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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

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Place

Portland, Maine

ID Number

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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

Interview includes discussions of: politically active Democrats, and descriptions of them, in Knox County, Waldo County, Lincoln County, Sagadahoc County, Piscataquis County, Somerset County, Kennebec County, Franklin County, Oxford County, Androscoggin County, and York County.

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Transcript

Andrea L'Hommedieu: This is an interview for the Edmund S. Muskie Oral History Project at Bates College. The date is January 16th, 2009, and I'm at the home of Don Nicoll in Portland, Maine, and this is Andrea L'Hommedieu. And Don, last time we left off, we were talking about people who were involved in Maine politics around the state of Maine, and we had started in Aroostook County and made our way to Hancock County, and so we wanted to pick up there and talking about individuals who were active.

Don Nicoll: Okay, I forget how far we got in Hancock County.

AL: I believe we finished Hancock County.

DN: Finished Hancock, okay, well let's go up to Penobscot and then follow the coast down, and then go inland. In Penobscot County, the principal focus of course was Bangor.

AL: Oh, we did cover Bangor, we covered Bangor, yeah, that's okay.

DN: We've covered Bangor, I'm sorry. But going down the coast, and in Waldo County, most of the focus was outside the city of Belfast, interestingly enough, during the fifties and into the sixties, and rural Waldo County was where most of the leadership came from. The individuals who were most prominent, particularly in the 1954-'55-'56 campaign period were Eben Elwell, who was County Chair at the time, later treasurer of the state of Maine, and has been the subject of very extensive interviews for the oral history project. I won't go into detail there, because Eben has given quite a bit of detail. Characteristic of him, I might say, he has a phenomenal memory and phenomenal command of every fact about every subject that he's dealing with.

And Eben was a very imaginative and active leader in the county, and made a number of connections with the Republicans who were disaffected by the 1952 election, and disaffected by Governor Cross. And some of the principal sources of anti-Cross activity by Republicans came out of Waldo County, and one of the chief people in that group was our friend the later candidate against Senator Muskie, who referred to himself as the ugliest man in the state of Maine, and also liked to compare himself with Abraham Lincoln, and I'm suddenly drawing a blank on his name [Neil Bishop]. From Stockton Springs, and that will come to me, I'll go back to it.

The other notable figures from the '54-'55-'56 period were Guy Twombly, who was the state committeeman, and Phyllis Murphy, who was the state committeewoman. And Guy was probably in his late eighties at the time, crusty old fellow, and Phyllis was his housekeeper and companion, Guy had been widowed, and Phyllis was a sweet, very gentle but very efficient and effective person. And they were part of the old rural democratic tradition connected with the farming community, progressives, and very suspicious of any of the Republican business leaders in the state, and very effective in working with both Democrats and rank and file Republicans in the area.

And I should note that Guy and Phyllis, who were longtime Democrats, represented a group in the party that Ed Muskie and Frank Coffin brought along. They did not command with the intent of sweeping the table clean and putting new people in charge everywhere, they worked very hard to get a blend of the old and the young, and were very successful at it. But I remember Guy on a number of occasions, when you'd come in with some, to you, great idea, and Guy would fix a gimlet on you and make it clear that that wasn't such a bright idea, and he was, ninety percent of the time he was right. He was shrewd and a great person, and part of the panoply as I remember from that period.

(Telephone interruption.)

DN: And those are the people I remember most of all from Waldo County. The other thing I remember about Waldo County most of all was 1956, when in the summer of '56 we were having our Jefferson-Jackson event, which was a lobster feed and was held at Pemaquid, not Pemaquid Beach, but in Pemaquid, and at the lobster pound. And Adlai Stevenson, who was a candidate again, having been a candidate in '52 for the Democratic

nomination for president, was making a campaign swing in Maine.

And he was touring northern New England, I got the assignment to take Senator Muskie's campaign car, the Edsel, and drive it to Vermont, and in Burlington to pick up Stevenson and company and drive them back through New Hampshire to Maine and to Rockport, where Stevenson was to stay overnight. And then he went to the Belfast poultry processing plant, Penobscot Poultry, where he was going to greet workers and have a chance for a little campaigning. And Stevenson was not much for plant gate gatherings, and was visibly irritated by having to go through this routine. I think he felt it was not a dignified activity for a presidential candidate, and illustrated as much as anything his great weakness as a candidate for president at that time.

Now moving south, the next county is Knox, and in Knox County the leading figures from that time were Ada Roberts, who was the state committeewoman, and Howard Dearborn was the state committeeman. Very different people. Ada was probably in her eighties at the time and was a very dignified, charming older woman, and very sharp, very effective member of the State Committee. And her grandson, Chris [Babbidge], has been a legislator from York County, and I forget Chris' last name, but he, two generations removed, has been an active Democrat. Howard Dearborn was a fellow who made his living in various ways, including operating a summer mini resort, cabins along the shore, north of, northeast of Rockland.

And the other figure who became very important from our point of view was Owen Smith, who had come to Maine because of a young woman he met when he was a Navy officer, picking up a mine sweeper built in Camden and skippering it down the east coast, through the Panama Canal and into the Pacific where he did his wartime combat duty. But then after the war he came back, married Joan [Smith], and they lived for a while in Portland, he was editor of the *Maine Fisherman*, and then in Camden took on some other writing responsibilities, and we convinced him to run for the state senate in 1956. As anticipated, he wasn't successful, but he contributed to the elevation of the reputation of the party in that area, and later he went to Washington where he was deputy assistant secretary of the Army. And he was, by coincidence, a member of the graduating class of Harvard with John Kennedy, but that I think had less to do with his appointment than his affiliation with Maine Democrats and connections with the secretary of the Army at the time. But Owen was a good example of younger people moving into the state who got involved with the party and provided some fresh leadership.

The next county -

AL: Before we leave that county, you mentioned Ada Roberts' grandson. Is it Chris Babbidge?

DN: Yes, Chris Babbidge, thank you.

AL: Yeah, and I will just note that we have an interview with him in the project too, because he probably speaks about his grandmother to some extent. So, the next county?

DN: The next county is Lincoln, and Lincoln was at the time virtually the most Republican county in the state, and was, this was before the great influx of well-to-do retirees. And this was true also, Camden had a number of well-to-do retirees, for example, Ambrose Cramer, who lived in Rockport, right next to Camden, was a Chicago architect before he retired to the coast, and he was Adlai Stevenson's friend who hosted Stevenson on that 1956 visit, and I think in another interview I have talked in some detail about that event.

But at the risk of repeating myself, we came after the Penobscot poultry event back to Ambrose Cramer's, and were getting ready for the event in Damariscotta, not Damariscotta but Pemaquid, and Stevenson was, as usual, editing and re-editing the remarks that had been prepared for him. And Ed Muskie, through his press secretary Floyd Nute, was getting his remarks done. Chester Bowles, former governor of Connecticut, later ambassador to India and a good friend of Stevenson's was there, as was [William M.] Bill Blair, Stevenson's aide, who Stevenson referred to frequently as the voice of doom, because Blair was the one who kept him on schedule and would appear to say, "It's time to go governor."

And we gathered in an upstairs library in Cramer's home, and I remember there was a sudden flurry and Floyd Nute had run out of paper for the Muskie speech. And about then Ambrose, who is a charming, diminutive man with a little moustache, came in and asked if he could do anything, and Floyd, the former newsman said, "Yeah, have you got any copy?" And Ambrose said, "Oh yes, how many do you need?" And Floyd said, "About a dozen." And Ambrose disappeared and never returned. And in the meantime, somebody found some paper for Floyd and he finished his work. And the time came to leave, and this group of men got up and headed for the stairs that went down to the first floor and out the door into the circular driveway. And as we came by the door to the kitchen, which happened to be right by that entrance, Ambrose appeared with twelve cups of coffee on a tray, and was left standing there as the group tore off. And that's one of my vivid memories of confusion in a campaign.

AL: And I don't think that you have told that story, Don, that's nice to add.

DN: The other image from that visit came in the evening when we came back after the Pemaquid event, and I was staying at one of the inns further down along the shore of Camden. And Jim Finnegan, the chairman of the Democratic National Committee and a leading political figure from Philadelphia, and Bill Blair, no, Bill Blair was staying with Stevenson at the Kramer's. But Joe Short I think was part of the group, and the three of us went to this inn, where you came up on the porch and by the windows, in a bay at the living room, most of the residents in the inn were elderly women. And they heard the tramping on the steps – it was after dark, probably about eight o'clock at night, nine o'clock at night in the summer – and these figures came walking by, Nicoll (*describing himself*) in those days rather slight, but Jim Finnegan, a big hulking man. And you could see them asking themselves, what in the world is happening to our inn? It's a charming recollection.

And moving into Lincoln County, the head of the, the leader in the Democratic Party was a real estate agent in Damariscotta, and his daughter was the state committeewoman, which tells you something about the thin state of the party in that county. And it was known not as a source of any strength of the party, but as an example of one of the most Republican counties where there was little or no competition, and where economic conditions were abysmal. Which is hard to think about today, considering the state of the economy in Lincoln County, but in those days it was, this is pre Maine Yankee, it is pre the flood of well-to-do retirees, and pre period of some prosperity for the boat builders. And so there's not much to remember about it except those couple of figures.

And by the way, going back to Waldo County, that Republican leader and candidate was Neil Bishop, a rather famous character in Maine politics.

And the next county along the coast which we can visit before breaking for the inland is Sagadahoc, and Sagadahoc was the home of course of the Bath Iron Works and a number of union members who were active in the Democratic Party. And a fellow named Bob Brewer was the state committeeman, I forget who the state committeewoman was at the time, but the most notable figure was Paul Hazelton who lived in Topsham. Paul was a member of the faculty at Bowdoin, a professor of education at that time, he'd earlier been a professor of English, and Paul was county chairman. And a 1956, as I've told in another interview, Paul was the campaign manager for Senator Muskie and a great contributor to that campaign and to the party as a whole over the years. Again, Sagadahoc was largely Republican, and you had pockets of Democrats in Topsham, adjacent to Brunswick and in Bath around the iron works, and the rest of it was rural and very Republican.

We might drop back to Somerset County, or Piscataquis County, and the edge of Penobscot that I think I did not mention, Newport, and there a local pharmacist – and I regret that that name escapes me, Ed was his first name – was a leading member of the party and an anchor, and someone who had very good connections with the Republicans in the community, notably the Friend brothers, Ike and Norris Friend, who owned a car dealership, had gotten to know Ed Muskie when he was the state director of the OPS back in the late forties, fifties, and respected him, liked him, and did not like Burton Cross at all. And they became very active in “Republicans for Muskie”, very prominent, and that was one of the anchors in the anti-Cross movement of 1954.

The Cianchette Company, J. R. Cianchette at the time, was a center of Republican money; J. R. Cianchette was a big road contractor and a staunch Republican. Little noted was Cianchette Brothers, another Cianchette company that was much smaller than J. R. Cianchette, and was headed by then young men who were all Democrats. And Cianchette today, J. R. Cianchette went out of existence at one point, and the Cianchette brothers became the Cianchette company that is so prominent in Maine business today.

AL: And it's referred to Cianbro?

DN: Cianbro now, referred to as Cianbro. And let's see, there was Chuck Cianchette,

who was at one point a member of the Governor's Council, Bud Cianchette and another, but they were very prominent, and the active members of the firm in terms of politics today, Eric and a daughter -

AL: Andrea, is Andrea Cianchette, Maker is her last name I think.

DN: Yeah, right, and she has been a Democrat and her brother a Republican. But they were, we knew them but they were so busy building their business that they weren't active until into the sixties, and they were strong supporters of Senator Muskie, Governor and then Senator Muskie.

Somerset County was in large part a, an appendage of the northern Kennebec County area. Fairfield, for example, is right on the border with Waterville, and sometimes people have trouble distinguishing the two communities as they go north of Waterville. And Skowhegan was the home of Margaret Chase Smith, and pretty well dominated by her. Francis Henderson, the father of Jim Henderson, later the state archivist, was the sheriff and the power in Somerset County for some time. But Somerset was not a, not really regarded much as a separate area during the early, mid fifties.

Franklin County was another heavily Republican county. The leading political figure in the county at the time was Peter Mills, father of the current clan of Mills, and it's interesting that in that family, Peter Mills was U.S. attorney under Eisenhower, and had been in the state legislature. And pretty much the establishment of Franklin County was Republican, and the Democrats were concentrated mostly in the mill town area of Jay and Chisholm, and the leaders were representatives of the paper makers, working in the paper mills. And an interesting character named Stocky Stevens, Stockton Stevens, who came from Brooklyn, New York, and he and his wife came to that area, and Stocky was an accountant who worked for Beisaw's Garage, B-E-I-S-A-W Garage, as their accountant. And Stocky was a fierce Democrat who believed that anyone who disagreed with him on partisan issues was evil. And he carried that attitude into his later life when he became very conservative and an ardent leader in the anti-abortion group in the state. He died several years ago, as did his wife Betty. But they were stirring the pot and carrying on a rebellion against the existing leadership of the Democratic Party, and Stocky and his allies were both the hardest working Democrats in that area, and a constant source of difficulty because of the problems they created with other Democrats who were less intense, shall we say.

Another figure who emerged later, a wonderful person, was Gwilym Roberts of the University of Maine at Farmington faculty, then Farmington State College. And Agnes Mantor, who was the librarian for many years, and a quiet but tough minded individual, as I remember, and greatly revered by everyone. And Franklin County was then waiting to develop as a Democratic center.

Just a footnote on the Mills, it's interesting that there were four children in that family, and that two of them male, two female, the two males are Republicans; the two females are Democrats.

AL: And dad was a Republican and mom was a Democrat.

DN: That's right. But I don't think she became a Republican until later.

AL: A Democrat.

DN: I mean became a Democrat until later.

AL: Yeah, I think you're right. And just on a side note, she was my English teacher in high school and still stays in touch every so often, so she's the matriarch so I think they had those strong role models on both sides.

DN: On both sides. Then moving west to Oxford County, Oxford County was really two, focused on two areas. One was the Rumford-Mexico area in the north, and the other was South Paris-Norway in the south, and then the rural towns scattered around. And there was enough of a sense of isolation that they always carefully moved to be sure they had some leadership from both ends of the county, which is the reason, that as I've mentioned in another interview, in 1956 I ended up running for the state senate to balance the ticket and get Mike Thurston from Bethel, in the northern part of the county, to run for the state senate, when we had multi-member districts.

The leadership in Rumford had been the Beliveau family and Severin Beliveau's father, Albert Beliveau, was a lawyer and then judge, and was on the Supreme Judicial Court of the state, and he was a potent figure in the Rumford area. The union leadership there was active in the party, but did not, as I recall, ever assume a strong leadership role in the party. And Paul Thurston of Bethel, a banker, dairyman and wood turning mill owner was a prominent Democrat, was chairman of the Maine Turnpike Authority when it was founded, and it was his son Murray, or Mike who ran for the senate and later served in the senate. And Mike was the most, there were a number of Democrats in Bethel out of the business community, and interestingly enough out of the wood turning mills, Addison Saunders and Mike were the two leaders there, and they were central to the effort to develop Sunday River, which was initially a community project. And I'm not sure why that core developed, but I remember that they were extremely active.

And in the southern end of the county, Ed Emerson and his wife were active, and Ed was a member of the State Committee at the time. And I forget, oh, Lucia Cormier, Lucia Cormier who was national committeewoman and later collector of customs in Maine, and a candidate for the U.S. Senate against Margaret Chase Smith in 19-, it would have been 1948, no, she ran, she ran in '60 against Margaret Chase Smith. But Lucia was, she'd been a teacher and she also was a businesswoman, and a very strong figure in the Rumford area and a leader in the party. She and Senator Muskie had a somewhat, sometimes tense relationship because of the inevitable question of who was leading and who was going to give her due attention. A reflection in part of gender politics in those days, and the difficulties women had getting their due.

And then we drop from Oxford County into Androscoggin, and Androscoggin was pretty

much dominated by the Lewiston party, and that was predominantly Franco American, people who came out of the mills. And there was a bit of a nod to Livermore Falls, and the Democratic State Committeeman from Androscoggin County was Bill [Labbe], oh, from Livermore Falls, a businessman, retail store owner, and I will think of that name along the way somewhere. In Lewiston the dominant figure, dominant figures, were Louis Jalbert of course, state legislator and a rough-and-tumble infighter in the party. Eddie Beauchamp, a lawyer who was county attorney for some years and a very, very strong figure in the Franco American community.

And then you had what was referred to by Mayor Malenfant as “the Clifford clique” led by John Clifford, who was a lawyer and then later federal judge in the District Court, and Alton Lessard and Tom Delahanty, who married Judge Clifford’s daughter Jeanne [(Clifford) Delahanty], were in the Clifford firm. And Al, although from the Franco American community was dismissed by some of the Franco American leaders as just part of the Irish Clifford clique, and Al was one, both Al and Tom had been in the FBI, and Al was one of those lawyers and then judges who were strong in their ability to deal with people in the courts. Not legal scholars so much, good lawyers, solid lawyers, but people oriented judges, and Al was one of the three people Senator Muskie submitted to President Johnson for that Court of Appeals appointment. One was Al, the second was Sid Wernick, and the third of course was Senator Muskie’s first choice, Frank Coffin, three very different people in many respects.

But Lewiston was always a place where you were juggling the different factions within the party, and you were also juggling, from time to time, the interests of the smaller number of Democrats who were active in Auburn. And county politics was a big thing in the county because the Democrats, in spite of rural Republican strengths, the Democrats most of the time were able to capture all of the county major seats, from sheriff to county attorney, to judges of probate, Register of Probate, etcetera. And my memories are of many of the figures who were in county government positions and active in the party.

The other person who tends to be neglected in later references to the party but was a strong figure and respected figure in the community was Jean Charles Boucher, who was a state senator for a number of years and party, the minority leader in the senate. Jean Charles was a, avuncular, was an avuncular person who presented quite a contrast in many ways to Louis Jalbert and that world.

Oh, that name from Livermore Falls just jumped through my mind and went again, but we’ll come back to that later.

End of Side A
Side B

AL: We are now on Side B.

DN: In Cumberland County the dominant town of course was Portland, or city, and followed closely by Westbrook and by Brunswick, these were the three points of interest

in the early days, and Brunswick always seemed to be an outlier, you associated it in many ways with Sagadahoc County, but it was really part of Cumberland County. And the most prominent figure for me, as executive secretary of the party in '54 to '56 was our state treasurer and state committee member, Louis Labbe, L-A-B-B-E, who was the treasurer, as I said. Louis was a baker, and Louis was someone who always dressed very carefully for state committee meetings. In today's casual dress world, Louis would be lost, he usually wore a vest, as I recall, and a carefully tied tie, and every hair in place, very precise man – in some ways he would make you think of David Suchet, who plays the part of Hercule Poirot in the Poirot mysteries on Public Television.

And poor Louis, who had been treasurer in the less prosperous days of the Democratic Party, had considerable difficulty coping with this new group that was raising money and spending it, sometimes spending it faster than we got it. And I remember Louis standing up to give his treasurer's report at the state committee meeting, saying, we have receipts of X number of dollars, and expenditures of X number of dollars, by which we have a deficit of Y number of dollars. You almost had the feeling that Louis had visions of going to jail because he was spending money he didn't have. But he survived and was charming and good humored about the way the new group was behaving, and was a valued member of the party leadership.

In Portland, it was not until the sixties that you had the flourishing of Democratic leadership in the community, when people like Harold Loring, Ralph Amergian and Gerry Conley and others played a much more prominent role in the city government. Until then, the leadership of the city came largely from the Republican and business community. It's a tribute to Portland that the leadership of the city from that business community was in most cases very liberal, in terms of investing in schools, investing in the parks, investing in environmental protection. It was not a conservative, keeping things as they were, but by the sixties the post-WWII generation of leaders had emerged and were playing a prominent role.

And in Westbrook the principal figure in the party was Ernest Porell who was another, he was a retail businessman I think, I think he was a pharmacist, if I'm not mistaken. And Ernest Porell was the leading figure for a number of years.

AL: Do you know how to spell his last name?

DN: Yes, P-O-R-E-L-L. And then the other, in Portland there were several of the lawyers, Democratic lawyers, who were close to Ed because they'd worked in the OPS with him. Campbell was one, and another lawyer whose name [*sic* Milton Wheeler was the second lawyer who worked in the OPS office] – I'm having trouble this morning picking up on a number of those names. I can see them. But there were, I'll find those names and get them to you so they can be included.

These were, Wally Campbell, Wallace Campbell is one, and they had worked with Ed, their practices were not prominent, they were not known as the leaders in the legal community but they were good workaday lawyers, and they were people who had been very effective in the OPS, working under Ed Muskie.

AL: Was Barney Shur one of the early -?

DN: No, Barney Shur was a Republican.

AL: Oh, okay, sorry.

DN: And he, Barney was, let's see, Barney was part of the Berman, Berman & Wernick firm I think, and the Bermans were Republicans. Sid Wernick, who came into that firm through marriage, he married Charlotte who was a Berman and she was a lawyer, was a Democrat. And Barney Shur was one of, at that time Barney was the leading lawyer for the municipalities in the state, he was one of the leading municipal law lawyers. And we might mention in that connection that Charles Allen, father of Tom Allen, who was at the time a Republican, was the leading lawyer in the state in bond law, and you went to Charlie Allen if you wanted to have bonds certified for any kind of municipal or other investment. And it was the Vietnam War as much as anything and I think admiration for what Ed Muskie was doing, that led Charlie to change parties and become a Democrat. And the city was going through a very fluid time of change in political leadership, to the point where today it's almost a completely Democratic city in terms of office holders.

And South Portland, major figure there was Clyde Bartlett, who was close to Ken Curtis, and ultimately Governor Curtis. Clyde was a school teacher, assistant principal, and I think later principal of a school. Feisty fellow and lively leader of the Democratic Party in South Portland.

York County, York County was another world for most people in the state. The leader in the party for many, many years was Mayor Lausier, L-A-U-S-I-E-R, of Biddeford, Papa Lausier, he was called, and he was a fierce partisan Democrat in terms of power, but he was quite conservative in his political philosophy. Not unusual in the Franco American community, they're, as one can see in many cases in the issues politics of Lewiston in recent years.

AL: And did you observe within the Franco community and their conservatism whether it weighted more on social issues or fiscal issues?

DN: Well, in the fifties, if we're going back to the 1950s, what we refer to today as the social issues, abortion, gay rights, etcetera, were not on the screen. But what was very much on people's minds then as today were taxes. And since many of the Franco Americans either came from or were second generation from rural Quebec, they were from farm families who had a very strong sense of property and the protection of property. They frequently, as they could, saved and invested in real estate, notably the three-decker apartment houses, which would be a source of income, and for them, keeping property taxes low was very important.

And in the fifties, Maine still had no income tax, so the taxes that people focused on were sales taxes and property taxes, and so the conservative tendencies in that community

showed up in opposition to government spending that would lead to higher taxes. And this was true of Papa Lausier in Biddeford. The union leaders of course took a very different view, and so you had conflict within the community.

And I should have mentioned when talking about Cumberland County that the Central Labor Council was a very important group in state politics at the time, and it was a combina-, it was largely made up of AFL, American Federation of Labor union leaders, and the Teamsters. Al Page of the Teamsters, Dave Hastings, who I believe was with the carpenters union, or he may have been with the Teamsters too. But these leaders, who had an office down at the corner of Exchange and Federal Street where the last I knew *SALT* Magazine was located at one point, they were, they raised money for the party and made sure that union funds came to the party, but they were also deeply involved in organizing the workers around the state and in influencing legislation--- and in that respect they came into conflict with Ben Dorsky, who was the president of the AFL and then president of the AFL-CIO for the state--- and were a great bulwark for us in dealing with the union members.

They did not play, Dave Hastings lived in Portland but did not play a major role in the party in Portland. Al Page came from Auburn, but again, was not active locally; he was active in the union.

In York County, you had scattered leadership but mostly it was focused in Biddeford, as I said. Saco tended to be a Republican town. Old Orchard produced a few Democratic leaders, the one who comes to mind most clearly was Jerry Plante, who was a state legislator and then later was town manager of Old Orchard, and Jerry was a, Jerry was in the legislature when he was barely twenty-one I think, and he was referred to scornfully by Louis Jalbert – and this tells us as much about Louis as it does about Jerry – he referred to Jerry as the youngest man in the world. But Jerry was a very effective young legislator. And that's P-L-A-N-T-E.

And the Canteras, the family that produced so many sheriffs over the years, I remember in Biddeford in those days. And I remember, and this is a measure of Biddeford politics. In 1958 when we had a primary campaign between Clinton Clauson and Maynard Dolloff for the Democratic nomination for governor, Frank Coffin was supporting Maynard Dolloff, who we believed that Maynard would bring in a sizeable group of rural Mainers, because Maynard was the head of the grange, the Master of the State Grange, even though he was a Democrat and was a very attractive candidate. And Doc was at the time former mayor of Waterville and a former director, state director of the Internal Revenue Service for Maine, so wasn't regarded as a likely figure to appeal to rural Mainers.

But in any event, I remember on election night calling around to get reports from various places and talking to one of the people in Biddeford, in the center of that group, and as a matter of fact he called us, we didn't call him, and he asked us how it was going, and we said it didn't look very good. And he said, "Well how many votes do you need?" We didn't follow through on that one, but it was a signal of what, this was after the polls had closed.

And then in, there was a small pocket of leaders in Sanford, who were mostly interested in local politics, although they worked hard in the statewide campaigns. And I should have mentioned Dave Marshall, who was later a member of the Public Utilities Commission, who was the first leader I remember from Old Orchard, and Dave served on the State Committee, as part of the geographic balancing that went on in those days.

And I just realized that I skipped over completely Kennebec County in this little tour of the state. Waterville was the center of the party in Kennebec County, which tells you something about Augusta in those days as a principally Republican town under the dominance of the state Republican Party. And in Waterville the Dubord family, led by the old man in the family, Harold Dubord, who was a lawyer and later member of the Supreme Judicial Court from the state, and then his son Dick, he had two sons, Dick and Bob, Bob was a dentist, Dick was a lawyer, and Dick became attorney general of the state at one point, and tragically died in 1971 of an aneurism, cranial aneurism.

Dick was, Dick and his brother both were among the wittiest people I ever knew, and Dick was multi-talented; a bright, able lawyer, a raconteur, musician, he was a clarinetist and had, was part of a small group of jazz musicians in Waterville that played regularly. And in fact on election night of 1968, when Democrats gathered in the armory in Waterville for watching the results of the national election, I remember Dick and his group playing, and Dick playing the clarinet like Benny Goodman with, and also singing like Louis Armstrong. And Dick was a figure who died too young, and whose loss I think was one of the unfortunate blows to the Muskie candidacy for '72, because Dick was, at the time he died I was counting on him being a traveling companion for the senator, who would be a valuable counselor for all of us but also a source of both good counsel and reality checks for the senator in a world that gets very unreal when you're in the middle of a presidential campaign, or in the White House.

There was a balance struck in Kennebec County between the power centers in Waterville and the rural people, and the southeastern end of the county around Brunswick and Randolph, excuse me, Gardiner and Randolph. And Jim Morang of Randolph was a member of the State Committee, and Mrs. Mills of Belgrade, Charlie and Dorothy Mills, she was a member of the State Committee at one point. And then we had, from Winslow, across the river from Waterville, a member of the State Committee who also served as secretary during the early days of the -

(Taping paused.)

DN: Thelma LaSalle was leader in the women's group, and also a member of the State Committee for a number of years, from the county. She – and looking back, I think Thelma's role and relationship to the active party leaders in Kennebec County is as good an illustration of how differently the roles of men and women were treated in those days. Because Thelma was active, she participated in state committee decisions, but outside of that role, that governance role, her involvement was almost exclusively with the women's groups and not in the general business of organizing and making political policy decisions. The men were the ones who tended to run that.

And I'm still in Kennebec County and thinking of some of the other leaders from that county, Paul Julian and -

AL: Perry Furbush? He was a little outside.

DN: Well Perry was from Somerset County, Palmyra, and Perry, Perry did not have much of a party role, he was a lawyer who had worked for Senator Muskie, or Ed Muskie as director of the OPS.

AL: Okay, that's where he came in, yeah.

DN: And he came into the campaign as a friend of the senator's, a very bright, somewhat unbalanced psychologically and eccentric, but still a, somebody that, he was as illustrative of the odd collection of people that Ed gathered for that OPS program who worked very well, and in conventional terms probably wouldn't have been hired. But did their job, and there was never a hint of scandal, there was never a hint of mal-administration, and price control program in Maine ran very well with a lot of support from the businesses who were regulated, and notably the farmers up in Aroostook County, the potato farmers and the potato dealers.

And I think, except if we were to go through a catalog of people in York County, that pretty much is what a tour of the state and a sense of the times. It really was a loose collection of people who were for the most part either traditional Democrats, a few recent arrivals, a few coming out of the university. I didn't mention, for example, Gerry Grady, who was on the faculty at the University of Maine in Orono, who ran for Congress in 1956. A few young professionals who came out of Republican families; Dave Roberts from Aroostook County, who ran for Congress and then later served on the court, Supreme Judicial Court; and then the union leaders and the union members.

And it did not have the, and with no history of strong across-the-board legislative success, it was the business of building, and trying to build with that collection of people, old and new, that took place in the fifties. And this was, as I've said before, part of the genius of both Ed Muskie and Frank Coffin. They did not try to build a party on the basis of people who were just loyal to them and came in.

AL: I think that's all that I wanted to cover today. I know we discussed something like on the side, but I haven't really come up with what that is and what that might be, so I think we'll stop today and just think about that.

DN: Okay, and I'll try to get back to you with that other lawyer name in Portland.

AL: Okay, thank you Don.

End of Interview