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Harkins, David C. oral history interview

Jeremy Robitaille

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Interview with David C. Harkins by Jeremy Robitaille

Summary Sheet and Transcript

Interviewee

Harkins, David C.

Interviewer

Robitaille, Jeremy

Date

June 8, 2001

Place

Lewiston, Maine

ID Number

MOH 274

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Biographical Note

David Harkins was born in Lewiston, Maine on January 3, 1929. His mother, whose father was brought over from Italy as a chef, came from Portsmouth, New Hampshire. His father's family emigrated from Ireland to Lewiston. His father, Thomas Harkins, learned the mason trade in Boston and worked for St. Peter's Church and the Lewiston Public Works, where he worked on the underground system and paving. Harkins attended the Gosselin School, Frye School, Jordan School, and Lewiston High School, where he graduated in 1948. He attended Bates College and graduated in the class of 1953. He attended physical therapy training at Columbia University for one year. He worked at New York State Rehabilitation Hospital in West Haverstraw. He joined the National Foundation for infantile paralysis where he worked at a polio emergency center in Providence, Rhode Island. He established a physical training center at Pineland Hospital in Pownal, Maine in 1957, at Montello Manor Nursing Home in the 1950s, at the Marcotte Home in 1961, and at St. Mary's Hospital in 1964. He worked at St. Mary's for 20 years. He had a private practice with Dr. Parisien and Dr. Dumont from approximately 1987-1997.

Scope and Content Note

Interview includes discussions of: Muskie's service with Jalbert; meeting Muskie at a Democratic field day; 1976 Senate campaign; Rumford's opposition to Muskie memorial; 75th

anniversary of Sisters of Charity; Lewiston farm culture during the Great Depression; Bernard L. “Barney” Harkins; Bill Harkins; Bates as an island in the 1940s; Bates football games; Bates science; Cultural Heritage; John Donovan and Frank Coffin; Bates professors active in Kiwanis and Rotary; Harold Rusk’s article about physical medicine department; Columbia professors in the physical training program; muscle reeducation; rehabilitation; transfer test; proposed overpass to connect St. Mary’s and Marcotte Home; Bates and CMG (later CMMC) in 1940s and 1950s; Bates and St. Mary’s; Bates and Lewiston; Sunday morning breakfasts at St. Mary’s cafeteria; and improved Bates-Lewiston relations.

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Transcript

Jeremy Robitaille: The date is June 8th, 2001, and I'm here at the Muskie Archives with David Harkins, and interviewing is Jeremy Robitaille, and David you were just telling me about this photograph you have.

David Harkins: Yes, this photograph. I was at a Democratic convention back, I would think it's probably in the late sixties because I was, when I came to St. Mary's to set up the department there I was thirty-five, and I'm going to say that I'm somewhere in that range between, you know, thirty-five, thirty-eight, so it's a late sixties, mid -. And Ed Muskie was the principle speaker for the Democrat rally that day. It was out to the Chalet, at the Montagnard, that they had at No Name Pond.

JR: Okay.

DH: And so, because we were two Bates grads, they wanted to get a picture taken of us, so what happened is that before the picture got taken, these two people came in -

JR: On the right?

DH: On the right, whom I don't know, and this lady came in -

JR: In Between you and Muskie?

DH: Between Ed Muskie and I, and she was a, I knew from high school and she worked in the Androscoggin County building, and her name is Lorraine Roberts.

JR: Okay.

DH: Now, there was an article that appeared with this picture in the Lewiston paper, but, and I thought that I probably may have had a copy of it, but I scanned the family history book, the scrapbooks that I have, and unfortunately couldn't find one. But it may be, you know, on file at the *Sun-Journal*.

JR: *Sun-Journal*, okay, great. All right, well I think we'll get back to that. I just want to kind of start the interview right off. And if we could start out just by stating your full name and spelling it?

DH: Yeah, my first name is David, middle initial C., and the last name is Harkins, H-A-R-K-I-N-S.

JR: Great, and what is your date and place of birth?

DH: I was born in Lewiston, Maine, January 3rd, 1929.

JR: Great, okay, and what are your parents' names?

DH: My father's name was Thomas Lawrence, and my mother was, first name was Florence, her maiden name was Orlandini, and she married Thomas Harkins.

JR: And how do you spell your mother's last name, maiden name?

DH: Maiden name is spelled O-R-L-A-N-D-I-N-I.

JR: Great, and how did, had they been in Lewiston for a long time, or how did they end up there?

DH: Yes, my mother was born in Portsmouth, New Hampshire, and her dad was a chef who was brought to this country from Florence, Italy by the (*name*) brewery people and he cooked for them at their resort in Portsmouth, New Hampshire. And then moved from there to Lewiston and he worked at the country club, cooking at the Falmouth Country Club.

JR: Okay, great, and how about your father?

DH: My father was born in Lewiston from, his mother and father emigrated from Ireland and he came, but he was born in Lewiston and he learned the mason trade in Boston as a young man and then later came back, and that's what he did for his living.

JR: Okay, so is he at all, did he build any of the mills, was he involved with that?

DH: He was involved in St. Peter's Church, he was involved, he had a long standing career with the Lewiston Public Works because many of the streets he wound up paving, and he also knew the underground system of the city at that time.

JR: Okay, great. Now, I understand you come from a very large family?

DH: Yes, I was the last of twelve, nine boys and three girls.

JR: Okay, tell me about Lewiston growing up, tell me like, like you were born in 1929 so maybe you might have some recollections of the Great Depression maybe, or like through the thirties, tell me about that a little.

DH: That's right. The early years of my younger years were, you recall, basically pretty lean years. And that was pretty much so for most of the people of my age growing up. We lived on basically what was then a farm area, which today is all grown up, and that farm area was up on the corner of East Avenue and Montello. My father owned several acres of land, and we had cows, hens, pigs, horses, and we actually lived off the garden area in the progress. My mother used to even raise turkeys and, some which we kept for ourselves, but she also sold them to neighbors around Thanksgiving time. And we used to sell eggs as well, there was a couple of the hotels that used to come up and buy the eggs from us. And so it was lean, your lean years.

Everybody was in the same boat, you were poor but you didn't know it.

JR: Right. What can you tell me about like your parents' religious views?

DH: Both my folks were of Roman Catholic. And they were, my mother was a lady that every night before going to bed did her rosary, and my father, I always remembered before going to bed is that he would kneel down in front of his rocking chair and say his prayers. As young kids we used to try to listen to see whether you could hear what the prayers were, but we were never successful. But that was a ritual.

JR: Did your mother work?

DH: No, no.

JR: She was a homemaker.

DH: She worked all the time.

JR: Well, yeah, right.

DH: Because in the summer time, you know, canning vegetables and tomatoes and so forth and all that. And when you think of the washings that she did by hand, and I can remember the very first washing machine that they were able to buy was one of those easy washing machines that had a wringer that you ran the clothes through.

JR: How about your parents' political views?

DH: My father was a very staunch Democrat all his life. And typical of the Irish heritage, he loved politics. My mother was much more liberal, you know. He was a staunch Democrat.

JR: Did they, did either of them get really involved in the community, or otherwise?

DH: My father very much so, and of course I had an older brother, Barney, who became an alderman, went to the legislature, went to the senate as a Democrat. And then after law school, he came back and he switched to the Republican Party.

DH: Barney?

JR: Much to my father's chagrin, and then was, later was appointed the municipal court judge in Old Town and he had a law practice in the Bangor area.

JR: Okay, that's your brother, all right. Was your, did your father ever hold any offices around?

DH: No, no, but very, very active in the political rallies and so forth, the ground roots level type

JR: Right, right. How about, any other of your siblings besides Barney?

DH: My brother Bill was, Bill, who was, who worked for a number of years in the newspaper business with the *Sun-Journal*, and then later was public relations man for Bates Mill and then Hillcrest Poultry. Bill was very active in the political scene and ran for the alderman's seat at one time. He was defeated by John Telow, but he was very active because of the background of, with his newspaper work, but he was always very much interested, you know, in the political aspect.

JR: OK, great. What can you tell me about Lewiston, just like the city in general growing up, like what you observed? Maybe some perspectives through Barney or Bill, through their service, like politically, socially?

DH: It was basically, you know, I have fond memories of growing up in Lewiston. At the time, for us to go down to Lisbon Street was really a treat because it was a very busy area. On a Saturday it would be wall-to-wall people from, on each side of the street, and that was really something. And there were a number of very, very good stores on that street. Not only, you know, the Woolworth's and the J.J. Newberry's, and the Kresge's, but there were a lot of fine clothing stores both for men and women, and of course, when you had, too, where L.L. Bean is today, the D. Peck store which was a wonderful department store. And usually at Christmas time that's where Santa Claus always came, you know, and that was always a big treat. And it was a type of town and city where people seemed to know one another. Even as a youngster growing up, you'd go down and, you know, and older people would speak to you and so forth and seem to know you, either, whether it was through a family resemblance or maybe, but it was a very warm area.

And I know playing sports at Lewiston High where I went to, there was a number of adults who followed the sports scene religiously. And you could go out and you could see them almost in their favorite sections of the bleachers where they sat regularly. And they were politically active, both at the school board level and so forth.

I can relate a personal story, that my junior year in high school I came out for football practice in August and I came down with a ruptured appendix that necessitated an appendectomy. And so I was in the hospital, and there was a man who was on the school board come to see me, and we had had two new coaches who came in that year who had replaced a previous coach who had been there for a number of years, and they were not doing well. So he said to me, "I don't want you to go back to school," he said, "We're going to get rid of those two coaches," and he says, "We're going to bring a football coach who was at Edward Little (*unintelligible phrase*) across the street here next year." "So," he said, "stay out a year," he says, "and come back." And I did. So I, instead of graduating in the class of '47, I graduated in '48, I came back and played two years of football, and the last year was the state championship team. So, it was that type of thing where you had people who were very much interested in, and knew, the boys and girls who were at that level and took very much an interest into it. And that was a thing that I saw, you know, as a result of coming back here over the years began to fade.

My children, as they now, my oldest son is forty-four and my second son is forty- one, my daughter is just thirty-eight, even when they come back they always kind of go down and they leave with such a saddened heart because they see what they experienced even when they were young, what it was like. And of course, unfortunately none of them will be back to this area. My oldest son has said to me, "If I ever come back to Maine," he said, "probably Portland would be my first choice to come back to." You know, but-

JR: Yeah. Tell me about, you were talking about your time at school, where did you go to elementary school?

DH: I went to elementary school, I started out in the little Gosselin School, which now is where the car wash is up here on the corner of East Avenue and Sabattus Street, Elizabeth Ann's, there was a, this was the Gosselin School, and they had a kindergarten, first and second grade, and the third and fourth grades were in the same room, they were divided and we had one teacher. She would teach the third grade in the morning and fourth grade in the afternoon.

JR: Really, wow, and then you went -?

DH: Then from there I went to Frye School, which now is being converted into a housing project for the elderly, and I was in the fifth grade there, and then from there I went to Jordan school where I went to the sixth, seventh and eighth grades.

JR: And then on to Lewiston High School.

DH: And then on to Lewiston High.

JR: What were your, like I guess, hobbies or interests or like favorite subjects while you were growing up?

DH: Well I was, probably from the standpoint of one of the big interests, because my, I had eight other brothers that preceded me in athletics, both in football and baseball. So naturally it was something that followed, we were, it was a great constructive outlet so that was, you know, so that was almost an natural, you know. But in school probably I had, you know, when I look at the elementary level, I had some wonderful teachers who were really, really good, both, even in my high school level. But, you know, history, you know, even spelling back then pretty good. I remember in the sixth grade every Friday afternoon our teacher would split the class in half and line us up, and we'd have spelling bees, you know, that type of thing and geography. And the sciences were always of interest to me.

JR: Do you remember like particular teachers who had like a really, really significant influence on you?

DH: Yeah, I would say that probably my fifth grade teacher, Theresa Burns. She was the principal of Frye and I had her for only one year, and she was very much, very much like kind of a turning point. Because one of the things that impressed me at the beginning, I was in that class with a fellow by the name of Don Bard, and Don probably had stayed back I would say

probably, maybe three years in total, and so he was older. And to me, you know, at that age, and he was, because he was older and bigger, you know, well I thought, you know, that this guy was almost an adult as far, when you're looking perspective from a fifth grader. But he had a natural talent to draw.

And I remember Theresa Burns, you know, spending time with him and I remember her one day saying to him, "Donald, this is a God given talent, and you must work to develop that because this is something that you cannot let go of, because you will become successful with this if you do what you have to do necessarily to get the education and develop the skills that God has given you." And it was so true, because he went on and became very, very successful in the art business.

JR: That's cool. So, what happens after high school?

DH: After high school, I had been accepted for a scholarship to go to Colby. And at that time Colby had just moved from down in the city by the railroad tracks up to Mayflower Hill. And I had gone up there for the initial session, and it was, I came away with a kind of a real cold feeling. It was not a kind of a warm reception, and I came back home and I remember saying to my folks, you know, "I'm not going to go there, even though I had been accepted." So my father, he said, "You want to go to college, go to Bates, Bates is a good college." You know, and so I worked a year, took a couple of post graduate courses, and I made application to Bates and came in in the fall of '49.

JR: What had been your experience with Bates growing up? Like, as, like essentially it's relation to the city, I guess?

DH: Well, I think that, I've had a good relationship with Bates largely because of, I think through the athletics. Because when we were in high school what would happen is that if Bates would happen to be playing, if we would play a morning game and Bates would be playing in the afternoon, then they would allow us to be able to go in and to witness, and that was really something because, you know, high school and watching a college game, you know, and so forth. And in those days the crowds, the games were very well attended. There were a number of local people who attended Bates College football games in those days. And so that was, that was really something. It was most interesting. We never really came into contact with the campus. It was more through the athletic field that we had a connection with the college. And I realize that even at that time that it was like, the college kind of sat on an island as far as the rest of the community was concerned, but those of us who were involved with the athletic program, you see, we didn't sense that same feeling as many of the others. And then as I was a student here, I witnessed that type of thing because even though I was a local boy and I was going to Bates, it was then that I probably really became cognizant about how distanced the community was from the college.

JR: Right. At the time that you went to Bates did a lot of local people attend Bates?

DH: Yes. When I graduated from Bates, there was twenty-one Lewiston and Auburn in the, that graduated that year.

JR: Really? Okay, so I imagine you were involved in athletics while here at Bates.

DH: Yes, I was involved both in football and baseball my four years. Freshmen then at that time were not eligible for varsity competition, we used to be the opponents in the scrimmages getting ready for games. But we had our own schedule, we had a freshman schedule.

JR: And, like what did you major in, what were your views?

DH: I was a biology major, with a minor in chemistry.

JR: Okay, and did you involve yourself at all politically or otherwise like on campus?

DH: Well I, politically I was not active. I was more active with the, you know, the George Ramsdell, the, you know, the science group because, as far as assistantships and then, and we used to give science fairs where we brought in the local students of surrounding areas to attend, you know, and that type of.

JR: And do you remember, were there any other professors who really had a, besides George Ramsdell?

DH: Oh, what the, the professors that, probably one in the biology department, we had Dr. Crowley, Mark [Thomas] Crowley. He was a great guy.

In the Cultural Heritage program, which existed at Bates at that time, which was a two year program where you went into the arts, and architecture, music and so forth and all of that, John Willis [John Randolph Willis], Professor Willis was really a, had a strong influence. I had to take, then you had to take a core English course, it was mandatory, and I happened to have Bob Berkelman, and he was a, that was a, it was a great, I would have to say that at the time I probably hated him, but I later began to appreciate really what a great teacher that he really was, you know, after, you know, so often is the case. But that, they happened to really stand out.

And in the chemistry department, Dr. [William Benjamin] Thomas was a real fine man who, and a good teacher. And in government they had Dr. Donovan, who was another one, who later left and was down at Bowdoin for years, and then he also became very politically active and wound up in Washington. He was active, he was very much involved in Muskie's campaigns, along with

JR: Oh, John Donovan?

DH: John Donovan, along with Frank Morey Coffin.

JR: Now you mentioned that the community kind of sensed sort of this isolation about Bates. Did you get a sense that that was reciprocal with like the faculty and the professors, or were they more willing to outreach?

DH: Yeah, I think that they were, I think that they were more outreach because, you know, you take like Brooks Quimby who was, you know, he was very active in Kiwanis, you know, a lot of the, and there were some that were Rotarians, and so the professors were, you know, there was probably a handful who at least were active within the community at that time while I was there.

JR: Okay. And at your time at Bates, did it really serve the, I guess maybe, did it give you like a new perspective on the world, like did you get a sense of that, or -?

DH: Yeah, I, you know, I was probably, another thing is that I don't think I really appreciated the education I got from Bates until after I graduated and I went to Columbia to do my physical therapy training, and I was there and I was then taking, you know, more science and so forth and all of that. And then I, because I was probably at best a, you know, a C student through my years at Bates, and then on Columbia I came out second of my class.

JR: Wow!

DH: So it really was a, but at first I think, you know, maturation, I had, I graduated one week, got married the next so I had, you know, and then went on to Columbia, so I think I had settled down some, you know, somewhat more than I did here. But I had a great four years here at Bates, though, I was with a great class and I really, and so I probably could have done better but I was, you know, there was so much going on I thought it was just wonderful to be able to participate, everything that was going on.

JR: So you went to Columbia. How did you decide to go to Columbia?

DH: In my junior year at Bates I broke my leg in a University of Mass football game. And I was in a long leg cast and I was over in the old Coram Library. At that time I was planning to go on to get involved and to probably go into research with drug companies, and probably get my master's and probably, you know, my doctorate, that's the direction I was leaning towards. And I was in the Coram Library and I was reading *The New York Times* and I read an article by Howard Rusk who was a physiatrist [*sic*] who had established the physical medicine department at New York University in Bellevue. And he had written this article about the rehabilitation of the G.I.s who were coming back from the service, wounded and so forth, and it kinda caught my attention and I thought, boy, you know, this is something that I could relate to, say, you know, to athletics because they threw a long leg cast on me, they gave me a pair of crutches which were way too high for me, you were never fitted, you know, that type of thing. So I wrote him a letter and he in turn responded and sent me the catalogues of Columbia and NYU to read more about. And so that was the turning point, and I applied for admission to Columbia my senior year. And, you know, you may sometimes, you know, I couldn't help but when I attended the, this, the Bates graduation and listened to Robert Reich, when he was mentioning to students about, you know, being receptive and you never know what, and all I could think of was that from that newspaper art-, from that broken leg, reading that newspaper article and how it turned around and I wound up in a career that I couldn't have been happier with, couldn't have enjoyed any more. So it was a, you know?

JR: So how long were you at Columbia, was it - (*unintelligible phrase*)?

DH: It was a year program, from September right through October.

JR: And what was your experience like in New York City?

DH: Oh, that was, well to me that was a, that was really, in the fifties was a great time to be there. I had a, I was down, I had a landlady that had a room, Mrs. Stein, lovely lady, and I had a room there which was probably about five blocks away from the university. And there was a Jewish deli that was right outside on the corner, and it was there the first time, when I had my first bagel. And so, and the interesting thing is that they would have doughnuts and they would have chocolate doughnuts, but to them a chocolate doughnut was a plain doughnut with chocolate frosting on it. And so I, as I got to be a regular I used to say to some of the men there, I said, "When I go back to Maine I'm going to bring you back a real chocolate doughnut." And so on my trip home, when I did go back, I lugged back a dozen of chocolate doughnuts with, you know, some that were plain and some that were glazed. And it was the first time that these men had actually truly seen a pure chocolate doughnut, and so this was really something.

JR: That's great.

DH: But it was a great year to be in because, you know, the Broadway shows, through the college we were able to get, even when money was real tight, but we were able to get tickets, you know that, of course, so you had a chance to see. We cut class on St. Patrick's Day, about five of us, and we got down and we got into the St. Patrick's Day parade, you know, and so forth, so it was a great experience. Coming from Lewiston, Maine, you know, it was a real eye opener.

JR: Yeah, definitely. So you spent a year there. What were, what professors there were really influential?

DH: I had, there was two professors that, that were really great to me. There was one I had in physiology, a Japanese professor by the name of Dr. Wong. And one of the things is is that I was doing very well in that class, and for years, from the time I was a freshman in high school, at Christmas time I worked at the Lewiston post office delivering mail because that was a job in those days that in a week's time you could earn a hundred dollars, and that was really good money. So I had to leave to go back, and I had told him that I had had this job, but there was an exam coming up but he said it was all right, I said, when I can come back I'll make it up. So when I come back, you know, I went to him to make it up, and I always remember he said, "Well no need to make it up," and so forth. He said, "You got a very good grade, B+." And I said, "But maybe if I take this exam I can get an A." "Nothing wrong with B+." And so that's the way it stood. So, but he was a very good professor, you know. Then I had a professor in neurology, Dr. Green, who was a, who was excellent. And he was a man that, who really knew his stuff clinically and so forth, and I thought of him many times as I practiced over the years. And then another man who taught us, I always remember this piece of advice, it was a man by the name of Dr. Garavich, he said to us on the last day of class, he said now, he said, "You'll be graduating, you're young, you're enthusiastic, you want to go out," and he said, and you really want to rehab the world." But, he says, he said, "Just remember," he said, "And don't make the mistake," he says, "of the young minister who upon giving

his first homily, you know, tried to give the parishoners the whole Bible in one lesson.” He said, ”Just dole it out a little at a time, you know.” And it was one of the best pieces of advice in dealing with patients that you could, that happened because sometimes, you know, you just need to listen to them, hear them out, you know, reassure them and so forth. And it was so true because you’re anxious to want to do well and show them how much you know, you know.

JR: Great. So after a year at Columbia what did you do?

DH: I then had my first job at, it was then New York State Rehabilitation Hospital in West Haverstraw, New York, which is now renamed the Helen Hayes Rehab Hospital. Beautiful area, just kind of six miles south of Bear Mountain in the Catskill, probably twenty minutes away from West Point. And oftentimes on the weekends when, we only worked a five day week we-, the Hudson Bay Ferry used to come up and stop at Bear Mountain, we’d get on that for a really token, and ride up to Poughkeepsie and so forth and come back. It was just a wonderful and it was a great experience.

I was in the rehab section of that, the physical therapy department was divided: you had one section where they did all the muscle reeducation, they did all the modalities and so forth, and then this was the rehab section where you taught people how to really transfer, use crutches, stairs, manage braces and so forth, along with the strengthening exercises. We had mat classes, parallel bar, crutch management classes, and then a lot of them before graduating, we had a tour where they would have to transfer into the hospital automobile, go actually into West Haverstraw, board a train, go to the next stop, get off, and cross the street, go into a department store, and we had a whole thing where we would time them and everything and grade them and so forth, and that type of thing so it was a, it was a very well structured program.

JR: And how long were you there?

DH: I was there for a year.

JR: Just a year.

DH: And then I joined up with the National Foundation for Infantile Paralysis, they had a polio emergency in Providence, Rhode Island. And so I went from there with them, and I was in the section where I dealt with those who were in respirators, the iron lungs and so was involved in that. That was a great, great experience. I saw, there was a lady who had contracted polio and she was really a (*unintelligible word*) high level type, and she was pregnant, and they delivered her infant son in the iron lung. And that was really an amazing thing to absolutely see. And the youngster came out and had just a little weakness of the ankle, which they cast, which they casted upon. It was amazing just to see this infant with this small little cast on, but it turned out well. She held right up, you know, was apparently paralyzed for the rest of her life, but she was a remarkable lady who later went on and won two awards as Polio Mother of the Year. But she was, after coming out of the iron lung to a walking bed and then to a portable chest, but she, through dictaphones and so forth drew a portrait, put a book together and everything else. She was a marvelous lady.

JR: So how long were you in Providence?

DH: I was in Providence two and a half years, because after, the original assignment was for three months, but after the three months was up the hospital administration asked me to stay on to another department, and so I was there for two and a half years before I came back to Maine. Came back to Maine in 1957 to establish the department of Pineland Hospital, the training center, in Pownal, Maine. I had never had any experience with mental retardation, and that was a great teaching and learning experience, believe me. And I had to develop a whole new set of criteria down to evaluate these youngsters, you know, and the treatment process and so forth. Pineland at the time had between twelve hundred to fifteen hundred residents, you know, on the grounds and so that was a, we had a total, the total package we had the education, the school, department of education, we had a speech therapist, we had an occupational therapy department. And then, then we also had one of the teachers went away to get instruction in Braille and, so we could work with some of the blind patients that we had there. So it was a great learning experience. And especially at the time because my children were being born, they were young and you really develop that real sense of appreciation, that fine dividing line between so-called normalcy, and normalcy, and it was a, but a marvelous learning experience that I never regretted it.

And I left there in 1964 to come to Lewiston to establish the department at St. Mary's Hospital over here. And I have actually set up the department for the sisters at Marcotte Home, which is now D'Youville, three years before, in 1961. And so three years later they asked me to come to do this in the hospital, and so I did. I was there for almost twenty-three years before I left. And I had the opportunity to establish the department of Montello Manor Nursing Home in the fifties up there, while I was there. Then the last ten years that I practiced was, I was in a private practice situation under, over here right on Sabattus Street, underneath Doctors [Victor M.] Parisien and [Jacques R.] Dumont.

JR: Okay, and so now you're retired from that?

DH: I retired four years ago the 30th of this April.

JR: Okay, great. If we can kind of change gears a little. When you came back, I guess I just kind of want to get an impression from you of just I mean like the political scene or social scene in Lewiston. Like how did it change, how had it changed like when you came back after your years away? I guess start there-

DH: Well, amazingly I didn't see a real big change. It was, Lewiston was still politically very active, still very strongly Democratic. And of course I had, had the opportunity to have as a patient the man who they used to call Mr. Democrat here in Lewiston, Louis Jalbert. And it was largely through Louis Jalbert that I met Ed Muskie.

JR: Oh, okay.

DH: And that's how that, that's how that contact began. When I was out of the state, Ed Muskie later came as governor of the state, you know. But I had not met him personally until,

when it was through Louis Jalbert. And it was at that meeting here, and that's how it happened to, they wanted to get the picture of the two Bates men.

JR: Right, okay.

DH: Because when Louis had brought me over to introduce me to Ed, he said, "There's another Bates grad," he said, "that you should know." And so.

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

DH: Sure, no problem.

End of Side A
Side B

JR: Okay, we're on side B of the interview with David Harkins, and you were just telling me how you first ran into Muskie through your contact with Louis Jalbert.

DH: That's right. And so, at that time I had not seen a decided difference in the political scene, it was still, as I said, very, still staunch Democratic, still very politically active at the time.

JR: Okay.

DH: And my years at the hospital, we saw plenty of political activity because during Sister Rachel's tenure, she wanted to create a campus thing for the St. Mary's and then the nursing home, and one of the proposals was that they wanted to build an overpass from, connecting St. Mary's through Marcotte Home, over Campus Avenue. But they wanted to be able to close Campus Avenue off of Central to Sabattus Street, see? And so, CMMC reacted very strongly against it, politically there was an alderman that got involved, so the thing is it was forced to a citizen's referendum. And so naturally we who worked at the hospital were very active in going to city hall and speaking to the aldermen and so forth and all of that before it went to a vote. The proposal got defeated, but it was a very, it was a great active, politically active campaign, and you had, you know, some of the aldermen who were in favor of it, and others who were not, and

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JR: And when was this, about what year?

DH: This had to have been in the, I'm going to say, what, maybe 1975 probably somewhere in that-.

JR: Okay, and so they wanted to have that overpass over Campus and to build they were going to have to close off.

DH: That's right.

JR: Oh, okay, and that was what became-.

DH: So, what happened is that they felt, see, it was, to be able to do it with, it was more cost effective for them to go over than it was to go under. But when the proposal got defeated, then what they did is that they went underground with the thing and kept the street open.

JR: Okay. Yeah, actually, I was actually going to mention, I wanted to just ask you about just the relationship between CMMC and like St. Mary's, like kind of like the political infighting, of what you- what sense you have of that.

DH: That was interesting because, you know, the years that I was at Bates as a student, the college and then, what was then Central Maine General Hospital before it was CMMC, they were very close.

JR: Really?

DH: Very close. Norm Ross was a board of trust-, was the bursar here and purchasing agent for years, he was a trustee and so forth, a lot of the professors had contacts, you know, through the hospitals and so forth. And I think probably a lot of that had to do is that in those days, because Bates having been a Baptist college, and it was always in growing up I know in the town, you know, the locals used to refer to CMG as the Yankee hospital and St. Mary's as the Catholic hospital, you know, so-. But there was a very strong allegiance between CMMC and the college. And a lot of the doctors who for years were the key physicians and the, who operated the infirmary, all came from CMG.

And it was later during Rachel's tenure that she got [Thomas] Hedley Reynolds, who then was the president of the college, onto the board of directors over at St. Mary's. And, boy, that really created a furor because some of the doctors who were very, very strong CMMC, a couple of them who were Bates grads who I had known, they were quite upset about the fact that Hedley would go onto the board over here. But it was a blessing in disguise because the thing is is that, more ways than one I think that it began to unite, say, the college properly with that hospital for the first time in years. But also in the process Bates was able to negotiate the land deal that the sisters had owned where you see now Merrill Gym and the new track facilities, all the way over. That was all the sister's land, and that deal was negotiated during Hedley's tenure as part of the board. And it's interesting now that I look at and see the relationship between St. Mary's and Bates, probably today is, probably reminds me of what it was like when I was a student here at Bates and it was the college with CMMC. It's really familiar.

JR: Do you think that that transition for Bates, being more affiliated with St. Mary's, had an influence on like the community, like Lewiston's community, Lewiston's outlook on Bates?

DH: Oh, I absolutely do, I really do. Because the, it was, for years in the early years, you know, it was, it used to be that actually that St. Mary's was looked upon as the local Franco-American hospital. CMMC was kind of the, you know, the, referred to as the Yankee hospital, Baptist, and the affluent from Auburn, you know, that type of thing. And I think that's where you see now where it's much more of an intermingling, much more liberalization of views and everything else, and you're seeing much better joint cooperation than you've ever seen before.

JR: Okay, that's really interesting. I guess maybe we can go back to Muskie a little bit, and maybe what your sense of, like for example, like how, what were the exact circumstances of this meeting?

DH: This was a field day for a Democratic rally. They used to hold those annually at the, le Montagnard Club had a chalet out at No Name Pond, and they used to hold these Democratic rallies out there, and they would always bring in a prominent speaker, and this year it happened to be Ed Muskie who they brought in. Later on, again this would have to be in the seventies, Louis Jalbert got Ed Muskie to come back to be the principle speaker of a 75th anniversary for the Sisters of Charity. It was held at the Armory, because I was the emcee that night, and so forth. And I only wish that I, again I looked to see whether, see when my mother was living she was the great saver. I have family scrapbooks that go back to 1924 all the way up until her death. And so that's the reason why, but I'm sure it would be the type of thing that would be within the archives of the *Sun-Journal*.

JR: Right, yeah.

DH: It was a, it was the 75th anniversary of the Sisters of Charity here, and Louis Jalbert, and I was on the committee when Louis actually called Ed Muskie secretary in Washington to tell him that he was going to have to come back and give a speech.

JR: What was your impression of Louis Jalbert?

DH: He was a very, he was a consummate politician. He was a throwback to the Jim Curley type of politician, of Boston, because he was, he learned his politics through Louis Brann who later became governor of the state who had actually had been a disciple of Jim Curley, and so. And he was a most, most interesting guy.

I said, being a consummate politician, I remember being with him, he always would make it a point on Sunday mornings to go and have breakfast at the cafeteria at St. Mary's hospital, because oftentimes after some of the masses the local French people would go over and have breakfast, it was inexpensive and they had a good breakfast. Louis always made it a point to be there. And sometimes whoever the first few that would come in, he would go up and he would pay for the breakfast, you know, and so forth, and they'd come up to pay and they'd say, "Oh, Mr. Jalbert took care of that," you know, and so forth and all that.

I had a girl who was my secretary, and this one particular, her mother had worked in the dietary service, and Louis was in getting treatment this one day and she happened to be saying to another one of the patients who was waiting that, oh, Louis [*sic*] Chevalier was coming to town to be the principal speaker for the awards night for the Bates Mill employees. And so this girl was saying, "Oh, he is my mother's favorite, what she wouldn't give to be able to see Maurice Chevalier," you know, and so forth. And so, it was something in passing, and never thought of it, you know, the day went on. Well, Monday morning came around and this girl comes in to me and she was so excited and she's saying, "Mr. Harkins, you'll never know what happened," she said. "Saturday morning Mr. Jalbert came to our house and he had two tickets, one for me and

one for my mother to go and see, you know, Maurice Chevalier.” And so, all I kept saying to myself, “Well, there’s twenty-five votes there, there’s twenty-five votes there.” This was, this was the way that this man had operated.

He was, he was a very interesting dichotomy because he had probably as many enemies as he had friends. But I saw at this kind of grass root level a lot of the good things that a lot of people did not probably see. I knew of people coming to him who were having hard times, who had big families, that needed shoes, that needed clothing, and he would send them down to a local clothing store or a local shoe store, outfit the kids and he’d take care of it, you know. I’m sure that he got that money from other sources, but nonetheless he did it, you know. I remember a lady who had a mentally retarded youngster, and it was really an undue hardship, she had to work and to be able to care for her, it was a big decision, to be able to get into Pineland. And she had made application, there was a waiting list, so forth. She come to, I said to her, she had told me, I said, “Well, you pick up the phone, you call Mr. Jalbert. You tell him your story just as you’re telling me today.” She did that night. She got verification two days later for her child to be admitted, yeah.

And I used to, I used to go and, he’d invite me to visit with him at his home, and he was a, he had, I always remember he had probably the biggest rolodex that I’ve ever seen in my life. And he had, and he operated from that telephone every day. And, you know, when you saw him he was, like he had just walked out of Baum Bros. and all (*unintelligible phrase*), always impeccably dressed, you know, so forth. And he used to say to me, he said, you know, he said, “I learned this from Louis Brann. You may not have a nickel in your pocket, but you’ve got to dress the part.”

JR: That’s great. What sense did you have of Jalbert’s relationship with Muskie?

DH: I sensed, because they had served in the legislature together -

JR: Oh, Jalbert served that far back?

DH: That far back. And so forth, and so he was very active, so, and obviously from the standpoint of having seen, you know, having been at some of the rallies and seen actually the response that he got when they were trying to line up the emcee for the Sisters of Charity, and how, you know, he picked up the phone and called Washington and was able to get, I think that there was actually a very mutually good relationship, you know. It may have been adversarial at times, but nonetheless they, there was a certain bonding there because he was able to get things. I think that, you know, in the political career, as I’m sure that Louis probably early on may have been helpful to him at the state level, and I think that as a result of that he never forgot those political favors and loyalty, and subsequently, you know, it would reciprocally work both ways.

JR: Interesting. Do you have much of a sense of, or like impressions of other prominent Lewiston figures, like political or -?

DH: Well, of course one who comes to mind is Frank Morey Coffin.

JR: Tell about him.

DH: Well, there is a finer a gentleman who, you know, that you couldn't meet and, you know, brilliant mind, and probably who you would not associate with politics at all. And I think the shameful part is is that he never got to be governor of this state, you know, because he would have been a wonderful one in that seat, and I think he would have been a wonderful man in Washington. As it turned out, of course, you know, he's second to none from the standpoint of his role as, as, in the law field. And I think that probably the thing that may have hurt him was the fact that he didn't look like the political type, you know, if there is such a thing. I think he was just too straightforward, you know, he just came forward with so much sincerity that it was hard to believe it. But he was that type of a man. I think the world of him.

I'm on the, I'm one of the directors on the National Football Foundation, the Maine chapter, and three years ago the distinguished service award went to Frank Morey Coffin. And he, in my tenure on this board, he gave perhaps the finest speech that I've ever heard from any recipient there. He just had that audience eating out of the palm of his hand, and it was with, you know, levity and, you know, and so forth, and it was just absolutely great. So he, I have the utmost respect and regard for him. And another man was that, we mentioned earlier, was John Donovan who, and he was a bright and regular man. Those are ones that really stand out, you know, for me.

JR: How about Ernest Malenfant?

DH: Ernest Malenfant was (*unintelligible phrase*) [*laughter*]. He, when, as the gate tender to become the mayor of the city, he was, he was just the opposite end of the pole. But I think in his own right, I think Ernest was a sincere, honest man, but limited in intelligence, political know-how, you know. Easily malleable by the others that were more sophisticated in their ways.

JR: If we can talk a little more about your brothers, Barney and Bill. When, do you know about when Barney served?

DH: Yes, he would be back in the thirties.

JR: Oh wow, that long ago, okay.

DH: Yeah, see, because he was the third oldest in the family.

JR: Okay, so you guys were pretty spread out.

DH: It would be back in the thirties, '35, '38, you know, because he was still in the senate when World War One broke out. He was married and three children, and got drafted.

JR: This was WWI?

DH: Yeah, WWII.

JR: Oh, oh, okay.

DH: And then he, and he volunteered for the submarine service and so, and that, at the time he was, he had two years of law school done at St. John's. And then after the service he came back and transferred to Boston College and got his degree from B.C. Law, and then established practice in the Bangor area and then got appointed municipal court judge by, then the governor was Fred Payne.

JR: Oh wow, okay. So that long ago. So do you know if he ever had any run ins with Muskie, like maybe in his early years? He's probably like before Muskie was Senator.

DH: Probably a little before Muskie's time, yeah.

JR: Okay.

DH: I'm sure my brother Bill had connections, you know, with Muskie because Bill was politically quite active, and then having been in the newspaper business and also public relations and so forth and all of that, I'm sure Bill had contacts with him.

JR: Yeah, you don't have any stories that say something about -?

DH: But I don't have any stories of him.

JR: What years did he, like was he with the *Sun-Journal*, or the *Lewiston Sun*?

DH: Yes, the *Sun*.

JR: Or both of them?

DH: Bill, Bill started working with the *Sun-Journal* when he was a senior in high school, which was, would be the '41, '42. He graduated in '42, then was in the service and then when he came back he was married and worked, he worked a number of years at the, during my high school and college years he was with the newspaper then.

JR: Okay, and he also, did you say he, did he ever serve any political positions?

DH: No, he ran for alderman.

JR: Oh, that's right.

DH: That's right, ran for alderman against John Telow.

JR: Oh, right.

DH: John Telow was the incumbent at the time.

JR: And but he lost.

DH: Yeah.

JR: Now this is the first time you met Muskie, right?

DH: That's right.

JR: And did, what was your initial impression of him like when you first-?

DH: It was very, you know, it was very informal, very friendly. And, you know, asked me about, you know, when people are introduced as two Bates people then he wanted to know, you know, what class I graduated from and so forth and, you know, all of that. And then we talked about, then he said, well, I said, "I know someone that you know real well because he was instrumental in admitting me to Bates," and that was Milt Lindholm.

JR: Who was that?

DH: Milt Lindholm.

JR: Okay, who's that?

DH: Milton Lindholm was the Dean Emeritus of, Dean of Admissions, Emeriti from Bates. He was the dean of admissions when, who admitted me because he was I think graduated the year before Muskie, I think. Yeah, I think Muskie, was Muskie in the class of '36?

JR: Yes.

DH: Yes, I think, Milt I think was '35 I believe, the year before.

JR: And did you have any other interactions with Muskie?

DH: Other than -?

JR: Other than this one?

DH: The next relationship I had with him was at the -

JR: When you were emcee.

DH: When I was emcee for the Sisters of Charity 75th anniversary and he was the main speaker for that.

JR: Okay. Did you have a sense of, like through Muskie's years as like a senator, kind of what his relationship to Lewiston was, or like how, like maybe how Lewiston, the people of Lewiston saw him and how he helped out Lewiston, or served them I guess?

DH: Because he was a Democrat and Lewiston was so strongly Democratic, he was naturally kind of a favored son here from that standpoint. I don't recall that, basically that he, that he did a lot for Lewiston, and that's one of the things that having, having known a lot of people from Rumford and actually had a classmate who was from Rumford, they were, there was a number that was opposed to the memorial that they set up for Ed Muskie that was just dedicated about a year ago over there, because they felt that he never owned up to being a Rumford native, that he always considered Waterville his home town because that's where his, that's where he practiced law out of, you know. And so there was a lot of native Rumford people who felt very remissed about that. And that, I remember them, you know, that one of my classmates who he graduated with one, you know, talked about that very much so. But they, you know, spoke very highly of his father who was a tailor there, you know, and the family. But a lot of them felt that Muskie avoided Rumford and never considered it as his native city.

JR: I'm just curious as to just your impressions of I guess Lewiston politics, I guess like later on, like more recent, like in, and compared to like the past. Just for example, like, if you have any impressions like the new charter back in 1980.

DH: I, you know, probably at that time I would have to say that I probably, you know, got really away from the political aspect of the thing. I was, I got taken up in my work, I had to deal with the politics of being in the hospital, and so forth. And so the city politics were kind of really put on a back burner.

JR: Okay, well then how about, like I understand you come to Bates pretty much every day for coffee, right?

DH: That's right, I come regularly to, I walk early here every morning, and I work out in the Davis gym afterwards, and then usually over to the Den to, for the coffee break with some of the regulars, Don Gautier who was a classmate of Ed Muskie's, you know. Don's wife, late wife, was my seventh grade school teacher.

JR: Really, okay, yeah, right. I read a transcript of the interview we had with him. Who are some of the other regulars?

DH: One of the other regulars is a man who is retired but, Ernest Roy. He is actually a Rumford native, but who lived and worked in, at Phillips Elmet. And his connection with Bates is that he had a son [Ernest M. Ray, Jr.] who went here, graduated I think in 1986 [*sic*] [1983] and who I had forgotten until Ernie reminded me that he did a student internship with me and that I was instrumental in directing him into physical therapy, and he's a practicing physical therapist in Laconia, New Hampshire now, and so. And then of course, Bob Provencher. Bob is a retired elementary school principal who, he and I were high school classmates together, we played football together at Lewiston High. After his retirement from education, he worked for I think four years in the equipment room at, over to Bates, and then left that and then this past year worked part time as a courier, you know, transporting the students to their student teaching assignments.

JR: Oh, okay.

DH: And so he's a, he's been a regular. And of course Phil Malgram, who was an engineer who was here at Bates, and of course I've known Phil for a long time because I, his wife was a high school classmate of mine, and their two sons were contemporary with my kids, they were musicians together and so forth and all of that, so he's a, he's kind of a regular. And a number of others usually join the round table, and so we discuss all the foreign affairs and, baseball, everything, anything that happens to come up, you know.

JR: That's great. What is your impression of how, first of all how Bates has changed since, like since you came here, and also how it's relationship to Lewiston has evolved?

DH: Oh, I would say that probably the relationship now, both from a student level and I think even from an administrative level with involvement with the community is far superior than it was when I was a student here. From the student's standpoint, I think their interaction in the community is far greater than it was when I was here, there's no question about that. And I think even from the administration. And I think, you know, President [Don] Harward had a lot to do with that. And I think in the, I think in the long run it's, it really will begin to, I think it's showing signs of paying off now, but in the long run I think it will even be more so.

You still have a lot of the old diehards who think that, well, you know, Bates has amassed too much property, you know. And they fail to see that with the constructions and with students who come here and how students spend in the community and so forth, and what it does for the community, then I simply say to a lot of them, "Do you ever stop to realize that if the college wasn't here, you think this town is dead now," you know.

So it has much to gain by this, and I think that as a result of that influence with the younger generation, some of the older diehards that die off, you know, because it's interesting when you, from my standpoint is that when you talk to a lot of the local people, you know, and they say, well, something's going on, Bates has started a project, well, they got plenty of money, you know. They, for some reason or other this atmosphere of Bates is just loaded with money pervades this segment of the community. When in essence, you know, I say to them, well, if you compare Bates with Bowdoin and Colby, they're still low man on the totem pole from the standpoint of endowments, you know. Really, so it's an amazing thing.

But I think that student involvement, the administrative involvement, you know, I think with this Lewiston-Auburn Excels, I think it's really beginning to make some inroads, and I think it may be, you know, another five years or more, but you know, it will really bind and have a real telling influence I think by then.

JR: Are there any other, well like do you know any Bates alums, who are still like in the area, like from like when you came here?

DH: Yeah, there's a fellow by the name of Benoit Letendre who, I think Benny graduated a year after I did, I think he was the class of '54, yeah. He lives locally here, and his wife, Jackie, her maiden was Boucher, B-O-U-C-H-E-R, her father was a legislator in this community.

JR: Oh, yeah, J.C.?

DH: Yeah, Jean, Jean Charles, yeah. Well, Jackie and Benny married and they were both social workers for the state and are retired, you know, and live here locally, and they winter down in Fort Myers in the winter time.

JR: Really? Any others that you can think of?

DH: Let's see, who, well of course I mentioned Don Gautier, oh yeah, and there's a classmate of mine, Dom Gaccetta who lives up on Champlain Street here in Lewiston. He's a Rumford native, and he was in my class at Bates. He's retired from Scott Paper, you know. And let's see, and there's another fellow who also graduated with me, a guy by the name of Gordon Howard, and Gordon, who lives up on Montello Heights, I think it's, it may be Del Cliff Lane or, it's on Montello Heights. He's also retired.

JR: Great. Yeah, I guess I'm just about done. Just, if you have any more impressions of Muskie that you'd like to share.

DH: Well, basically those were my probably two closest contacts, you know, with him at the time. And, you know, they were very impersonal, very friendly and cordial and so forth, you know. And of course not having the, any political dealings with him, and so I didn't get a chance to see that side of him, but I followed his career and voted for him and so forth. I was disappointed that he didn't become president, you know.

JR: What do you think his legacy is for Maine, or his, you know?

DH: Well, I think it's a very positive one, you know, I really do. I think you know he really did very well, and I think, you know, from the standpoint of the state of Maine, you know, served with distinction.

JR: Okay, now besides the two you gave me, can you think of anyone else that we might want to interview?

DH: Let's see. If I don't right now, Jeremy, you know, sometimes in passing it will come, I can always give you a call, give you a call, and let you know.

JR: Yeah, we're pretty close anyway. Great, all right, well then I think I'm all set.

DH: Okay, and as I said, if this is something that you feel that the archives would be interested in -

JR: Yeah, I definitely think so. Yeah, that'll be great.

DH: Well, you're welcome to have it.

JR: Thank you very much.

DH: Because you can follow up and probably get the information from the archives of the Lewiston *Sun-Journal*, it would be there.

JR: Right, okay.

End of Interview