fullam was unable to do it, because of Paul's death, but Roger persisted and was Frank's primary opponent. And he used to, he campaigned around the district referring to Frank Coffin as "that Johnny-come-lately" and reminded people of how long he'd been active in the Democratic Party. But Frank handily defeated him in the primary, then went on to run against Jim Reid, the lawyer who had been majority leader in the state senate, and defeated Jim quite handily.

That year was a busy one for me because we had the state committee, our effort to fill the slates for the house and senate, and coordinating the Congressional campaigns and the gubernatorial campaigns, and part of the effort was, as I mentioned, filling the slate of senate and house candidates for the state legislature. And living in Oxford County, I was eager to see that we had two candidates in Oxford County for the state senate. Those days we had multiple senate districts, and traditionally in Oxford County you recruited a candidate from the northern end of the county, up around Rumford, Bethel area, and one from the southern end of the county, South Paris, Norway, etcetera, so that you had geographic balance in the senate and in your campaigning. Well, we found a candidate, a prospective candidate, who was about ready to run in the northern part of the county. That was Murray Thurston, Mike Thurston, who was a, the manager of a wood turning mill in Roxbury, up near Rumford, and lived in Bethel. He was the son of Paul Thurston who was the chairman of the Maine Turnpike Authority and a banker, was the president of a bank, and a Democrat; very unusual in that area, but came from an old

Democratic family.

**AL:** Did they know the Muskie family? (*Unintelligible phrase*).

**DN:** Yes, yes, Paul did. Mike was younger. Well, actually Mike was about Ed Muskie's age, but he would not have known Ed as a boy because he grew up in Bethel, went to Gould Academy and off to Dartmouth, to college, and he was probably two or three years younger than Ed. And Mike was very well known in the community, very able guy, but very laconic and not at all eager to run. He was willing to do it because that was a duty, civic duty, but he wouldn't run unless we got somebody from the southern end of the county. I spent a long time in the spring trying to find somebody who would run from the southern end of the county, and we did not succeed and finally we agreed that, okay, I could run, at least put my name on the ballot and get Mike to run. So in the midst of all of this, Frank running for, being state chairman and running for Congress, and working on the state wide campaign business, I was also going to run for the state senate. Add to the mix the governor's decision that he would not use a member of his staff to manage his campaign, that was improper in his view. He also would not use a state car for campaigning, so he purchased an Edsel and that was his campaign car. And we had to recruit somebody to manage his campaign, and that recruitment fell to Frank and me. We decided that the best prospect was a member of the Bowdoin faculty, Paul Hazelton, who was at the time a professor of English, later became professor of education at Bowdoin, was a very pragmatic, lovely guy who combined all of the instincts and behavioral patterns of a real academic with the practical outlook of somebody who had grown up in Saco and was, never put on airs, had been a hard working county chair and local volunteer in the Democratic Party. Very down to earth. We thought Paul would make an ideal manager for the campaign because of his personal qualities and talents, and because since we had September elections, somebody as an academic who was fully tenured at that time could take off for the summer and run the campaign and be through with the campaign in time to go back to the classroom in the fall. So we recruited Paul, he agreed to do it, and that was the beginning for me of a great friendship.

And I remember particularly the cultural problems of working on that campaign with Paul at the beginning because Paul, as I said earlier, was a true academic in many ways and very carefully weighed all of the evidence before making a decision. He came to the office I remember, early in the campaign when the primary question was, "What do we do about color schemes and bumper stickers and printing of materials for the campaign?" And Paul came armed for the discussion, starting first with the question of bumper stickers. In those days you had very limited choices. Bumper stickers were generally printed using the silk screen method, and there were a few stock colors that could be used for bumper sticker material, there was fluorescent pink, and fluorescent green, and a kind of fluorescent yellow, and maybe one or two others. In 1954 we had used blue on this fluorescent reddish pink, sort of patriotic combination and bright, it would catch your attention. Paul came in and said, "Now, in 1954 you had this fluorescent reddish pink on blue, and that worked well but everybody uses those colors. If you want to distinguish yourself, you have to have something else. I read that psychologists have determined that yellow, fluorescent yellow is much more visible and catches one's eye better than red, and in fact today they're making more fire trucks, painting them yellow instead of red because that's more

visible. But on the other hand, psychologists tell us that yellow can have a very adverse effect on the viewer, turn people off.” About this time, the phone messages are piling up, I've got a raft of things that I have to get done and I'm getting very antsy about this long discussion of bumper stickers and colors, and I know that in that department at least those choices in those days were limited and not terribly important. So I said, “Dammit, Paul, it doesn't make any difference. Two weeks from now, two weeks after you make the decision nobody will care, nobody will know, it doesn't make a difference. Just make a decision!”

Well, we went on through the campaign and after the campaign was over Paul came up in October to Lewiston for our session on financial reports for the state. We were sitting down to go through the papers and fill out the report, and he looked at me and he smiled and he said, “I didn't know what you'd done to me in this campaign until I went to my first faculty meeting last week. And they sat there for an hour debating where the next faculty meeting should be held and what they should serve for refreshments, and pretty soon I found myself sitting there saying, “It doesn't make any difference, dammit, just make the decision.”” That became the watchword of our relationship. And later Paul's niece, Jane Fenderson Cabot, went to work for us. She came to us an intern from, as a student at Mt. Holyoke and then worked for Senator Muskie and ultimately for Mrs. Carter in the Carter White House.

But the campaign came together in '56. As we've said earlier, Bill Trafton ran against Ed Muskie, Jim Oliver ran in the first district, Frank won the primary handily in the second district, and Ken Colbath reluctantly agreed to run again in the third district. The governor was reelected by a very comfortable margin, the first district, Jim Oliver came closer and I believe they had a recount that year, and Frank won, again fairly comfortably, and Ken Colbath did well but didn't come close to winning. We added members in the house and the senate in the state legislature, and fortunately I lost. Matter of fact, Mike and I both lost in that campaign. I lost by about six hundred votes, as I recall, and Mike lost by about two hundred, and he never stopped reminding me that in 1958 he ran again, having decided he rather liked to campaign, and that that time they couldn't find a candidate in the southern end of the county so they recruited Peter McDonald, who at that time was a retiring attorney in Rumford, and Peter was a lovely man and had been a very successful lawyer but he was reaching the stage where his energy level was down and his memory wasn't always the best, and they both won. So Mike reminded me that he could do better with somebody who wasn't supposed to be such a good candidate in his own back yard. But I didn't win, and Frank was elected, and after that election we started work on going to Washington.

**AL:** So he asked you to go to Washington and be his?

**DN:** Administrative Assistant, and we went in early October. To add to our pressures, we did some more campaigning after the election in '56, we were on call, this time Frank as well as Gov. Muskie, and we did some campaigning, Hilda was expecting our third child Melissa, who arrived in late September. Then after a series of these flights around the country, I came down with a serious ear infection, a recurring problem from my childhood, and had to have mastoid surgery, the third time that ear was operated on, and we were also getting ready to move from

Maine to Washington, D.C. and somehow we got our, got through it and took off in late December, just before Christmas, heading for the District, sharing a moving van with Frank and Ruth Coffin. We contracted with the mover so that we could save each other money.

**AL:** Great, that sounds like a great place to stop for today, we're almost out of tape, and hopefully we'll pick it up again soon.

**DN:** Okay.

**AL:** Thank you.

*End of Interview*