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Bernstein, Rosalyne S. and Sumner T. oral history interview

Jeremy Robitaille

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Interview with Rosalyne S. and Sumner T. Bernstein by Jeremy Robitaille
Summary Sheet and Transcript

Interviewee

Bernstein, Rosalyne S.

Bernstein, Sumner T.

Interviewer

Robitaille, Jeremy

Date

July 6, 2001

Place

Portland, Maine

ID Number

MOH 304

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Biographical Note

Rosalyne (Spindel) Bernstein was born Dec. 22, 1928 in Bronx, N.Y. Her parents, Harry and Bertha (Lehrer) Spindel, were Jewish immigrants from Poland, working class, and liberal Democrats involved in the Workmen's Circle. She grew up in a Jewish neighborhood with daily political discussions in the home. She attended Durkee High School in Fall River, Massachusetts and was captain of the Debate Team and President of the Debate Club. Through high school she worked part-time six days a week. A graduate of Radcliffe College, she majored in Economics and participated in Zionist activities. She moved with her husband to Portland in the late 1940's, and became very involved within her new community. She served as president of the National Council of Jewish Women and the PTA; was founder of the Head Start program in Portland; a member of the Woodford's Group; a trustee of Bowdoin College for 24 years; was a member of the University of Southern, Maine Board of Visitors; a member of the Maine Health Care Finance Commission; a trustee of the Maine Medical Center; a member of the American-Israeli Public Affairs Committee; a member of the New England Board of Higher Education for ten years; and a member of the Maine Community Foundation for nine years. She was also involved in the Portland Model Cities program, playing an instrumental role in the building of the Reiche school. About 38 years after coming to Portland, she graduated from the University of Maine School of Law in 1986.

Sumner Thurman Bernstein was born March 12, 1924 in Portland, Maine. His parents were Israel and Rebecca (Thurman) Bernstein. His father was from Portland, and his mother was from Boston—they were both lawyers, registered Republicans, and very active in the Portland community. He had very strong extended family ties. Sumner attended Deering High School, then went to Harvard for his undergraduate and law degrees. He met Rosalyne while in school and they married in June of 1949. Upon returning to Portland, he joined his father's law practice. He, like his wife and parents, was also heavily involved in community affairs. He served as a member of the Pine Tree Council of the Boy Scouts of America; was on the board of the YMCA and the Jewish Community Center; was president of the Jewish Federation; a member of the Portland City Council in 1955 and 1958; was a member of the Woodford's Group; helped to establish Temple Beth El; participated in the Portland Housing Authority and the Downtown Portland Corporation; was a trustee of Maine Medical Center; and was a member of the World Affairs Council, the Committee on Foreign Relations, and the Access to Justice Project.

Scope and Content Note

Interview includes discussions of: family background; description of Frank Coffin; Maine Commission on Legal Needs; Maine Bar Foundation; Muskie's influence and accessibility; lack of bias in the Portland community; social, ethnic, political, and religious changes in Portland over 70 years; Model Cities and Reiche school; community involvement; Ku Klux Klan (KKK); 1954 gubernatorial campaign; Clean Water Act; Foreign Relations Committee in Portland; and an extensive description of health care issues.

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Transcript

Jeremy Robitaille: We are here at the Portland House in Portland, Maine with Sumner and Rosalyne Bernstein on July 6th, 2001 at approximately 3:00 P.M., and interviewing is Jeremy Robitaille. Okay, first we can start out, I'll start with you, Rosalyne, actually, if you could state your full name and spell it?

Rosalynne Bernstein: Yes, my name is Rosalyne S. Bernstein, R-O-S-A-L-Y-N-E, middle initial S, B-E-R-N-S-T-E-I-N.

JR: And when and where were you born?

RB: I was born in the Bronx, New York in 1928, December 22nd.

JR: And what can you tell me about your family history? Well first of all, your parents' names.

RB: My parents' were Harry Spindel and Bertha Lehrer Spindel. They were both Jewish immigrants from Poland who came to the United States shortly after World War I and met in New York.

JR: Okay, and what brought them to the United States?

RB: Persecution, and the search for a better life.

JR: And what were their occupations?

RB: My father was in the knit goods industry, sweaters, all his life. My mother worked with my father, but was essentially a homemaker and a volunteer.

JR: And what were your parents' religious views? They were Jewish, of course, but (*unintelligible phrase*).

RB: They were Jewish, they were committed Jews, very active in the Jewish community, and were, thought the United States was the most wonderful place in the world. As I said, I always had the feeling that my parents would practically kiss the ground every day because they were so grateful to be in a free country where they enjoyed the same rights as everybody else.

JR: And in what capacity were they involved in the community?

RB: They were involved in fraternal organizations of various kinds. They were, my father was the president of his branch of the Workmen's Circle, which was a major Jewish organization, really mostly immigrant in that generation, but it still exists today. It publishes a newspaper called *The Forward*, and he was very heavily involved in that. My mother also. And, with all kinds of organizations like Hadasseh, the National Council of Jewish Women, and a bunch of other organizations, and also involved very heavily in pro-Zionist activities.

JR: And how about their political views?

RB: They were Democrats, liberal. Interesting, they were liberal in some areas and conservative in others, that is they held very strongly held values about family, and so they were pretty well balanced I would say. We had very lively political discussions at our home all the time, and there were lots and lots of issues of importance both locally in New York City and nationally. And we, I can't remember sitting down to a meal without a discussion of what was going on.

JR: Could you tell me about some of those issues that you remember discussing, that really stand out in your mind?

RB: Well, every election was a matter of great discussion. Candidates, their views, whom to support, and also one, of course my earliest conscious memories really are of World War II, and there every day. And as we read the newspaper there would be discussions. We were very concerned for family members in Europe, most of whom sadly died, and very concerned about relatives serving in the United States Army during World War II. So those discussions went on all the time. My parents were strong supporters of Franklin Roosevelt -

Sumner Bernstein: I was waiting for (*unintelligible phrase*).

RB: And the New Deal, yes indeed.

JR: Okay, what can you tell me about growing up, of your community, of New York City, just politically, ethnically, socially?

RB: I lived in a largely Jewish community in the Bronx, it was the South Bronx which is, no longer has a Jewish community, but my community was heavily, heavily Jewish. The kids in school were Jewish, the neighborhood storekeepers. It was a lower middle class neighborhood, working people. There were other ethnic groups represented, but in much smaller numbers. And I remember really growing up in what was for me a very ethnically homogenous society. And I always laughed and said the schools would close on the Jewish holidays because both the teachers and the pupils were observing, so those students who were not Jewish got a free ride because they got days off on the Jewish holidays.

JR: Okay, and where did you go to high school?

RB: When I was thirteen we moved to Fall River, Massachusetts for business reasons, and I spent my four years of high school at Durkee High School in Fall River.

JR: And what were your interests during high school, like academic?

RB: Academics definitely, very much interested. I was president of the debating club and captain of the debating team. I also had a job. I worked every day after school, six days a week, I worked all day Saturday, five days a week, and Thursday evenings every week right through high school, so I was pretty busy.

JR: And did you really have any other time to involve yourself in the community otherwise?

RB: No, essentially it was my schoolwork, my work, my debating in which I was heavily involved, both intramural in school, and intermural debating all over New England.

JR: And where did you attend college?

RB: Radcliffe.

JR: Radcliffe, okay. And why did you choose Radcliffe?

RB: It was chosen for me. When I was a junior the dean of girls at my high school called me in and asked me if I had any college plans. Well, neither of my parents had gone to college and, although they were committed to an education, I really had no sense in where I was going to go. And she said, "Don't worry, you're going to Radcliffe." And that was, and she directed me and helped me get scholarship assistance, and that's where I went.

JR: What did you major in?

RB: Economics.

JR: And how did you involve yourself extracurricularly at Radcliffe?

RB: Well, most of my extracurricular activities, until I met my husband, whom I met when I was beginning my sophomore year, were involved with the Zionist cause, which was very hot at that time. I went to college between 1946 and 1950. We were raising money, we were doing all kinds of things, and that was essentially, I belonged to other things, you know, the various, a political group, but I was not really active in them. And I married at the end of my junior year and, when my husband was already back in Portland practicing law. So I spent my senior year commuting, writing a thesis, and just getting my work done.

JR: Wow, okay. Before we get too far ahead, I'll switch over to Sumner here and then we can, first for the record could you please state and spell your full name?

SB: My name is Sumner Thurman Bernstein, S-U-M-N-E-R, T-H-U-R-M-A-N, Bernstein, B-E-R-N-S-T-E-I-N.

JR: And when and where were you born?

SB: I was born in Portland on March 12th, 1924.

JR: And where were your parents from originally?

SB: My father was born in Portland, and my mother was born in Boston.

JR: Okay, and how did they come to Maine?

SB: My father was a practicing lawyer in Portland, and through mutual friends he was introduced to my mother, who was a lawyer, but not a practicing lawyer, in the greater Boston area and the connection was made. My father married when he was thirty-two, my mother was twenty-six, and I was born two years after they married.

JR: And what were your parents' religious, social, political views?

SB: Well, both of my parents were reared in Orthodox Jewish communities, with a very, very substantial emphasis, as Roz has indicated in her family, on education and in community participation. My Bernstein grandparents came to this country in the 1880s, my father was born in 1890, were very active in the Portland Jewish community. My father, in his early years, was tutored because of the desire to protect the Orthodox tradition under which, the Orthodox Jewish tradition under which he was born. He eventually transferred into the Portland school system, graduated from Portland High School, and then went to Harvard College and Harvard Law School, and returned home in 1915 and started his own practice of law.

Shortly after America's entry into the First World War he enlisted and served in the First World War as a sergeant major at Fort Devens, eventually. And then at the end of the war he returned to Portland in 1919 and resumed his practice of law. And he became a very active member of the Portland community. He was active in the American Legion, he was a member of the Portland school committee. And he was a generally active member of the community, fully committed both to Jewish organizations in the community and the general community. As I say, he was home for several years before he married, and so he, when he married in 1922 he had reestablished himself after, in the post war experience.

And my mother, my mother came from a very similar family. Each of my parents had five siblings. In my mother's case, her father, Jacob Thurman, was a great believer in education, not just of men but of women. My mother's older sister was a dentist, somewhat unusual in the time of the First World War. My mother, as I say, was a lawyer, a graduate of Boston University, the head of her class, which she was frequently reminded at Boston University Law School. Her next, her elder brother was a Harvard Medical School graduate, her next brother was a graduate of Harvard Law School and was a businessman. Her next sister was a teacher, and her final sister married her high school sweetheart and rejected the opportunity to go to college. But they were a very, very close knit family. And, of course, Boston and Portland were close enough together so that I was close to my Thurman side of my family as well as the Bernstein side. Furthermore, my grandfather owned a very handsome tract of land in Falmouth and every summer, it was a cottage colony, and every summer many of my cousins, that is my father's nephews and nieces and their parents, would come home to Maine. And so I was very close to my Bernstein cousins as well. So it was a close family connection.

JR: Okay, and I don't think, can I get your parents' names?

SB: Yes, my father's name was Israel and my mother's name was Rebecca, Rebecca Thurman Bernstein and Israel Bernstein.

JR: And what was their political affiliation?

SB: My father was a Republican. And my mother was a very, unlike my mother, of course I wasn't around at the time, made the decision that being able to vote in the Republican primary was a critical part of being politically effective. So it is my understanding that she was always a registered Republican, and I use the word 'registered' appropriate emphasis. I will tell you that after my father's death in 1967, she reregistered as a Democrat. But politics was a, was a very usual subject of conversation. My father was not a New Dealer, he was a very active supporter

of William Tudor Gardiner, the governor of the State of Maine, and he was a bank director at the original Casco Bank and Trust Company formed after 1933. He was a very active member of the community and I would say essentially, economically and politically, conservative.

JR: Okay, and what can you tell me about just the city of Portland, like growing up, like through first of all your father's involvement in ... ah ...?

SB: You'll really get me going.

JR: It's good, we want to.

SB: Portland was a wonderful community for me in which to grow up. The vast majority of the members of the Jewish community lived in what I would call peninsula Portland, where we are right now, Munjoy Hill and through the peninsula. My grandparents lived in this part of the city. Again for reasons which I don't know, my parents bought their first house on Longfellow Street, between Deering Avenue and Forest Avenue. The house is still there. Shortly after I was born in 1924, they moved to the bottom of Brighton Avenue hill on Bolton Street, at the Brighton Avenue end of the street. The result was that growing up I went to school at Oakdale Kindergarten School, Nathan Clifford Grammar School, Lincoln Junior High School, and Deering High School, in a situation in which there were very, very few other Jewish students. My contemporaries, most of them, still lived in town and were going to Portland High School. There were a handful of Jewish kids in every class at Deering.

And I can say that I grew up in Portland in a cocoon of comfort. It was a superb city, my parents were well respected, my father clearly was reasonably successful as a lawyer in maintaining his household, my mother was a community activist. She was essential in the forming of a number of social service agencies, primarily child and family services, and the women's board of the Maine Medical, what was then the Maine General Hospital. In addition to her activities, as probably the founder of the Council of Jewish Women here in Portland, they were very, my father was the founder of the organization which was called the Jewish Federation, which is now called the Jewish Community Alliance. They, I was very much aware of being Jewish and Jewish activities, but at the same time I was a member of the Boy Scouts. I was integrated into a school system very well. Should I tell the story of my one anti?

RB: Why not?

SB: I've only one recollection of an anti-Semitic episode growing up in Portland. I went to Camp Hines, the Boy Scout camp. My father was a devoted Boy Scout, he won the silver beaver, he was just devoted, devoted to Boy Scout volunteer work. And I went to camp, and every Sunday there was church call. And because I was one of the, I may not have been the only Jewish kid at Camp Hines for all I can remember, but I was certainly the only kid in Camp Pershing, which was the unit which I was in, so I was excused from church call. And one Sunday I was lying in my bunk while everybody else walked by. And as the line walked by the last guy in the last line looked at me and he said, "You goddamn dirty Jew." That was the, you can tell it's stuck with me to this day, it was a unique experience.

Deering High School was a superb educational experience. I went to Harvard and needless to say I, not needless to say, but at Harvard, remember the Second World War had already started, the Harvard experience simply strengthened all of those kinds of values and experiences that I had had. Immediately after Pearl Harbor I enlisted. I was only eighteen, I was eighteen a couple of months after Pearl Harbor. It took them a long time to call me to active duty, I served three and a half years and came home having been discharged as a captain. I was in the South Pacific for half of my three and a half years in the Army. And I came home, immediately went back to Cambridge, finished my undergraduate experience and continued on at law school. And then as you know, I met Rosalynne there. And I came home in February of '49, we married in June of '49. And except for the first year of commute, we have been here for the past fifty-two years.

JR: Okay, so let me ask -

SB: That's the framework.

JR: Right, right, in a nutshell. If I could just get some dates straight. You entered Harvard what year?

SB: Nineteen forty [1940].

RB: He was sixteen.

JR: Wow, impressive. And then you went into -?

SB: I went into the, I enlisted in the Army in, well I actually enlisted only in the reserve and they were not in a hurry to pull us all out at once and shove everybody in. I enlisted in the reserve in the spring of 1942 and actually was called, my first day of active duty was my nineteenth birthday, March 12th, 1943. And I served from March 1943 until August of 1946, although the last chunk of time I was on terminal leave and I wasn't really there. I was back in Cambridge going to summer school.

JR: Okay, and you graduated from Harvard?

SB: I graduated from Harvard and started law school immediately and went through seven straight trimesters, they called them then, and I got out in February of '49.

JR: And you went to Harvard, or Radcliffe?

RB: I went to, in 1946 I was seventeen and I graduated in 1950, and thirty-three years later I went to law school. And I graduated the University of Maine School of Law in 1986.

JR: Wow, okay.

SB: She's a much more distinguished person than I am, as you will find as this interview continues.

RB: Not true.

JR: Okay, so I imagine you entered your father's law practice (*unintelligible phrase*)?

SB: Right. My uncle, who was ten years my father's junior, had gone to Bowdoin. He also served, I think he served on the Portland City Coun-, on the Portland Common Council.

RB: It was called the Portland Common Council in those days.

JR: And what's his name?

SB: Louis, L-O-U-I-S Bernstein, he eventually became a judge. And he then went to Peabody Law School, and I think joined my father in 1930 as a lawyer. And the firm was Bernstein & Bernstein, and I joined them. And then he served in the Second World War, even though he was over age.

RB: He was over age, he enlisted.

SB: He enlisted.

JR: Was this your father?

SB: My uncle. My father did not go. My father served in the First World War. And my uncle served in the Second, ended up being a major in the Air Force, and was discharged and came home in 1946 and resumed the practice of law with my father. So three years later I joined them, in 1949.

JR: And so in those first couple of years with your father in that law firm, what law did you, what types of law did you focus on?

SB: I searched titles, did real estate transactions, and then did everything else that a lawyer does, I did estate planning, I did divorce work. In those days, unless there was some special circumstance, you did what had to be done.

RB: Which meant everything.

JR: Okay, and -

SB: And I did the tax work in the office, because I'd had tax training at law school.

JR: Okay, in these, in like the late forties and early fifties, how were both of you involved in the Portland community, if at all?

RB: Heavily. Of course we were having children, but I was very much involved in the National Council of Jewish Women, in which I served as president, was heavily involved in the school system, I was president of the PTA, I co-chaired a, the Portland school system self-study

which it did in the early fifties. I founded the Head Start Program in the Portland public school system. I served six years as a member of the Portland school committee and chaired the Portland school committee - I'm thinking only of the early years - and I served on a wide variety of boards. That was the early years.

SB: My history is similar. I, uh, it was, there was no question, being my father's son, my father and mother's son and my uncle's nephew, a lot of doors were opened, as they were to Roz. And I can't remember which boards of directors I served on first, but I was on the Pine Tree Council of the Boy Scouts of America, and I served on the Portland YMCA board, I was on the board of the Jewish Community Center, the Jewish Federation. I was elected to the Portland City Council in 1955 and again in 1958. And I'm reminded that I, frequently lately, that I got off the Portland City Council forty years ago, so it's a long time ago.

RB: And he practically no sooner got off the council than I went on the school board.

SB: And then I uh, we were very active with a group of people, Merton and Harriet Henry, Charlie and Suki Allen.

RB: Bill and Elly Rounds.

SB: Bill and Elly Rounds, there was a group of us -

RB: Weston and Ruth Walsh.

SB: Right, Weston and Ruth Walsh, who really felt that local political activity was critical, and it was called the Woodford's Group. And we were both very active in the formation, well not the formation, but in the establishment of Temple Beth El, which was when the Conservative movement established itself in Portland; up to then all the congregations had been Orthodox. After being on the City Council, I served on the Portland Housing Authority. I can't remember, recent years I've been on the Downtown Portland Corporation. We've kept our finger in in one way or another, both Jewish, I've been president of the Jewish Federation.

RB: And I was a trustee at Bowdoin College for twenty-four years, and I just finished a term as chair of the board of visitors at the University of Southern Maine. I was president of the museum when we built the Payson Building, I served as chair of the Maine Health Care Finance Commission, the State Hospital Cost Containment Agency for nine years, and I just -

SB: You were the executive director of the Celebration Bicentennial.

RB: I was the executive director of the commission to commemorate the bicentennial of the constitution. I mean the list goes on and on. We've both been trustees at the Maine Medical Center, we've both been very active in the Jewish Federation, both chaired the campaigns of the Federation, and we've led an extremely active life, very satisfying.

JR: Great, okay, I'd kind of like to get both your perspectives and this may be interesting, considering one of you is a Democrat, one is a Republican, about -

RB: How did you know that? You obviously know a great deal about us.

JR: I've done my research. Just sort of in the, kind of backtrack to the 1950s and like the state of politics in Maine, like around the election 1952, and specifically the election of '54 when Muskie won as governor. If each of you can give an impression of what, I guess just Maine politics, about just people being active in Maine and just what your sense of the political atmosphere was at the time.

SB: Most of my activity as you can tell was local, and it wasn't particularly partisan. I barely remembered Louis Brann, I knew that there had been a Democratic governor in the state of Maine, but I came home with the impression that Maine was a solid Republican political community. I knew the name Sewall, when Sumner Sewall was governor. I certainly knew the name Horace Hildredth, because Horace was a very, very close friend of my uncle. I don't know if they were Bowdoin classmates, but they were at Bowdoin together, and Horace appointed my uncle to the Portland municipal court. Oh, I think first he was, the assistant judge used to be called the recorder, and he was the recorder of the Portland municipal court, and then he became the judge of the Portland municipal court. And I obviously was exposed to some of these people by being there with my father or my uncle, but I was not, I was not an active political partisan, I was not actively identified. I don't think it ever occurred to me to run for the legislature or to do anything which was partisan, the Portland city government being a non-partisan government throughout all the time you're talking about. I remember Burton M. Cross. And I remember Muskie's election and the surprise that it was, to at least the circles in which I moved.

RB: My first exposure to Maine politics was Sumner's father. I grew up in a family in which we practically hadn't, if we'd been Catholic we would have genuflected, but we were Jewish so we didn't, every time the name Franklin Roosevelt was mentioned. And when I met Sumner he was the first real Republican I had known well. And the first time I met his father was when his parents came to Cambridge to meet me, and his father and I got into a knock down, drag out, verbal battle over Franklin Delano Roosevelt. And Sumner sat there holding my hand, I think he thought the relationship might go kerphooey because of that. So that was my first real exposure. And coming to Maine, into a Republican state from the environment in which I had grown up in which just about everybody I knew was a Democrat, was a political shock. And so it was -

SB: I can't even remember what the issues were, you know.

RB: I don't remember what the issues were, except it was politically quite alien. And I remember when Ed Muskie was a candidate, nobody gave him a chance, nobody gave him a chance. And we were invited, remember? To a reception for him at the home of a local lawyer named Milt Wheeler. And I remember going to Milt's house and looking up at this tall, attractive man with a wonderful smile on his face, and being just bowled over by him and thinking, 'Abraham Lincoln in the flesh'. He was just such an imposing presence. I mean he was, not only his height which was towering, but there was something about him, and the way he looked at you and the way he took your hand, and the way he spoke to you, that was really powerful. So, as I said, that was my first exposure. And, of course, I was absolutely delighted when he won, needless to say.

SB: Another advantage Ed Muskie had was his association with Frank Coffin. Frank Coffin had been at law school when I was at law school, he was ahead of me. I think Frank probably started before the war, got interrupted, and then finished law school after the war. In any event, he was there in 1946, and I've told this story a hundred times, Frank has heard it endlessly. We went to a forum at Harvard Law School concerning various activities that are conducted for students at the law school, and how you got eligible and what you had to have honors to do and what, had to do certain, what the eligibility requirements were. And several people who spoke were professors at the law school. And then this fellow got up and talked about the Harvard Board of Student Advisors, which conducted the moot court work, sort of the Ames competition at Harvard Law School. And everybody decided that he was also a professor; of course it turned out to be Frank Morey Coffin.

RB: Who was a student.

SB: He was a student then. And of course he was kind of a rational human being. And Muskie had a sort of a flair personality, as Roz described it, a presence, but Frank Coffin was something special. However, I was still surprised when Muskie won. And I still think, for no reason I can fully justify, that the unpopular-, Burton Cross was just an unpopular governor. It was a, from Muskie's, was a happy confluence of a very able man with a spark, at a time when his opponent was a sitting governor and was weakened by the experience of the past year and a half. I will tell you one other thing that perhaps I shouldn't. I can remember being with a group of young lawyers whose political persuasions were far to the right of mine. And I can remember one of them, now dead, saying, "Well, you know, nobody really knew that Muskie was a Catholic, and when it comes up again and he runs for reelection, he won't get reelected for that reason." So there was a, and I'll come back to that because we never did finish my story of life in Portland, but in the early 1950s there was still in the Maine community a good deal of what I would call bias, bigotry. And that was, again, one incident that I remember, in connection with Ed Muskie. Now let me just finish that.

JR: Please.

SB: I will tell you, what is your first name again?

JR: Jeremy.

SB: Jeremy. Jeremy, the community in Portland has changed in fifty years beyond measure. Nothing is closed in this community to anybody, I don't care whether they are Somali Catholic, or Russian Jew, if you've got the stuff and if you make the commitment, this city is open to you. And I've lived through the time when the Cumberland Club had no Jewish members, the Portland Country Club had no Jewish members, and there was a number of other instances in Portland where doors were closed. The Portland Museum of Art that Roz refers to was certainly a closed, what I would call Yankee, community. Those things, Jeremy, I mean this city has shown a growth, and I hope it's true throughout the state of Maine, I know Portland is, I'm so proud of this city, glad that we're here. So glad I reared my children here.

RB: Of course, in your father's lifetime, when he was on the Portland school committee he was caricatured by the Ku Klux Klan, which was very active in the twenties and thirties. And of course we had a senator who was reputed to be a member of the Klan.

SB: Ralph Owen Brewster.

RB: Ralph Owen Brewster, and had very close ties with the Klan. So that -

SB: I get quite emotional thinking about what a community Portland is. I'm sure there are still pockets of bias.

RB: It's changed dramatically. There are still pockets of bias. But it's not respectable any more, and that's the difference.

SB: It doesn't do, it doesn't do. I interrupted your train of thought to finish mine.

JR: No, no, it's okay, very good.

SB: So Ed Muskie becomes governor in 1955.

JR: Yes, after the election of '54, yeah. And, so yeah, so through the, like that was like the real big watershed?

SB: That was it.

RB: That was it.

JR: How did, what were your impressions of how Maine began to change, like through his years as governor and then when he was elected to the Senate? How was that, was Maine changed towards being more Democratic?

SB: Small 'd'?

JR: Small 'd', right.

RB: And large 'D' as well.

SB: No, I think he was, he, Frank.

RB: Frank was crucial in all of this, too.

SB: The other people who joined the bandwagon. A lot of Democrats came out of the woodwork and ran for office who would not have done before. I think his leadership was absolutely critical, and it's the same part of the picture I've just described about Portland. I think, he had a real influence in changing the face of Maine.

RB: I think World War II was the dramatic watershed, also. Attitudes after WWII were different from what they had been before. America went from being an insular looking inward place, to a society that began to look outward, that had a more broad view of issues and people, that had been more exposed to the rest of the world. And I think that was reflected throughout the state. And also, as Sumner said, once Muskie had run a successful campaign many people who were nominal Republicans, because their goal had been to vote in a Republican primary, in order that the lesser conservative candidate would be nominated, because the Republican was assured of election, then began to realize that Democrats could win and came out as Democrat, so to speak.

SB: He was also a very good politician.

RB: Yes, and excellent politician.

SB: Worked with the legislature in an extremely constructive fashion. I mean, put through a sales tax, for crying out loud.

RB: So that, the atmosphere particularly in the cities in the state changed dramatically.

SB: I don't, Maine will never be the same in terms of -

RB: Never. And then just, I think there was also something in the Maine character. I don't know, it's hard to define, but people seemed to be more open to ideas than part, and I think that's part of being a coastal state. I think states on the coast, both the east coast and the west coast, have a more open attitude. And that's part of not being surrounded -

SB: Insular.

RB: Insular and surrounded by an entire country just like you. And I think that makes a big difference.

SB: He was a good guy.

RB: Yeah. Lots of nice memories of Ed Muskie.

SB: I was a very active Bar examiner. And one of New York's long term Bar examiners was a man named Jack O. Harris who went to Cornell Law School with Ed Muskie.

RB: Muskie was his roommate.

SB: And professed to be his roommate. I'm not sure that he was, but, you know, by this time any association with Muskie was plus, but he used to say that he was one tough guy at law, I mean he was determined to suc-, just determined to succeed.

RB: He also was the son of immigrants, and it's a very common experience in immigrant families, that drive for education and excellence. You know, you can't do it for yourself, but you

want to be sure that your children have the opportunity.

SB: And he was bright, that helped.

RB: Yes.

JR: So was Frank Coffin. Okay, well then just from like Portland's perspective, from living in Portland and being involved, how did first Muskie as governor, then as senator, how did that, how did he influence Portland, how did like his involvement, specific programs perhaps?

SB: That's hard for me to answer. In thinking about it today, I try to cast my mind back to my contacts with Muskie. We were, we certainly became friends on a first name basis. How that -

RB: Quite early on.

SB: Quite early on. How that took place, I can't remember.

RB: I don't remember it either.

SB: I don't remember. But I do remember that, when he was in the Senate, we became very active in a group called The American-Israel Public Affairs Committee, called AIPAC.

RB: Known as the Israel Lobby by its enemies.

SB: Known as the Israel Lobby, yeah oh, and by its friends. And we would frequently go to Washington for what were called policy conferences. And seeing Ed Muskie on, one-on-one by the two of us was an essential part of every trip to Washington.

RB: A wonderful part of every trip.

SB: Yeah, wonderful part of every trip. He took us to his, when he was the leader he took us to the, his private dining room overlooking the mall.

RB: His hideaway.

SB: Hideaway, and we were served by some guy from some restaurant. And he, I remember his, I remember we were having a discussion with him about the fact that his seat in the Senate was in the back row, the arc. He made it quite clear that it didn't make any difference where you sat, it was who you were and the clout that you had.

RB: Of course he was very responsive to the issues we were concerned.

SB: Yeah, very, very responsive.

RB: And so working with him was a pleasure. And then when he decided to make a run for president he asked you to co-chair or chair of Republicans for Muskie, or lawyers for Muskie,

which you certainly agreed to do.

SB: I don't remember that, but Roz's memory is much better.

RB: I remember it very well.

SB: I was certainly, I've never been a partisan in the sense of other people, and I was always, once I knew Ed Muskie I always supported him, against

RB: He would have made a superb president.

SB: Oh, absolutely.

RB: It was a tragedy that he didn't make it.

SB: If he would have kept his temper under control, he would have been a great president, brilliant. Tell him the story about getting a paycheck.

RB: Oh yes.

JR: I think we, I'm just going to flip over the tape.

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

JR: We're on Tape One, Side B of the interview with Sumner and Rosalynne Bernstein, and Rosalynne, you were about to tell us a story.

RB: Well, when he left the Senate and of course the secretary of state office and went to work in a private law firm, we asked him if he didn't miss holding office.

SB: We met him once at a reception at the Holiday Inn.

RB: And he said, "Oh, I do, except on payday." Of course Sumner got to know him very well in the later years of his life.

SB: At the end of his life, well what turned out to be the end of his life, he became so committed to legal justice here in Maine, and to the Maine Bar Association project, and particularly to the support of Nancy Chandler who was just a superb director of the Maine Bar Foundation. One day, we were someplace, and Nancy said, "Where are you going after the meeting?" And I said, "I'm going home." She said, "Would you take Ed Muskie to Brunswick?" We must have been in Augusta or Waterville or something. So I had the rare opportunity, I'd probably been with him alone before but this was, and I drove him to Brunswick. And then frequently when he was down at Governor's Way in Kennebunk or Kennebunkport or whatever it is, Nancy got into the habit of calling me and saying, 'Would you go down and pick him up and bring him to this meeting and that?' So I got to, I got a number of insights into him.

These are of course his post Congress, post secretary of state years. And his commitment to equal justice in Maine was again -

RB: Legal services for the poor.

SB: Legal services to the poor, were, I mean, this was a man who was a national icon at this point. And he traipsed around the state of Maine, wherever he was called to go, to support those programs. And with sincerity. If he talked to ten people, he would talk to ten people, he would talk to a gathering of a thousand, he was just, he was committed to this project. And it was clearly part of his being, it was part of what he was trained, what he was born to do, just a, really a great man. And he never put you ill at ease, at least with me he never put people ill at ease, and I spent a number of hours with him. By sheer coincidence Nancy Chandler was sitting in that chair yesterday, and we tried to reminisce about some of the Muskie experiences. He was just *sui generis*, he was different.

RB: He was, though, in the mold of what we have grown to expect from our best political leaders in Maine. I mean, he was human, he was approachable, he was unpretentious. It's something that is a real gift. And I think that people from other states, when they encounter Maine political people talking to Maine people on a first name basis, they are astounded. We've had a couple of those experiences where people from other states said, 'You mean you know so-and-so, you can actually get to see him one on one?' We said, "Yeah."

SB: I think his, I think what Roz is talking about is the reason why George Mitchell bloomed so well under his real tough guidance, by that I mean his discipline. He was a serious influence on Harold Pachios' life, people like that who made a commitment to Ed Muskie and literally wrapped parts of their lives around what he was doing at the time, got a tremendous amount from that, you know. And I put George in that category, in particular.

RB: He was rare.

JR: Okay, actually, if we could go back to, you were talking about APAC, just kind of, just a question about like, do you remember like some of the issues that you went down to lobby for, like down with Muskie and -?

RB: Well remember, the years that he was in the Senate, as today unhappily, Israel was always under siege, there were always issues. There were issues of American aid to Israel's defense burden, which was enormously heavy; there were always issues of -

SB: Well, actual wars.

RB: Actual wars in which, you know, Israel needed American supplies and American support. There were issues always of refugees who were coming to Israel and needing help in resettlement of these people. And, so we were literally constantly involved, and constantly involved in talking with our Congress people and our senators about all of these issues. We wrote to them, we called them, we saw them.

SB: We tried to balance the frequently anti-Israel press.

RB: And so, there was a lot of interaction.

SB: But I don't think we had to convince Ed Muskie.

RB: We didn't, no, we didn't.

SB: I think he saw the issues clearly. But it was important to him to know that people in Maine felt that these were issues of importance to him, I think. You'd be a somewhat unusual public citizen who didn't feel that way. But I'm trying to think, let's see -

RB: We would meet him in airports, run into him in the airport, coming and going to Washington.

SB: Yeah, he was, let's see, there was, I hate to say it, there was a war in fifty, the Suez war in '56, there was the Six-Day War in '67.

RB: There was the '73 Yom Kippur War.

SB: Yom Kippur War in '73.

RB: When did Ed's term in the Senate end, I lose track.

SB: Carter's last year or so?

JR: Yeah, in 1980 Carter asked him to be secretary of state.

SB: So he was in the midst of all of that stuff.

RB: And he was a very important member of the Senate. As a matter of fact, at that time Madeleine Albright was his chief foreign policy aide, and we spent a good deal of time with her.

SB: She won't remember us, but we remember her. He would bring her in to the briefings.

RB: We remember our discussions with her very, very vividly.

SB: But Roz is right, we would go to the AIPAC conferences and there were members of Jewish communities literally from every one of the fifty states. And you'd hear them, hear others talk about views with their senator and we'd listen, and we realized that we were in there, we weren't talking to Senator Bump, we were talking to Ed Muskie. And we weren't talking to some remote aide. He'd bring Madeleine Albright in to talk to us, you know, because, you know, he was, we were friends.

RB: He was, and he was accessible.

SB: Yeah, he was accessible. And George Mitchell continued that tradition.

RB: Yes, he did.

SB: We had to fight people off who wanted to come to meetings with the Maine delegation.

RB: Well, George was majority leader. And we had a meeting to talk to George, and there were mobs of people who wanted to meet George . . .

SB: . . . wandering all over the Senate.

RB: And so, you know, we said, "You can come, but you can't open your mouth. You've got to be absolutely quiet, this is our meeting." And so, you know, we just had a wonderful, cordial time with George and when we left people were just amazed. They couldn't believe it. They said, you know, they're from New York, they'd go to see one of their senators, there were a thousand people in the room, you know, they'd never get a word in edgewise. It's different to come from Maine. And I think politicians have a different relationship with their constituents.

SB: But that was also, it was, Bill Hathaway I don't remember that closely, but it was certainly true of Bill Cohen, it was true of George.

RB: Absolutely. It was true of Bill Hathaway the few times that we actually met with Bill. Certainly George Mitchell, certainly Olympia Snowe and Susan Collins, they're all accessible.

SB: They're all in that mold. And I think he set it up. There was no remoteness, no 'I'm separate from you', different from you. No sense of remoteness.

JR: Did either of you get a sense, because I think specifically right after his bid for the presidency failed there was really a sense in Maine, from what I've read, that he really kind of forgot about Maine, I guess, you know, when he was kind of going, you know, really focusing on national office. Did you have a sense of that?

SB: I certainly, it would never have occurred to me to mention it, and I'm certainly not aware of it. But again, as I say, memory fades with the passage of time.

RB: That's one of the problems is memory does fade. I'm trying to think about the passage of the Clean Water Act. When in his career did that happen? Because that was powerfully important in the state of Maine.

JR: Yeah, I would have to say -

SB: Must have been in the middle eighties sometime.

RB: No, it would have to be before the middle eighties. Seventies?

JR: I would say probably, yeah, around the seventies.

SB: Oh, I'm sorry, Carter, middle seventies.

RB: Because it was certainly, I mean, that was such a powerful influence. You have no idea what Portland was like. You would smell S.D. Warren everywhere, because the waters were so polluted. Back Cove was so polluted, at low tide you couldn't breathe when you drove down Baxter Boulevard. The rivers were so unbelievably polluted, you know, you would get to some of the towns in Maine and you would smell them long before you got close to them.

SB: Including his home town of Rumford.

RB: Because the waters were just all foul. And he's responsible for the fact that Maine has the clean water . . .

SB: His leadership, no doubt about it.

RB: . . . such clean waters. And, I mean, it's extraordinary, you know, how anyone could say that he forgot about Maine. He was so powerfully responsible for the environmental condition of our state today.

SB: And I think if people say that, it's because when he left the Senate and he left being secretary of the state, he clearly wasn't on the news every night, and he wasn't in the newspapers every day. But I don't think it changed his commitment and relationships with Maine interests.

RB: And also -

SB: And all his protégées were running around, you know, he had a real interest in them.

RB: But also, people who leave public office deserve some personal time and a respite. I mean, when you think of the years that spent and the commitment that he made and the energy that he gave, it is really unfair, I think, to characterize him as forgetting about the state.

SB: Look at the energy he put into LBJ, and Frank Coffin on the circuit court of appeals.

RB: That's right.

JR: So what's this?

RB: He is responsible for Frank Coffin being on the circuit court of appeals.

SB: When the president, LBJ, did not want to appoint him. I've forgotten what Frank had done as a congressman or something, or as an AID administrator. But Muskie used his clout.

RB: And he got LBJ to change his mind.

SB: And couldn't have got, and couldn't have put a better man on the bench.

RB: Absolutely. It's one of the best things he did for -

SB: Even though he comes from Lewiston (*chuckle*) . . .

RB: One of the best things he did for Maine and the first circuit, absolutely.

JR: That's interesting, too, because -

SB: I hope you've interviewed him.

JR: Oh, Frank Coffin, they've interviewed him several times, oh yes.

(All speaking at once.)

SB: I'd say weeks and weeks of interviews with Frank Coffin.

JR: Oh yeah, several interviews. But, no, that's interesting you say that because there is that, I don't know if you've heard that story, I've read it several places, where, when Muskie first entered the Senate how he didn't make a favorable impression on LBJ, and so that's why he pushed, he put him in like the Public Works Committee.

SB: Yes, I've heard that, yes, I've heard that story, I'd forgotten, but that's right. I'll tell you, I once went to a meeting, might have been a committee on foreign relations, and the issue was Vietnam, and Muskie had just come back from Vietnam and defended U.S. policy right down the line.

RB: Well, everybody did in those days.

JR: About what year was that, do you remember?

SB: Oh, '66 maybe, something like that.

RB: Time, you know, when so many years go by, time gets a little blurry in trying to identify a specific year for a specific issue, it gets a little difficult.

JR: But that time he had come back and he was very supportive?

SB: Yeah, yes. I tried to argue with him, and that was the night I remember coming home to Roz and saying, "You never win an argument when the speaker's got the chair." You never win the argument.

RB: The person who's got the chair is in control.

SB: And in fact, at the end of the discussion he said to me, "Sumner, I've been there and you haven't." That's what he said to me.

JR: Did you have a sense that that may, that his stance on Vietnam ever affected him not getting to be vice president or president?

SB: No, again, if I had thoughts of that sort, Jeremy . . .

RB: Not at all. It was certainly never an issue, it never arose in the media, it was never, never talked about.

SB: At least I don't remember.

RB: And I think we would have remembered that.

SB: Yes, something as striking as that.

JR: All right, actually I wanted to switch gears a little bit to ask you, Rosalyne, about your involvement with Portland Model Cities Program?

RB: Oh yes, I was heavily involved in the Model Cities.

JR: Okay, tell me about it.

RB: Well, I was serving on the school committee, and Portland, again due to Ed Muskie, was picked as a model city. You know, the Model Cities program was originally designed for major American cities, but Ed Muskie had clout and Portland got chosen. And I was involved with Model Cities in an overall way, very generally. I remember being invited to go to meetings, to discuss concepts, and so on. But I became heavily involved with Model Cities with regard to the building of the Reiche School in Portland. Actually, I'm trying to recall the details. What happened was, a decision was made to create a community school at that time. The concept was for a school that would be used by the whole community, in a neighborhood in which, was a low income residential neighborhood, in which there were few social services. And that the school would become not only a school but it would be a twenty-four-hour-a-day, seven-day-a-week place where various human services, social services, health services and so on would be located.

And a team of consultants was brought in, because Model Cities had lots of money for consultants, and there were loads of specialists who were making their living off Model Cities, you know. They were created to, because of Model Cities, and that's how they earned their living. And for some of them I don't have very good things to say, as you will see. And anyway, and there were citizens advisory committees. And as we were trying to design the programs, it became very, very clear that the biggest obstacle to agreement among the community advisory committees and the school committee were the consultants, the Model, that came in as part of Model Cities. And at one point, we threw them out of the room. We said, "You are not being . . ." (this went on for months). . . . "You are not being constructive, you are not helping the process. Leave. We will discuss directly with the various advisory committees." And we did, and we created the school and the program. And so I have very mixed feelings about Model Cities. I think that Model Cities was a noble effort. It, unfortunately it was seized upon by a

class of professionals who made a very good thing out of Model Cities. And I'm not sure that the benefits that the cities got out of the program were all that great. It had enormous potential, or at least in Portland. I think what it achieved was modest. So -

SB: Well, the Reiche School is something of a community center, it's something of a community center.

RB: Oh, yes, the Reiche School was a big success, there is no question about that. But working with these people who were brought in from away, as we like to say, and who really knew nothing about the city of Portland, I don't think was very helpful. Now the, I don't know what the experience was in other cities. I don't think that the Model Cities experiment had a lot of lasting values. But you know, it was part of an era.

It was the era when there were all kinds of wonderful ideas created by the Great Society, by Lyndon Johnson. All sorts of wonderful ideas for really uplifting the life of the people who had been underprivileged and oppressed in many ways. I mean, we had some marvelous programs going in the schools that were supported through these, through the Great Society efforts. There were the breakfast and lunch programs for children from homes who would otherwise have started their school day hungry and unable to do any work, because if you're hungry how can you concentrate on your school work? That was a wonderful program, and that continues to this day. There were all the Title I programs, some wonderful Title I programs which enabled, to have special classes and materials and teachers for children who really came to school terribly disadvantaged, to enrich their education, to give them the kind of head start that would enable them to start school on an even level with kids from more privileged backgrounds. So a lot of the programs under the Great Society, from my perspective, in the school department, were terrific because they allowed the city to do what it couldn't have afforded to do on its own, without this federal money. But the Model Cities program specifically, to me, was a great disappointment. I did get to know some marvelous people with whom I've had opportunities to work in other contexts, but they were local people. They were people who lived here, had a commitment to the community, and were grounded in the community.

JR: Like who?

RB: Oh, let's see, Caroline Glassman was very active before she went on the court. Several of the people, I can't think of his name who then went on to be the executive of a major social agency. There were a number of people. Time goes by and you forget specifically, you know, the people who made a difference. Selma Black, who was the Title I coordinator for the Portland public schools, she died just this past year, was extraordinary. She was the best grants writer, and the best program idea person you can imagine. And she came up with more good programs for the school system, and was able to get them, the federal match to enable us to do those programs. I mean, we bought text books we never could have bought, we never could have afforded them. We were able to replace old out-of-date text books. And she just was a wonder at that. So she's somebody I'd give very high marks to, taking advantage of what became available and helping us to access it.

JR: And was there any sort of lobbying involved as far as, as like people from the Portland

school board or like city councilors, I mean going and, to Ed Muskie?

RB: There was always lobbying involved, there was always lobbying involved. Remember, you were competing, there was a pot of money and you were competing for that pot of money with every other place that wanted a piece of it, so there was always lobbying.

SB: Including other places in Maine, of course.

RB: Other places in Maine as well. And we were very, very successful. So I don't think the fact that Ed Muskie came from Rumford biased him at all, you know. He really had a good statewide perspective, and he also recognized that in the city of Portland we had a multi-generational, in those days, a poor white underclass with every kind of problem you can imagine, who needed to be helped. And he was very, very supportive and responsive.

JR: Sumner, do you have any impression of that?

SB: No, I've, I'm listening to Roz and I, it doesn't start any bells ringing. I must have been too busy in the office.

RB: No, you were doing a million other things in the community.

JR: Okay, I, from the research I have, I have, there's mention of what's called the Portland Partnership that I think you were involved in?

SB: Well, the Portland Partnership is a general name for support for the Portland school system, and I'm just a volunteer at Riverton School a lot.

RB: A very active volunteer for many, many years.

SB: I go out and read to kindergarten kids, and I will tell you, as I have said given any opportunity, the best hour of the week is when you're sitting inside with six year olds and talking with them and reading to them, and listening to them read refreshes you, it restores your faith in humanity. It also reminds you that you better be careful what you say in front of your children because they may repeat it in some other environment, to your embarrassment.

JR: All right, how about your involvement with the World Affairs Council of Maine?

SB: Okay, there used to be a group, probably still exists, called the, what's the -?

RB: Committee on Foreign Relations?

SB: The World Affairs Council of the United States. It was a New York, is a New York based organization, and they form committees on foreign relations.

RB: No, in New York it was called the Council on Foreign Relations.

SB: Council, and they form committees in many cities, and Portland was one of the committees and my father and I were both founding members of it.

RB: Doesn't exist any more.

SB: Doesn't exist any more. What they, it was a group of community activists and leaders interested in foreign affairs, and essentially it involved bringing a prominent person to Portland, listening to that person speak, and then having, what, an hour of general discussion after. And there were a number of very good programs. I'm sorry to tell you the only one I remember, because again I remember very well, we were, had a meeting and the French Consul General from Boston was the speaker, and he spoke and then the question period started, and DeGaulle has just done something absolutely, -

RB: "Quebec libre."

SB: Yeah, "Quebec libre", DeGaulle had just done something -

RB: And gone to Canada.

SB: To Canada and spoken about "Quebec libre".

RB: Called for a liberated Quebec.

SB: And somebody in the audience said, "Wasn't that a terrible thing." The French consul stood up, he said, "I will not have the president of France insulted." And he stood and walked out of the meeting, and that was the end of that evening. Generally they were very, very constructive suggestions, and they were primarily intended to educate the local community that didn't read the *New York Times* from cover to cover every day, or didn't read *Foreign Affairs*, the publication of the Council. It then became sort of moribund, I mean it just, it didn't, it wasn't taking in enough new members and the programs weren't good. And another group had started. There was a woman in Portland named Bea Chapman, who in, don't hold me to whether it was the fifties or the sixties, began inviting -

RB: She lived on Peak's Island.

SB: She lived on Peak's Island. And she began inviting foreign journalists to come to vacation in Maine on Peak's Island. And out of that group she and other people like her, Rick Barton was one of the early people, they formed a, I'll call it a competing group called the World Affairs Council. And with some trepidation I went to a few of their meetings and realized that they were much more lively, they were much more interesting, they were much more challenging, and -

RB: They didn't have a restricted membership, anybody could join the World Affairs Council.

SB: Anybody could join the World Affairs Council. You had to go through some rigamarole to get into Committee on Foreign Relations, you had to -

RB: It was by invitation only.

SB: By invitation, you know, you had to go to the right school or have the right something or other. And the result was that I became very, very interested and Roz and I transferred our participation to the World Affairs Council and eventually, I stood on the board and became active. In fact I've just gone, just now gone off the board, I've just literally within the month have gone off the board. And it is an extremely strong organization. It is committed to world affairs, it's committed to the education of youth, it's committed to foreign exchange students who are here in Maine, give them an opportunity for (*unintelligible phrase*).

RB: Has wonderful programs.

SB: Has superb programs, strong support from the State Department and State Department types who, you know, the Maine woods are full of retired State Department types, they really are. Some of them I disagree with, some of them I agree with, but there are a lot of them around. And it has been a, I think it has been a very, very important, but again, and this is not because it's exclusionary, just because of its nature, it's sort of a, it tends to be elitist by self selection. I mean, not everybody wants to go down to King Junior High School at six o'clock in the evening and listen for an hour and a half while some guy discusses what's going on in Cambodia. But it's a very, very good organization.

RB: Now got an active, Bangor

SB: And it's now, as I say, I would say I've gotten much more out of the World Affairs Council than the World Affairs Council got out of me. But it's a good organization, good organization. You must have gone through some morgue at some newspaper, I mean, Portland Partnership, World Affairs Council.

RB: I was going to say, where did you find all these things about us?

JR: The Internet.

SB: Really? I'll be damned.

JR: Yeah, just, it's amazing what you can do by just putting someone's name in parentheses and saying, "Search."

RB: It must (*unintelligible phrase*).

JR: Oh yes, it's very, very useful. All right, Rosalyne, the Maine Health Care Finance Commission, what about that?

SB: Excuse me for an hour or so.

RB: The Maine Health Care Finance Commission was established by the state of Maine to try to get a handle on hospital costs, and thereby moderate their increase for the benefit of the people

of the state of Maine. One of the issues has always been the ability to take apart charges. If you've ever seen a hospital bill, and they're much better now, they're detailed at least, and take apart what it really costs and what is really padding. And it was, at that time that the commission was established, costs were escalating alarmingly, and hospital costs were escalating the fastest, and so the state established the commission. I was appointed in 19-, I served for nine years, and I was appointed, I think, was it '87 or '90, just about 1987 I think, and I served as chair for all but a few months of that time.

SB: It was a great commission, a superb commission.

RB: We had a, absolutely a superb commission. Harvey Picker from Camden, who was one of Maine's most brilliant people and a leading citizen, Bob Strong from the University of Maine, Dick Dallbeck.

SB: Dick Dolbeck from UNUM.

RB: Yeah, it was a very good committee. And we, I believe we did an excellent job. From the day the commission was established, the hospitals fought against it, actively and aggressively. And under Governor McKernan, who appointed me, there was an effort to abolish the commission. I fought the governor on this, you know. He's a friend, we still are friends, I felt he was wrong, and I fought very, very hard. I fought a battle for two years in the legislature, winning the battle all the time, until, I won it throughout the McKernan administration. When Angus King became governor, another very good friend. Angus really didn't believe that the commission served a purpose and it was abolished.

SB: Well, he felt its function could be performed by DHS or one of the other agencies.

RB: Yeah, it clearly, it's very, very interesting because I said to him then, and I'd say it to -

SB: And would say it to him again.

RB: - again when I see him, I said, "You know, if the commission is abolished, there may come a time when you would really say I wish I could recreate it." Because again, a huge percentage of hospital and health care costs in the state of Maine are paid by the state of Maine, for its employees, for Medicare patients, for all the other classes, Medicaid I mean, for all the other classes of people who the state, for whom the state is responsible for health care costs.

Now, it's clear that this is a very different environment today. First of all, no regulation becomes more difficult, because what we have now are horizontal and vertical merges. We have hospitals merging into integrated systems, and we have hospitals, home health care agencies, social service agencies, insurance, all merging, so that it becomes much more difficult to pick out the pieces and see where the costs really are. You have hospitals now owning physician practices, so the issue is no longer a hospital based issue. And you also have pharmaceutical costs escalating out of sight. So what we now have is really a total health care problem. The last commission that Governor King appointed in effect came up with no solutions, because the problem is so complex and so difficult that solving it state by state is almost an impossibility.

There needs to be a federal policy, federal programs, in which the states can participate. I still believe that we don't have a good handle at all, on what is really the cost and what is not. And I'm a, you know, I'm a hospital trustee so I have no biases in that regard. But I am aware that there is, it is impossible to identify real costs anywhere in the health care system at the present time. I enjoyed my nine years very, very much, it was intellectually very stimulating. We were working with hospitals all over the state, although they weren't happy with us, we were working with them.

SB: And you had a tremendous staff, guys like Frank [McGinty].

RB: We had excellent staff, we had excellent relationships with the legislative committee in charge. I did a lot of public speaking all over the state. It was, and we sat as a quasi-judicial board in the hearing disagreements, appeals, and so on. So it was a very stimulating and interesting experience for me, a learning and growth experience. And I regret that, while the Health Care Finance Commission in its form probably no longer served the purpose for which it was intended, at a time when hospital costs were the really big piece of the whole equation, there needed to be something to replace it. Total abolition I don't think was a great idea, but that's one person's opinion.

JR: What are your impressions, given your time with this commission, on like the, like this past election with the emphasis on the drug price controls in Maine?

RB: Something has to happen. You know, I mean while both of us rely on medications, my husband particularly, at this point in his life, when he's having chemotherapy, and are very grateful for the development of all of these miracle drugs, -

SB: Let's hope.

RB: Let us hope, nevertheless, it is inexplicable in my opinion that charges for medications in the United States are two, three, and four times what the same medications are priced in Europe and in Latin America. In the winter we spend three months in Arizona, forty miles from the Mexican border. People in the town that we live in then, go to Mexico all the time for their medications. They are getting exactly the same medication at a greatly reduced cost. Now, it is true that the pharmaceutical companies spend a vast amount of money in research and development, but they spend more on television advertising, which to me is unconscionable for prescription drugs, because they're interfering with the doctor's choice of what is appropriate for a patient by influencing the patient in what to ask for. So that's one thing. Secondly, a huge part of pharmaceutical research is supported by grants from the National Institute of Health, which is a tax-payer supported institution. And my argument with the pharmaceutical industry is, you are entitled to a reasonable profit, you are entitled to recoup your costs of research, but not everything on the back of the American consumer. You ought to be charging prices overseas that enable you to lower some prices in the United States. And the answer obviously is clear: overseas, the governments of those countries control the prices.

In the United States we have a laissez faire system which is totally unsuited to health care. Health care is not an area of discretionary spending. It's like your heat, it's like your food. You

don't choose to eat or not to eat. You can't choose whether to have health care or not, when you need it you must have it. Therefore it doesn't lend itself to a free market, it has to be controlled. And in the United States we have no controls whatsoever. I believe we are being gouged unmercifully. And that, I'm proud of the state of Maine for at least making an attempt. And I believe that making these attempts will perhaps make the pharmaceutical companies recognize that there is a rising tide here, and that if they don't police themselves, they're going to be policed. It sounds like a tirade but I believe it profoundly.

SB: I firmly believe that, now that I have been on Medicare for some time and realize how excellent its coverage is, that a single payer system, maybe we'll have to go into it incrementally about, in terms of poverty levels and ages, but eventually a national single payer system is the only real solution. We can't do this on a fifty state-by-state basis.

RB: It's interesting that the pharmaceutical industry, the health care industry, decries Canada because, they put before you the horrible examples of people who have to wait for procedures. But by and large, Canadians are very happy with their health care system. Americans are not happy with their health care system. There's a very great deal of dissatisfaction here.

SB: We need a new Ed Muskie taking the leadership of this area.

RB: No, I think President Clinton and Hillary blew it by putting up with monstrosity of a Rube Goldberg plan. They had a real opportunity to turn the tide in health care by developing an incremental system based on the model of Medicare, which is the most efficient health care program in the country. Something like one and a half percent of total Medicare funding goes to run the program. There's nothing that can compare with that. And they had a real chance to cover all children in this country. Start with them, to cover everybody within a certain percentage of the poverty level. You know, to begin incrementally in a way that wouldn't scare everybody half to death, and interfere with the doctor-patient relationship.

SB: Have you read any of the material by Martha Angel, who was the former editor of the *New England Journal of Medicine*?

JR: I have not, no.

SB: She's a very insightful critic in this area, Dr. Angel, she's really something.

RB: So, we have a lot to say on the subject.

JR: Good, that's what we like to hear. All right, how about, you were a trustee at Bowdoin College for, what, twenty-four years?

RB: Twenty-four years, I was the first woman.

JR: First woman, right. A trustee at Maine College of Art?

RB: Yes.

JR: Okay, you were involved with USM board of visitors?

RB: I chaired the board.

JR: Okay, just tell me about your experiences dealing with, you know, institutions of education in Maine, like what are your impressions?

RB: I also served for ten years on the board of the New England Board of Higher Education, which is the board that administers the New England Compact by which states can send, if they don't have programs in their own state, can send students to programs in other New England states at a substantial discount, this is higher education. Well, obviously education is the key to success in life, and highly committed to it as you can from my activities. I've had the rare experience of deep involvement with both a public university and a private college, and very committed to both.

Bowdoin College is a superb institution, it is one of the top American liberal arts colleges. It has it's, it has a staff and faculty second to none, it's programs and the richness and depth are extraordinary, and it is one of the few institutions left in the United States that admits its students on an aid, a need blind basis. That is, if you are, when the admissions committee looks at a student profile at Bowdoin College, it makes and admit or deny decision before it has any idea whether that student is self pay, or whether that student will need financial aid. And if the student needs financial aid, then the college is committed to providing the aid that the student needs. That's a very rare treasure in the United States today, outside of the great universities like Harvard and Princeton and Yale and Stanford with their multi-billion dollar endowments. There are only a hand full of colleges that still do this. So my commitment to Bowdoin is deep, and our son went to Bowdoin, his wife went to Bowdoin, and we're just deeply devoted to it.

My commitment to the University of Southern Maine is equally deep because, for the vast majority of students in the state of Maine, there is not the option of a private college. And the University of Southern Maine is the best kept secret in the state of Maine. Under Rich Patten's presidency, this university has just by leaps and bounds, literally pulling itself up by its own bootstraps, finding efficiencies, finding savings, developed a faculty and a program, and is continuing to work to improve itself, that is accessible to students from all over the state, we have students here from every county in the state of Maine, that provides first class education, that has half the graduate students in the state of Maine. It is the fastest growing of all the public universities in the state. It has a record of increasing enrollment over the last twenty years while enriching and deepening its programs. It's got a first rate law school, and now a fully accredited business school.

SB: Not to mention the Muskie-

RB: The Muskie Center, which of course is one of the national shining stars, it's an extraordinary place, the Muskie School. And I believe that it deserves the support of all the people of this region because it is the economic engine that's going to make this region prosper. The businesses here, we just did a self study this past year, actually we did a study, as the board

of visitors, did a study to determine how the community saw us and what they saw the needs as. And I'll tell you, the high tech businesses in this region are really dependent on the university, for them to be able to bring good people here to work for them, because they need continuing education for these people. This is where, this part of the state is where the population is, this is where the programs have to develop, and we really need support. And the university has gone from being a state-supported institution to being a state-assisted institution. Maine is fiftieth in the country in the percentage of support that a state gives its public universities. That's pretty serious.

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

JR: We are on Tape Two with the interview with Sumner and Rosalyn Bernstein. And just to continue with our discussion of your involvement with education in Maine, what impressions do you have of USM's relation to like the University of Maine, and just the U Maine system in general throughout the state, and how that's changed?

RB: University of Southern Maine is a part of the University of Maine system and we are committed to that system. We talk about the university at Orono as the land grant university, and the University of Southern Maine as the urban university. Each has a mission to perform, and a very important mission. The University of Maine has the full panoply of graduate programs through the Ph.D. We do not seek to duplicate those. But we do seek to achieve, more masters and Ph.D. programs here, in targeted areas, which are specifically designed to serve this region. And this region includes more than Portland. The University of Southern Maine has campuses, has a campus in Lewiston-Auburn, Lewiston-Auburn College is part of the University of Southern Maine, we serve Cumberland, York, Oxford.

SB: Well, you really serve the whole state in some senses.

RB: And we, our pr-, we serve the entire state but we are, in effect, the six southernmost counties are heavily dependent on the University of Southern Maine. Example, this is where the bulk of the information technology companies are located, this is where the bulk of the biotechnology companies are located. We need masters and Ph.D. programs in those areas in order to keep those businesses here, to attract more of them, and for them to be able to attract employees, talented employees. So we have a mission in particular areas. We also have a huge number of social service agencies here and need graduate programs in all the areas in which there is an enormous demand for professionals. And since most of the people in graduate programs are place bound, that is they have jobs and families and are pursuing their graduate education as part of a full life of activities, they cannot commute to Orono, it makes no sense. This is not unusual. Almost every state has an urban state university, and a land grant university which is not in a major city. And what we are saying is, we need this for the University of Maine system.

And we have widespread support, we're working very hard with the legislature, with the governor, and with the private sector. We've almost completed our first ever capital campaign, and we recognize that the private sector is going to have to play a much larger role in funding the

university than it has in the past. But we think that the legislature also has a responsibility, and it's a responsibility to recognize how crucial higher education is to the young people in the state.

We lose people because we can't, they can't afford to go to school, it's too expensive, and once they leave, most of them never come back. So we need affordable education, and that's going to take state support. There is no way we can get around it. And we can only pull ourselves up by our own bootstraps so far, the resources are stretched very, very thin. For example, the legislature did approve for us a bond issue to enable us to create, to build a community building and a parking garage, desperately needed here. There is no place for people to leave their cars. And we have eighty-five thousand people a year come to the University of Southern Maine for courses, classes, seminars and other activities, and conferences. We have no place to put them. We don't even have a place, a large meeting room where we can put people any more. Every inch of space is spoken for. So as I say, the needs are enormous, and they're always enormous, but we need more, we need more help.

JR: Right, Sumner, I haven't forgotten about you.

SB: No, that's all, I expected you'd forgotten about me. When you start tapping the record of Roz, you know, you hit gold.

JR: I kind of wanted to ask you just, you were the first member of your law firm to become a Fellow of the American College of Trusts and Estate Council?

SB: Trusts and Estates Council, yeah.

JR: Also your affiliation with the Maine Bar Association, Maine Bar Foundation?

SB: Yeah, I was president of both.

JR: I just wanted to ask you, first through your involvement in, with your law firm but also with these different organizations, just how you see these organizations and your involvement in them affecting like the state of Maine, and like the types of law in Maine and how it's changed?

SB: No question, the Maine Bar, the Maine State Bar Association, like many other institutions, used to be a sort of a closed group, people with long term connections to the legislature and the court. In the sixties, the decision was made by a number of us who were, had become active, in fact I will quote my father who used to call it the 'Moribund Organization' because it did nothing. In the middle sixties I would think was the time when a number of us became active, particularly with the arrival of Edward Godfrey as Dean of the University of Maine School of Law and a young man he brought along named David Gregory. And the decision was made that we were going to turn the Maine State Bar Association into an active organization, education of people committed to various areas of the law to make sure that Maine was updated, to make sure that people knew the right kind of practice, high ethical standards, you name it. And I think we were successful. I think that since the late sixties and early seventies the Maine State Bar Association has played a vital role and from it have gone a number of projects, including the Maine Bar Foundation which is essentially a fund raising organization from membership to support legal aid causes. I think that it was, that these sorts of initiatives taken by lawyers,

individual lawyers taking individual responsibility in the framework of a structured organization.

We became activists in what became Pine Tree Legal, what is now the justice pro-, I mean the state of Maine, where Frank Coffin is still a critical leader. And we've gone now into a heavy program of alternate dispute resolution. I was involved in one small aspect of it in family law issues, where we developed what is now family court. I think the Maine Bar has lived up to its profess--, has learned to live up to its professional responsibility, and that's a, that was a real challenge. The law is not, it's a profession, not just earning a living from day to day. It's raising the standards for the life of the people of the state of Maine. I would like to, one thing I regret is that the, I can't re-, what was the name, what was Howard Dana's national organization?

RB: Oh, yes, Legal Services, Legal Services for the Poor?

SB: When I listen to the arguments today, the anti-lawyer arguments about trial lawyers, if we had an organized volunteer Bar working for public causes, think of the difference if the enforcement of the health care laws were in the hands not of lawyers looking for contingent fees, but in terms of lawyers who were salaried employees of public service organizations, who would undertake those causes for the community rather than for an individual claimant. That's a, we still have a long way to go, but the answer is we have, the Maine Bar is a very strong organization. It's had very good leadership. And I think there are going to be a number of causes, and that in particular is one I would like to see revived. I, you know, Pine Tree Legal is an excellent organization but Congress, in a rash of Reaganism, cut back things that they could do because they were suing the government, they were suing the government that was funding them.

RB: Because it wasn't carrying out its responsibilities to clients.

SB: And that's, again, where Frank stepped in and the Maine Bar picked up.

RB: The Access to Justice Project.

SB: The Access to Justice Program, the Maine Bar picks up what the feds cut out.

JR: Can you tell me about that, the Access to Justice, what is that exactly?

SB: It's exactly what it sounds like, exactly. It's a, making sure that, and again, I'm not two or three, I'm going to say for the past two or three years I've been phasing out of the heavily parts of my practice and as a result of the organizational activities that surrounded it. But this was designed, when Pine Tree Legal lost a certain amount of its authority, this was designed to make sure that certain types of claimants were still represented. And that's what Access to Justice is. I'm sorry, I am not current on the details of how the programs work. I would like to be but, not exactly true, but now, the mantle of leadership has I'm sure passed to two or three generations of lawyers following me. I know that a lot of lawyers in our office are up to their ears in this sort of stuff, and it's good to see.

JR: Great. Right, well I think I, I think I've covered all my bases. Do either of you have any last thoughts about your own careers, about Muskie, about Maine politics, or law?

RB: Maine is a wonderful state.

SB: I think we've been very fortunate.

RB: We're very lucky to have lived here. It's a state in which if you show an interest and you're willing to work, it's wide open. There's opportunity galore and it's, because, we always like to say, the whole state of Maine is just one small town. It's possible to have an impact here in a way that is not possible in a heavily populated state or city, unless you are enormously rich.

SB: It's not going to be as easy for the Somalis and the Ethiopians, and the Hispanics who come in, but it will, and the Orientals, but it will happen. It will happen just as sure as God made green apples, this state will be open to them, and opportunities.

RB: It's taken, it took generations for the community to open up to Jews and Catholics, and it will take time.

SB: I'm sure, your family's got history of Franco-American problems in this country, right around the corner. So I mean, but it will happen. But I want, you know

RB: But, but constant, what is it, internal vigilance is the price of liberty. You've got to be constantly alert and you have to be ready to highlight those instances of bigotry that become apparent, and just not turn your back on them and say, "Oh well, it doesn't matter." Because it does matter, it matters a lot. And I'm, you know, I'm very glad to be part of the community where these things are involved. I mean, I just finished my nine years on the board of the Maine Community Foundation, which I served as chairman for three years. And we are heavily now involved in the area of diversity. We trained our own board, and have actively been seeking board members who represent diverse communities, and are seeking programs that will assist these new communities that have come in. The United Way is doing exactly the same thing. As a matter of fact, we've had some cooperative programs going, so that there is a growing awareness that all of us who have made it, have a responsibility. And the fact that we have made it doesn't mean we can shut the door behind us to everybody else, and I think that's just crucially important, and it's important to be alert.

SB: We have often commented that, I got out of law school in 1949 at a time when, because of the war, there was a tremendous shortage of lawyers. And I don't, I think it's accurate to say I could have gone to any city in the United States and to any major law office and had a very different career, probably been much more successful financially, but nothing, Jeremy, has ever made me have a second thought about the right decision of coming home to Maine with Rosalyne and raising -

RB: The quality of life we've had here has been wonderful.

SB: That's right. And it's good to see young people like you getting exposed to this and realizing that there's a, believe me, somewhere there's a challenge for you that is just as significant as any one of the challenges that Roz and, to a lesser degree I, have undertaken

during the past decades.

RB: Could you say a word about what this project is all about?

JR: Yeah, it's just a, essentially it's an oral history project where we go out and we interview people we know who either were directly, who directly interacted with Ed Muskie or, you know, through various involvements, and to really get impressions of Ed Muskie, his career, but also of just Maine politics.

RB: The life and times?

JR: Yeah, exactly, life and times, to get like a wide range, you know, from lawyers, journalists, all sorts of different perspectives.

SB: Should be a very valuable history when it's put together.

JR: Oh yeah, this, you are number, what, three hundred, you're the three hundred fourth.

SB: Three hundred and fourth, we had three hundred and three people ahead of us?

JR: And some people -

RB: How many in total will you be -?

JR: I'm not sure, I've just been working with this project since January and I'll only be working until next month when I go back to school. But I think they, the grant goes on for at least a couple more years.

SB: He's an undergraduate at Bates.

RB: Oh, you're an undergraduate at Bates?

JR: Oh, no, I don't go to Bates, I'm from Lewiston. I actually go to Reed College in Portland, Oregon.

SB: Oh, you do?

JR: I do.

RB: We have a grandson who's about to start Lewis and Clark.

JR: Really?

SB: What sort of a school is Lewis and Clark?

JR: Well, let me finish this off.

End of Interview