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Willman, Eugene oral history interview

Andrea L’Hommedieu

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Interview with Eugene Willman by Andrea L’Hommedieu

Summary Sheet and Transcript

Interviewee
Willman, Eugene

Interviewer
L’Hommedieu, Andrea

Date
October 28, 1999

Place
South Portland, Maine

ID Number
MOH 160

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Biographical Note

Eugene Willman was born September 29, 1929 in Portland, Maine. At an early age he developed an interest in photography, which he carried into his professional life, as both a newspaperman and a television cameraman. He became involved with Maine politics through his job at Channel 13 News, one of the first three news channels to hit Maine. Although his contact with Muskie was not extensive, he offers insight into Muskie’s reputation as well as his influence on Maine and national media.

Scope and Content Note

Interview includes discussion of: family history; Portland, Maine community; Muskie’s staff; Nunzi Casavola; TV and Maine media evolution; fishing with Ed Muskie; and photography.

Indexed Names

Baxter, Percival
Blake, Harold
Bradley, Bill, 1943-
Transcript

Andrea L’Hommedieu: This is an interview on October 28th, 1999 at, is it Willman & Johnson Associates, at 160 Ocean Street in South Portland with Mr. Gene Willman. Mr. Willman, could you start by giving me your full name, when and where you were born?

Eugene Willman: Well, my full name is Eugene Stephens Willman, and I was born in Portland on September 23rd, 1929. I guess that’s it? I’m still here.

AL: Could you tell me a little bit about your family life and background, as far as how many children were there in your, growing up in your family?

EW: I was actually an only child. My mother and father were divorced when I was, oh, less than two, so I really never knew my father until I got older. I do have a half brother who presently resides in Austin, Texas. I haven’t seen him in a couple or three years, I think that’s what happens. Other than that, I grew up in Portland, had a happy childhood. My mother remarried a co-worker that she was working with at the time, and he was Pop. My father, I guess when I was about six, seven, or eight, and I realized that I had two Pops. But Pop was Pop, and my father was my father.

AL: What did your mother and Pop do for occupation?
**EW:** My mother was a cashier at what was then Cumberland County Power and Light. And Pop was a, well, he had several jobs, but mostly he was a salesman and a credit manager for what started out to be Cumberland County Power and Light, and then became Central Maine Power Company, when they had an office on the corner of Elm Street in Portland.

**AL:** What was Portland like when you were growing up? Was it, as far as what we see today, how was it different?

**EW:** Well, first of all, one of the things I remember is that the movies had double features. As a kid I’d go to the movies on Saturdays, and of course all the kids went to movies on Saturdays. And there was Hopalong Cassidy, and Dale, and Roy. But mostly it was trolley cars, there weren’t, horses came in as I was probably, oh, going to high school. I do remember them taking the trolley cars, and taking them out to where there’s a mall that right now on Riverside Street now, which contains Bradlee’s. But back then it was an old farm. And they took a lot of the trolleys out in the back part of that farm and burned them because they couldn’t sell them, couldn’t get rid of them, couldn’t do anything with them. Now if you want to see anything like that you’ve got to go to the Kennebunk Trolley Museum. But basically it was a fun time. I do remember going to Old Orchard Beach on the train. I also remember going to Old Orchard Beach on an open trolley. I guess I’m getting to be an old guy here.

**AL:** As a child, did you go through the streets in downtown Portland freely by yourself? Was it safe? Was it something that a lot of the kids did?

**EW:** There were kids all over the place. I mean, we had bicycles back then when I was, say, grammar school to high school, and you traveled all over the place. We used to live on Bolton Street, which was between Brighton Avenue and Congress Street. And I would generally on Saturdays take my bike and go over to Woodford’s, pedal all the way over there to go to the movies. Wasn’t unusual for me or anyone of my generation, I don’t believe, to go hither, thither and yon, you know. You might be ten, fifteen, twenty miles from home. No great big problems as far as I could see then. But then maybe I didn’t know any better.

**AL:** Were you politically aware of politics when you were in high school?

**EW:** No.

**AL:** Did you have any feelings?

**EW:** No. I, to this day I don’t, I have no real interest in politics. When I was working for the paper, and when I was working for the television station, yes, I had to have an interest in politics because we were covering it. I don’t believe we were covering it to the point of a lot of other places, but politics in my lifetime has gained considerably. Seems like every time you turn it on, there’s somebody on television or radio that’s wanting to do this. Well, just last night was the Gore-Bradley debate up in Hanover. And when I used to work for UPI, I was there covering that back in the ‘70s, ‘60s, but -

**AL:** Do you think not having a strong interest in politics made you, made it easier for you to be
sort of an independent observer, rather than taking sides when you were reporting issues?

**EW:** To this day, I haven’t told anybody my political afflictions, whether or not I wanted to be for the Democrats or Republicans, or whatever. And I’ve always had an open mind as to which side I could be; there are good men on both sides, don’t get me wrong. And then there are others that are mnnnah, but we won’t go into that.

**AL:** How do you think that your parents’ attitudes and beliefs while you were growing up affected you, sort of shaped what your beliefs became, social and religious?

**EW:** Now you’re forcing me to think. We were, to set the scene so to speak, we were a family, we were very close. And back then, now this was prior to WWII, back then you could buy a lot of things, I think even milk was ten cents a quart or something like that. I’m not sure of the prices, but back then it was more like the milkman delivered milk to the house, and in the winter, when you went to get the milk bottle, there was two to three inches of nice cream on top that was frozen. Well, that was good. Don’t have that today. I think family was more important than anything else. It’s just that my folks, Pop and Mom, they worked, they were a working family. I probably was on my own growing up. Not that bad, but I think I got home about three-thirty in the afternoon from school and the folks got home about five, five-thirty. We had a very close family. We were, one of the things, I don’t know whether you want this or not.

**AL:** Sure.

**EW:** One of the things that my mother taught me, in a nice way, was to always put the toilet seat down and never leave it up. And I had to be stupid and say, “Why?” Then she explained that ladies like to have the seat down. Funny how things stick in your head, but that was one of them. I don’t know if that says anything. We always had a dog while I was growing up, the dog kept me company. And they were good dogs. Had cats, one or two cats. Never had a barn animal, because we, a farm animal, we were in the city proper, so couldn’t really have a farm animal, as far as I know. But we did a lot of things. We went on trips, we went on vacations together, here, there and everywhere. I had a happy childhood.

**AL:** Where did you go to school? Which schools did you attend in Portland?

**EW:** Well I started out in Nathan Clifford, grammar school, and then went up to Stevens Avenue, and then to Deering High. So really -

**AL:** What were your experiences like in school? Were you active outside of the classroom?

**EW:** No.

**AL:** Were there teachers, any teachers that ever left an impression on you?

**EW:** Never in sports, never in the school. I never really had teachers that stood out in my mind as role models or anything like that. I was pretty much an individual, or individualistic I guess. Had a lot of friends. Did a lot of things. Had a crowd that I ran with, and so forth and so on.
But I never really, I always had, ever since I was in grammar school I wanted to be a photographer.

AL: Okay, good. Where did that spark come from?

EW: Spark came from a classmate who one day said to me, saw my new camera that I’d bought. I used to have a paper route and I’d go around delivering papers, and he, his family, his house, was on that paper route. I’m going by the house one day, and I had this new camera that I’d bought with the money that I saved. Now, I say new camera. Probably, I can’t remember exactly what the devil it was, I think it was an Ansico 120. But I bought this camera, and I sort of liked it a little bit, it was like a Box Brownie. And he says, “Once you get done taking pictures, why don’t you come up the house and we’ll soup it up.” I says, “Oh, you can do that?” He says, “Yeah.”

So I went up that night and we went down in his cellar, he had a little black plastic, or in those days you didn’t have the plastic, I think he had black cloth or something in a little corner of the place, just enough room for the two of us to get in there. And he’s going up and down with the film, and he’s souping it like you used to in the old days in a tray. He turns the light on, he looks at me, he says, “oh-oh.” I says, “What?” He says, “When is the film going to come out?” He says, “It isn’t.” I says, “What’s the matter?” He says, “I developed your film in the hypo.” Well hypo is a fixer, and that destroys, or eliminates any image that you might have had on there to begin with. So rather than developing it in the developer, he developed it in the hypo, which fixed it for all time, which made it no good. So he says, “Look,” he says, “Why don’t you get another roll of film and shoot some more pictures and come on back tomorrow night and I’ll do it right.” I says, “Okay.”

I went back the next night, he did the same thing again. That made me mad. So I am now a photographer because of it. I went out the next day and bought a developing kit, took it home, made a little cubbyhole down in the cellar, started souping up film. First one was great. I don’t know what the devil ever happened to it, but it had good pictures on it. So everything started from then. I think I was in the, I don’t know what grade I was in, fifth or sixth grade I think, somewhere in there.

AL: And so, when did you have your first job as a photographer?

EW: You’re talking full time?

AL: Well, anything.

EW: Probably about, depending upon what we’re referring to, the first- I did a number of jobs for people, Christmas cards, a shot of the house. Of course, in those days everything was black and white, you didn’t have color. So a nice pretty picture of the house, time exposure taken at night, and giving them for their Christmas cards was great. I did a number of those. I also shot some kids, babies, group shots, family outings, and I’d do now and then individual shots. But the first full time job was after I came back from out of the service. And I started at a place that’s no longer in business, and that was Sullivan Photo Service. I came back on a Friday and
started on a Monday, I had two days off from the service, I had a weekend off.

AL: How long were you in the service?

EW: I was in the service five years.

AL: In what branch?

EW: Navy, I’m Popeye the sailor. I really had a good time while I was in, did a lot of things, got to see a lot of places, if you like the Arctic and the Antarctic, both poles, Mediterranean, Caribbean, a lot of fun, as a photographer.

AL: So, what year did you come out of the service and start working at the photo shop? Would it be about ‘49?

EW: Forty-eight I think it was. I think it was ‘48, ‘49, somewhere in there. I don’t know the, all I can tell you is that I worked for Sullivan for a couple of years, and then started on the paper. Worked at the paper, and then -

AL: Who hired you at the paper?

EW: That was a funny thing. One of my friends who was in the service was here. Harold Blake and I were both on the same ship. Harold was here in South Portland, and he had a friend by the name of Amory Hodan. Amory’s stepfather, not stepfather, father-in-law, not his stepfather, was the general manager of the paper. After, we had met at, Amory wasn’t aboard our ship, he was on board another ship that was based in Norfolk. And after we got out of the service, Harold, Amory and myself, we came back. And Amory was going to get married to this gal, and asked me if I’d shoot his wedding. Well, back in those days, you had to have a 4X5 camera, 4X5, that’s all there was to it. So, I had one, and I agreed to do his wedding. I shot the wedding, it came out good, made up some prints, gave them to him and so forth. The general manager of the paper was the bride’s father, I didn’t know that. I knew Mr. Hodan worked somewhere, did something, I didn’t know what it was.

So I turned around one day and, after I decided I was all done at Sullivan Photo Service, and said to myself, “Well, I’ve got to get another job,” so I went looking around, and one of the people I talked to was Gardiner Roberts, who was on the Portland paper. And he said, “Well come in tomorrow and we’ll talk about it.” So I went in, and I talked to him, and showed him some of my stuff and so forth and so on. And Gardiner was looking for somebody, a darkroom person; low man on the totem pole, weekend shift, the night shift, everything else. So he went in to the general manager of the paper and says “I’d like to hire somebody.” The general manager says, “Wait a minute, I’d like you to hire somebody too, if you’re going to hire a photographer.” Well I guess they about split their guts when they found out they were both toting for the same guy, although I didn’t know it at the time. That’s a story that was told to me years ago by one of the people who was there. “You know how you were hired, don’t you?” “No, well, I thought Gardiner hired me.” “Oh no, you were hired because two of them wanted you.”
AL: And how long did you stay with the paper?

EW: I was only on the paper’s staff about a year and three quarters, almost two years, before they booted me upstairs.

AL: And “upstairs” was the news station.

EW: Television station. I didn’t really have too much of a choice in that, I was the only one. They wanted a photographer on the staff to move upstairs, and because I had had the movie experience and knew about movie cameras and so forth and so on, they booted me upstairs because I was the only one that had the experience.

AL: Was this news channel thirteen?

EW: Uh-huh, put them on the air on March 4th, 1954.

AL: So that, they went on, were there any other TV stations?

EW: One. Channel six was on before we were. And channel fifty-two I think was building at the time. Channel fifty-two didn’t make it though, bank walked in and shut them down.

AL: What was your responsibility at news channel thirteen? Were you to go out and, in the field, and work the cameras, and bring the tape back, and make it ready for a news cast?

EW: Oh, how young you are. Tape? Tape? Didn’t have tape back then, it was film; sixteen millimeter movie film, black and white. You took it back and you processed it in a big machine that made a heck of a lot of noise. When I was hired I was taken up to the people who, I had made, I said, I have only one stipulation, I would like to hire, I would like to buy, and have charge over, and oversee the ordering of the equipment that we’re going to have to do this work.” They said, “Fine, that’s no problem.” The first day I walked in, I had been given this space because it had water and air connections in there. I had been given the space that used to belong to Guy P. Gannett, which was the owner of the paper. He had an office on the fourth floor, and because that office had water and air connections, they gave it to me because it was necessary for the processing.

So, when I walked in and opened the door to the space, there’s all these boxes, one on top of another, piled high. And I went down to the office and I asked them, I says, “What the devil is all that stuff in there?” And they said, “Oh, we took a trip and went down to a television station in Atlanta, Georgia, and they gave us a list of the things that we should have to start that.” Well, let me tell you that when I left the station nineteen and a half years later, there were two boxes, two or three, that weren’t even used, was, that were still sitting there. It was a waste of time. But I had a good time there, worked my butt off probably more than I should have. But that’s, that’s anything, you know, any job you run into that.

AL: What was your favorite thing about the job?
EW: About the what?

AL: About the job? What is it that motivated you?

EW: Well, let me say this: to start with I didn’t like the television job. I wanted to go back on the paper, always did, for a number of reasons. But after a while it grew on you, and you said to yourself, “Well, I’m stuck with it, I might just as well keep on doing it.” I think the biggest thing was, whether I like to admit it or not, the biggest thing was being sort of in the forefront. I used to have a favorite expression that I’d say to the wife. She’d say, “Well, I didn’t know where you were. Where were you last night?” You know whatever. You know, all you got to do is turn on the radio or the television and listen; you’re going to find out where I’m at.

So, yeah, it was true, you were there, you were in the news. You were part of the news. You were what was connecting, or bringing the news to the general public. And when I left, I worked for a number of places, one of which was, the television station, the newspaper, the television station, and the United Press International. And when I left UPI, the thing I missed the most was the camaraderie between the members of the media. I don’t have that here, but I’ve mellowed. I don’t mind it any more, but there are still times when I get a call from a voice on the other end of the line I still remember. Yeah, actually, that’s nice. You work, it’s like shipmates, or people you went to war with, or something like that. You’re always remembering them, always.

AL: Close bond?

EW: Oh, very close. And I think that’s probably one of the reasons that I was, that I liked after a while doing the news side of it. I miss that here, but I make more money doing this than I ever did there. So, six to one, half a dozen to another. If I had it all to do over again, would I have done it that way? No. Knowing what I know today I’d have quite, started this business. And if I was twenty years younger, or twenty-five years younger, yeah, I’d be doing a lot more here. As it is I’m just mellowing out.

AL: So what was your relationship like with Nunzi Casavola?

EW: Nunzi Casavola.

AL: What was he like?

EW: Hell of a news man. Knew a lot of people. He had been in the service and my understanding he came back a major. He was in the OSS overseas, and very easy to work for. He’d been there, done that.

AL: Was he the one who introduced you to Ed Muskie?

EW: I got introduced to Ed Muskie sort of a round about way. About two-thirty in the morning in my apartment, the phone rings. The wife answered it and gave it to me, and says, “It’s Nunzi.” When I answered the phone, I says, “Hello?” And all I could hear on the other end was this voice saying, “Get your butt in gear, get in here.” And I says, “Get in where?” “Get in the
station, we’re going to Waterville.” I don’t know, “What the devil’s in Waterville?” He said, “Ed Muskie just won the governorship. Get your butt in here.”

So at about five a.m. in the morning, it’s not even daylight yet, I’m sitting at the kitchen table with Nunzi and Jane, Ed’s wife, and they’re, Nunzi and Jane are talking back and forth. Now they knew each other because Nunzi and Ed had worked in the Office of Price Administration or something in Portland years before, so they knew each other. But Ed was in some other house somewhere doing an interview with somebody from the national press, and we were waiting for Ed to come back. And in between questions and answers on Nunzi’s part, the phone just kept ringing and ringing. People calling, “Congratulations,” “You won,” and all that was going on. So we sat there for about a half, three quarters of an hour, waiting for Ed to come back. He never came back.

So after Jane had gotten, gotten dressed, everybody was still sleeping, you know, young-Ed comes toddling out, he was about three or four. Steve, he comes toddling out. We woke him up because the phone kept ringing and we were talking in the kitchen. Well, after Jane put him back, then she went, she got dressed, and so forth and so on. We never did do an interview with Ed because he never got back, we did an interview with Jane as the state’s first lady. And in order to do that we had to take her across the street to somebody else’s house, this was a third one, so that we could have some quiet and the phone wouldn’t keep on ringing. And then we came back to Portland, and that’s how I got introduced to Edmund Muskie, Edmund Sixtus Muskie.

**AL:** What were your first impressions of the Muskie family, meeting them in the dawn hours?

**EW:** Family like yours and mine, you know. Sleepy, been up all night, full of exhilaration. You can’t help, they had, in Waterville they had a Cape Cod, small house, you know, it wasn’t a large mansion or anything. He was the governor of the state, well, governor elect, and he lived in a small Cape Cod, just like anybody else. I didn’t know it, but I found out later he was a practicing lawyer up there in Waterville, in his hometown. And, well, it’s not really his hometown I guess, Rumford was. Then I got to meet his mother, and the family, and his father, aunts and uncles galore.

**AL:** Did you have a chance to get to know his mother or father at all?

**EW:** Oh yeah.

**AL:** I haven’t met many people who had met them. Did you have impressions, what were they like?

**EW:** When he won re-election he was with his mother, I believe, up at, they had a camp in, the father had a camp. His father’s camp was on a lake. And I can’t remember where the devil that lake was, but I think I could drive you there. I don’t know, to this day I don’t know the name of it.

**AL:** Is it near Rumford or in the Waterville area?
EW: No, this was Rumford.

AL: Bear Pond?

EW: Just south of Rumford.

AL: Bryant Pond?

EW: I don’t know. When he won reelection I drove up there with the news car and did an interview with the mother. I say did an interview, I don’t know who the newsman with me was at the time, I think it was probably Harry Marble, but I wouldn’t swear to it. But we did the interview, and this little old lady was grey-haired and wonderful. “Oh, would you like some coffee? Would you like some tea? Here, have a biscuit, made these this morning.” Ed’s father at that point wasn’t too healthy, as I understand. But then, when the devil was the next time? I don’t know.

AL: Did you maintain a relationship with him over the years? Did you, did it, did you become so you knew each other? Were there circumstances under which you would come together, rather than media?

EW: Yes and no. It was always in my capacity that I’d have to get a picture of him or do something, or this, that, and the other. Know him, yes. Like him, yes. As a person, yes. As a politician, to this day I would lean towards, yes, but I really don’t know. He shocked me when I ran into him and he came out saying that the Vietnam War should end. And I think to myself, “What the devil’s going on here?” He had the ability to turn around, to talk to people. I swear to God that if you had the opposite ideas on any issue from his, that if you talked with him for fifteen or twenty minutes, there’d be a question in your mind about your belief. He had the ability to talk to practically anybody and really feel them out and understand what it was, and then put an argument up against it. And I’ve only seen that in two people, and one of them was Ed. You know who the other one is?

AL: No.

EW: George Mitchell.

AL: Really.

EW: And George was with Ed, part of his campaign staff, along with Coffin and Tom Delahanty. Insofar as getting to know him personally, enough so that we were on a first name basis, yes. But I mean, outside of the news, I don’t know. I could see him on the street, and we could stop and talk and shoot the breeze, and so forth and so on. But I don’t think that, I don’t think that there was anything outside of that. I will say that when he became Secretary of State, we were in Portland when we got the news that he was coming up here. And he was going to land at the Brunswick Naval Air Station and then motor from there up to the State House to address the legislature. Well, when I got down to the, when I got down to the Naval Air Station,
AL: Do you have any stories that might illustrate your time as a newsman, sort of situations or a particular assignment you had that sticks out in your mind as to what made it a fun thing to do.

EW: A fun thing to do?

AL: Well.

EW: Oh, let me go back to that story about Muskie. He was going in to the Brunswick Naval Air Station, and as I said, he was going to be speaking to the Maine state legislature. When we got there at the Brunswick Naval Air Station, the security department of the Secretary of State’s office was already there. And they had set up a point that they were going to put all the media over to the side behind ropes, you’ve probably seen them before, while Muskie came in. And when he got off the plane he was going to shake hands with the commandant of the base, and so forth and so on, and a few others. I says, “Why can’t we get pictures over there?” to this guy. And he says, “No, you’re going to be here.” And I said, “Yeah, but he’s coming to see us, he’s not coming to see the base commander, for God’s sakes.”

Well, it got involved in a little bit a heated thing. I was pushing to get a little bit closer and get some pictures that were meaningful other than, “There he is off the plane, see him? He’s the third one over, that dot over there.” I mean, we were pretty far back, and the rest of the media, and there must have been fifty of us there, they were all saying the same thing. And the PR gal for the base was a, I believe, a lieutenant, and she was pretty hard pressed. And she was sympathetic to our cause, but she was saying, “Well, it’s out of my hands.” And this young guy from the Secret, I don’t know, the Secret Service or state house security, Secretary of State’s office security force, came over and said, “Now, this is the way it’s going to be, and you guys are going to be here, and that’s all there is to that. Period. We’re going to have his car out here.” “Oh, now you’re going to put the car in front of us so we can’t get to see Muskie.” “Well, he’ll be walking over to the car, and that’ll be the time that you can get to him.” I said, “Great.” I got really ticked off at this guy, and I told him so. But anyway, that was an individual point.

After the senator, well, secretary, and his wife got off the plane, they went through this receiving line of these commander, vice commander, deputy commander, and the city manager, this manager, that manager, and they started for the car. Well, their car was in front of us about, probably ten or fifteen feet in front of us, and Jane got in the car. And I’m still shooting away, and finally I said, “Ah, this is bull,” just put my camera down, and I just gave a wave. And Ed was just about to get in the car, looked right across the hood of that thing and says, “Jane, come out here, here’s Gene.” Jane came out, they came out- they came right up to where we were. This guy’s going nuts, he looks at me, he says, “Who the hell is he?” You know. But, came over, I shook his hand, congratulated him, congratulated Jane. She says, “How is it up here?” I said, “God, you’re going to be great.” But it’s times like those that made me feel good. The other times, no. The time, I was wearing a beeper, and I was attending a graveside ceremony, former, well, Governor Longley died. The cotton-picking beeper went off. Oh. And it was real quiet, minister was speaking, I hadn’t shut it off. Didn’t feel too good about that one.
AL: What role do you think that TV played in Ed Muskie’s election in ’54?

EW: Very, very, very little.

AL: Really? Because it was so new?

EW: I had been working for the television station since January. That was, well, to answer your question, I said to Mr. Casavola, Nunzi, when he called, “Who the hell is Ed Muskie?” I didn’t know, I wasn’t involved in politics. I had been working to put the station on the air. Here it was November, December, and we’d had an election? Who’s Ed Muskie, I didn’t know. So at that time, not too much. Television hadn’t got to the point, newspapers were king, television and radio hadn’t got to the point of pulling the media, doing as much as they did. Our election night coverage I believe was, I’m reaching, but if it was a half hour of results, I believe it was just the news results, saying that he won in the regular news period, because back then you didn’t have the electronics that you have today, the instant. . . .

End of Side A
Side B

AL: We are now on side two of the interview with Gene Willman. And you were saying?

EW: Nobody in the media outside of the newspapers was set up to give results of elections back in ‘54. I’m sure that there were probably stations that were doing it locally, but not state wide. The only ones that were doing it state wide were the newspapers. It grew from that.

AL: Do you remember if, when he ran for re-election, did he use television in ‘56? And was it, I’ve heard from some others that his appearance on television was a very positive one.

EW: Oh yeah, yeah.

AL: How did he come across on television?

EW: The very same way he did in person. He’d ask a question, he’d get an answer, and then, he came across Lincolnistic, okay? There’s no other word for it. He thought about it, thought about the person’s question, answered them. He was very straightforward. I don’t think that you could have said, that anyone could have said that, “Ah, he’s full of bull, he’s lying.” No, I don’t think you could have said that. But, I could be biased in my opinion on that.

AL: Are there others that you know from that time period? Did you know Frank Coffin at all, or have impressions of him?

EW: Uh-huh.

AL: What were they?

EW: Frank was something else. You never knew what he was thinking. Frank always was
non-descriptive about anything. But he would get back his feelings or his answers to the person that was, the person who it had derived from. In other words, Frank would tell Ed, “Don’t think you ought to do this,” then he’d tell him why. He wouldn’t tell anybody else. Very, very stylistic, knew exactly what he was doing. That was a hell of a crew; Ed, Frank, Don. They had about five or six guys.

**AL:** Tom Delahanty?

**EW:** Yeah, Tom was there.

**AL:** I don’t know if Dick McMahon was mayor at that time?

**EW:** No. No, but this, these guys were from the old school, they had values that they upheld and wanted to do it right. Maine had a saying, “As Maine goes, so goes the nation.” Hah! Margaret Chase Smith I knew very well.

**AL:** What did you think of her?

**EW:** The same as anybody would think; very savvy lady, no nonsense, loved to relax, sit down and put her feet up. And that’s what she did when she came back here to Maine. I can’t imagine the pressure that’s on those people down there. As I said, I don’t like politics, never did, but I covered an awful lot of them. You probably never heard of May Craig?

**AL:** Yes.

**EW:** Did you? Another little lady who was no nonsense, knew what she was doing, covered it real well, like Helen Thomas today. But, insofar as the inner workings of the Democratic or Republican parties back then, I know nothing. I do know that I wish that, I wish that Ed had had a chance to become the president, or the vice president. I think a lot of things would have changed. But, how do you know? Everybody puts their faith in somebody and then the first thing you know, “Ah, they did this and they did that, a deal had been made.” I don’t know how many deals that Ed might have made on the table or under the table, or whatever. But I think he was a very honest guy, and if he thought so, he’d tell you, which is why I said I was a little bit shocked about his view on the Vietnam War after it had been on a while, and, turned out to be right.

**AL:** Talking about Ed Muskie and his strengths and his weaknesses, what do you think his strengths and his weaknesses were?

**EW:** Honesty, for one, in himself or what he portrayed. Weaknesses, I don’t know. Two things stand out in my mind. The night in Augusta when Hathaway came out for Kennedy rather than Muskie in his support, and Ed took that with a grain of salt, mad, but took it with a grain of salt, and the other, gone out of my head. What was the other *(unintelligible phrase)*?

**AL:** Did you ever see his temper, the legendary temper?
EW: Oh yeah, yeah. But, you know, he had a temper, I guess his temper and mine were more or less the same. I explode, and I think he did too. But fifteen minutes later. It's over, you get it out of your system, you get rid of it. I don’t know, but, I’ve seen it, you knew he was mad at something or somebody, or whatever. Can’t place what the devil it was. But basically, his attitude was, “Well, let’s see what’s around the room here.” He was a happy, I mean, I don’t think he was ever really down for any length of time that I ever knew him. He was always, “Well, let’s see what’s up ahead, around the corner.”

AL: I’ve read that you taught Stephen Muskie a lot about photography, is that true?

EW: Not to my knowledge.

AL: No?

EW: No. I don’t know where you saw that.

AL: I saw it. It was in the book, Marvelous Man.

EW: I think what he -

AL: Did I mis-

EW: I think what he referred to there was to my being there that morning that Ed was elected, and young Steve coming out might have been something in his brain to see the camera. I did explain a few things about the camera to him that day, that morning, but that’s one split, that’s one half-hour out of a lifetime. I mean, how do you say that that’s teaching somebody? No. The next time I saw Steve was when he was, well, Steve had always been around, but then Steve got to be on a paper down here in Biddeford, on the Biddeford paper. And I got to see him down there and talk to him and so forth and so on. But by that time I had, I was either in the process or had left the television station, and I was then working for United Press International. I took a couple of pictures of him, and he called me up one day and asked if he could use the picture that I had of him for the back of his book. And I said “Sure, go ahead.” I don’t know, teaching? No. Emulating that this is the way to go? No, I don’t think so, unless it was in his head. I just don’t know.

AL: Who were some of the other people you worked closely with over the years?

EW: You mean politicians, or?

AL: No, other newsmen.

EW: Well, for a number of years there were only two of us photographers with, from the station, television station thirteen. And my partner there was Bill Goulet. Bill Goulet gets a call like I did, “Hey, you want to go fishing?” “Yeah.” “Okay, come on up to the farm,” that was Nunzi, Nunzi lived on the Dutton Hill Road up in Gray, and Bill and I had been there, Bill knew how to get there. And Nunzi said to Bill one Saturday afternoon, “Come on up, we’ll go fishing
up in the stream.” So he goes up, walks in, didn’t see Nunzi anywhere. Parks his car, walks into the kitchen, there’s this six-foot-six state trooper looking at him. Bill says, “Whoops, hello, looking for Nunzi. Trooper says, “He’s in there.” Nunzi and Ed Muskie were out the back yard fishing, and they invited Bill up to go fishing with them. Bill was an avid fisherman. So that was a part about Nunzi and Ed, they were just down to earth, go get another fisherman, go get some fish. They’d parked the governor’s car in the shed underneath the cottage so that nobody else could see it from the road.

AL: Keep the privacy.

EW: Yeah, just the three of them having a good time. Bill was also the guy that Ed said “I’m going to run again” to, and who broke that on one of his reelections, at the Blaine House, up in Augusta. Very down to earth. We were a tight crew, Nunzi, Bill, Harry Marble, God, a number of guys. Start thinking about them, you start confusing this, that and the other. My mind, what mind?

AL: Did you know Hal Gosselin, from Lewiston?

EW: I knew of him, I didn’t know him. I knew that he was pretty influential, but other than that, no. Probably run into him a half a dozen times, you know. But back then, they’re from the other company, we don’t talk to them. One of those deals.

AL: What do you think, or what do you feel that Senator Muskie’s lasting contribution will be to Maine?

EW: Well, I think he stands in with an awful lot of other people who probably you could say the same thing about. But I think he stands as an example, as do others, of the little guy can still win, the little guy can attain great heights. Look at the crew that he had to start with; himself, Frank Coffin, George Mitchell, Don Nicoll. I mean, look where they are today, it’s amazing. I think that little situation on his part of starting out and winning the governorship, I think that had an impact, an awful big impact.

How far will it go, will people remember this two hundred, a hundred and fifty, three hundred years from now? Who knows. Then you think back, well, how about Governor Percival P. Baxter, did he have an impact? Yeah. Why? Well, Baxter State Park, for one, Katahdin and all that other business, but then, look at the city of Portland, Baxter Boulevard. Do politicians have interests, do they benefit people? Yeah, some do, some don’t. I think Ed will be remembered by an awful lot of people, and set up as an example of faith; he did it, you can do it too. Down to earth, had vices, like we all do, but basically, if he can do it you can do it. I just never tried.

AL: Is there anything that I haven’t covered already or asked you, that you feel would be important to talk about at this time, about your times or about Senator Muskie?

EW: I have no idea. We could probably sit here and talk about it all day and then five minutes after you’re gone, “Oh yeah, I remember,” you know. I don’t know. Suffice to say that I think that I was very lucky starting out and being with the television station, and having the crew that
we did. But, because television was growing, at that point, we were the only ones in the state. I say we, there was probably three television stations, all right, there were probably three photographers, I think there was six of us in all, at three television stations. And one television station only had one photographer, period. So I mean, well, when you’re starting out this way, it’s a growing business, you’re the only one.

Did we get help from people? Yeah, we did. State troopers, I knew hundreds of state troopers in the state, because I was the only one at an accident scene who would show up with a camera, or whatever, yeah. Politicians knew us by our first name because we were a connection to getting them publicity, perhaps. I think it’s much more prevalent today, that, you’ve heard about the Washington spin? Well yeah, politicians have learned to spin stories, and spin news people, and so forth and so on. I think it was a growing lesson back when we started, there wasn’t any other game in town. I mean, “Oh yeah, I saw you on TV last night.” “Oh you did, what channel?” You know. Holy cow, that’s something new, you know. I think anything new, it’s like the Internet today, okay? Somebody comes up with a way for a politician to get on the Internet and get the word out, yeah, that’s going to be the new “in-thing.” But that was what we were back then. Whether or not it did anybody any good, I don’t know. Familiarity with the system after a while, by the time, twenty years later, by the time I got out of the business I think I could see a little bit of it rubbing off.

But back then I knew the politicians, the politicians knew me, I knew the judges, I knew the police, the local police, the state police, the area towns, the chiefs, the captains. Today I don’t know anybody. But back then, yeah, I could call somebody up and say, “Hey, you having a party tonight, or something going on over there, you got an accident,” or, you know, I did. And I’m sure that that is going on with some of the members of the media today. But now, back then we were the only guys, and we were on practically twenty-four hours a day because we were the only ones there. Now you have crews that rotate on seven or eight hour schedules, so it’s a little bit different today. You might, the same photographer might not show up at every political gathering, whereas back then we did. We showed up for the Democrats, we showed up at the Republicans, we showed up for Green Peace Party, we showed up for the reformers, we showed up for the malcontents, whatever. And that was it. Nowadays, I don’t know. We had a weatherman, you see all these weather people now, we had a weather man that did every single weather show on the station from eight o’clock in the morning until midnight. You don’t get that today, they just wouldn’t do it. But Bob did it, Bob O’Rill. But that was back then. Nowadays things are different.

AL: And you enjoy having your own photography studio here?

EW: Do I enjoy it? Yeah, yeah, this is the best thing that’s ever happened to me.

AL: Is it sort of, for what reason, the independence, and the keeping your own hours sorts of things, or?

EW: Well, you got to understand; I have never had a job that anybody else has ever had before me. When I worked on the newspaper, that, perhaps the newspaper was the only one, when I first started on the paper. But then I was only there a year, a year and a half, and I went up to the
television station, nobody had that job before. When I left the television station to go with United Press International, nobody had that job before. We created it, or it created me, or whatever. This job here, I’m in partnership with another photographer, who isn’t here, he’s off doing a job. But we’re individuals, we’re not working as a business together, we’re each doing our own thing. Yes, I like the independence. I like the hours, I can come and go as I please, I don’t have to depend upon this business. I could retire, I should retire according to the wife. I don’t feel like doing it, I feel like I could still go on for nineteen or twenty years. But, you’re getting to be an old guy, you know, walk down the street and break my hip, then I won’t be able to work. No, I don’t know. Yes, I like this. And knowing what I know today, if I’d done it twenty-five years earlier, yeah. But you have to take in the considerations that were back then. I was raising a family, had commitments to make, commitments to meet. I couldn’t do it. So, I couldn’t have done it then, I can do it now. It’s nice, I like it.

**AL:** Thank you very much.

**EW:** You’re welcome.

_End of Interview_