

Interview with Jean Larson and Bob Rush by Andrea L'Hommedieu

Summary Sheet and Transcript

Interviewee

Rush, Bob

Larson, Jean

Interviewer

L'Hommedieu, Andrea

Date

August 26, 2000

Place

Houlton, Maine

ID Number

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Biographical Note

Bob Rush was born November 10, 1920 in Houlton, Maine. His parents were Mathilda McGloughlin Rush and James Murray Rush. He lived in Canada for eight years and then moved to East Hodgdon, Maine. He went to school in Hodgdon until 1937 when he transferred to Houlton High School and graduated in 1939. After graduating, he worked on his family's farm and earned money at a garage. After being inspired by Franklin Roosevelt in the 1930s, Rush began to get politically involved in his community and was an early supporter of Ed Muskie in the 1950s. In 1974, he was elected to the Maine legislature and worked for Muskie in Washington, D.C.

Jean Larson was born September 9, 1925 in Houlton, Maine. Her parents were Frank and Jenny McGloughlin and her father worked in potatoes. As she grew up, she became involved in local politics as one of the few Democrats in Houlton. She was also an early Muskie supporter, and over the years served on the Democratic State Committee.

Scope and Content Note

Interview includes discussions of: Rush's family background; the Great Depression; Franklin D.

Roosevelt and his influence on Rush; Democratic Party in Maine in the 1950s; George McGillicuddy, “Mr. Democrat”; Larson’s family background; Harry Truman; Houlton, Maine in the 1950s; Rush’s and Larson’s first encounter with Ed Muskie; Jane Muskie; Muskie’s baked bean suppers; Jim Pierce; Don Nicoll; Aroostook County Committee; Ken Colbath; King Harvey; George Mitchell; Muskie’s jokes; bullet voting; 1972 presidential campaign; and the Manchester, New Hampshire incident.

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Transcript

Andrea L'Hommedieu: This is an interview with Jean Larson and Bob Rush on August the 26, the year 2000 in Houlton, Maine at Jean Larson's home at 64 Park Street, and I'm Andrea L'Hommedieu. I think I'll start with you, Mr. Rush. If you would, could you give me your full name, when you were born and where?

Bob Rush: Robert R. Rush, Robert Richard Rush that is, born November the 10th, 1920 in Houlton, Maine right here in Memorial Hospital.

AL: So did you grow up in Houlton?

BR: I did not, I lived in Canada for eight years.

AL: Your first eight years, or -?

BR: First eight years of my life I lived in Canada. My father moved to East Hodgdon, Maine in 1928 just in time for the big Depression to hit us. March in 1929.

AL: And what were your parents' names?

BR: My mother's name was Mathilda McGloughlin Rush and my father's name was James Murray Rush.

AL: And what did they do for a living?

BR: Farmed.

AL: And what kind of farming?

BR: Well, in Canada you mostly harvested wood and sold wood on this farm. Then we moved to East Hodgdon, Maine and we raised potatoes and oats and cattle.

AL: And so you came back to this area when you were eight years old.

BR: We come back to Houlton, Maine, Hodgdon, Maine is the next town area near here, in 1928.

AL: Do you have memories of the Depression years?

BR: Do I ever. I'd rather not remember them. We lived, we moved over in 1928. My father borrowed money at ten percent interest and we hit the Depression. We lived in a house that was not finished, it had no basement in it, no electricity, and I do remember the Depression. And a lot of people don't. Those that don't, (*unintelligible phrase*), what was it Truman said, they'll live to remember, they'll do it over again, those that don't remember will do it over again. So you people have something coming to you. I hate to say that, but that's.

AL: So, did you go to Houlton schools?

BR: I went to Hodgdon schools until 1937, then transferred to Houlton High School and graduated from Houlton High School in 1939.

AL: And what did you do after graduating?

BR: Back to the farm, went to work. Well, I had a job at a garage for, since I g-, when I graduated. I went to work at (*name*) Motor Company, washed cars and greased cars, and I worked two nights a week and every other Sunday for eight dollars a week. Had a job, though.

AL: And were there any teachers that influenced you when you were growing up?

BR: Well, not really, not -

AL: Or people, not teachers or anyone in the community that -?

BR: Not really, just had a hard time scraping out a living.

AL: When did you become politically aware or interested? Were your parents politically involved at all?

BR: Not really, but I, when Franklin D. Roosevelt came along in 1933 that's when I got interested in politics. And of course that made me a Democrat for the rest of my life, FDR.

AL: What was the Hodgdon and Houlton community like politically, did you have a sense of how you fit into the community with your beliefs?

BR: Democrats were so scarce it was terrible. You were almost an alien.

AL: Do you remember Louis Brann being governor?

BR: Just remember that, yes, I was about thirteen at the time. I remember him being elected in 1932 and FDR being elected in '32. First president I voted for was FDR and I couldn't vote for him until 1944, had to be twenty-one. Didn't vote for him until 1944. Truman was the next one.

AL: What um- who were the, when you got a little bit older and more aware and interested, who were some of the people in this area that were prominent politically?

BR: We didn't have a, the only one we had was Tom Doherty that was politically prominent. There was only three or four Democrats in the whole town. We had, we didn't, well what, in '54 is about the first we ever organized to get going. Ed Muskie caused that. (*Unintelligible phrase*), it was a great time, we had a lot of fun.

AL: Now who was Tom Doherty and what did he do?

BR: He was an attorney and he was my wife's great uncle that brought my wife up, Tom and Mrs. Doherty, so he was about the only Democrat around here at the time.

AL: Do you think that he had an influence on you?

BR: Somewhat, yeah, somewhat. I automatically went for FDR, he did something. Maybe everything wasn't right but he did, he did get her going.

AL: Did Mr. Doherty, did you talk political, politics with him?

BR: No, I didn't even know him back in those early days, no. I didn't know him but I knew who he was.

AL: Did you have any brothers or sisters?

BR: I had one brother and five sisters. They're all older than I am, all dead but two, and me, myself, (*unintelligible word*). People don't, people can't seem to realize what it was like in the Depression. There were so many people that well we're all dead, practically, who all survived it and, it's really an experience to go through.

AL: What would you say to someone my age who maybe has read some history of the Depression but hasn't lived through it, what sort of wisdom, or -?

BR: I don't believe that reading about it you could ever conceive of what we had to go through. Well we had, I won't say that we ever wanted for food. I lived on a farm, we had lots of eggs and butter and we had lots to eat, (*unintelligible phrase*). But there was just no-, nothing left for entertainment, nothing to do if we did have any money I guess. But when FDR came along he gave us hope. I got a friend by the name of Paul McGillicuddy, he got a job when the NRA come, first paying job he ever got. And he's eighty-six now or seven, eighty six I guess, and he remembers that. You know, people say that Clinton and Bush and Reagan are responsible for the good times today. They're not at all, FDR is. All the programs FDR started,

there's about ten of them still in force right now starting with Social Security and FIDC and many of them, Triple A, Agriculture Adjustment Act. And it's the Social Security that's making good times in this country today. Can you imagine anybody my age that hadn't been for Social Security, sixty percent of them wouldn't have a thing today.

Those young people don't realize that, they say, oh, they're being taxed to death. I had a friend was complaining about taxes one time, Clinton was getting elected, and he's a Republican. And I said, "The inheritance is six hundred thousand dollars now, up to six hundred thousand, but when Clinton gets in we're going to walk her right down to two hundred thousand." Well that guy, pretty near drove him crazy. He was going to his lawyer and his accountant to get rid of his money before he died. And finally I said to him one day, I said, "How about those boys have died in the Battle of the Bulge, they'd like to be back here paying taxes."

AL: Did you know George McGillicuddy?

Jean Larson: Oh yes.

BR: Oh yes. Good friend of ours.

JL: Mr. Democrat.

AL: He was called Mr. Democrat?

BR: Did you get a recording from him?

AL: I was unfortunately not able to before he passed on.

BR: Oh, that's too bad.

AL: I, so I was hoping you could tell me a little bit about him so that he in some sense is a part of this project because I thought he would be very important to talk to.

BR: Yeah, he would be.

AL: Where did he come from?

BR: Well, he's a farm family and they're a big family. And they live, they were born in Amity and lived in Littleton and finally his father went into the coal and wood business and they moved to town. George was a Democrat from the word go, wasn't he?

JL: Before I was born I understand.

BR: Yeah, well, George is a loyal one, yeah, so -

JL: He ran for different offices, too.

BR: He ran for different offices too.

JL: And he ended up postmaster. LBJ.

BR: Yeah, we finally landed a job. I got to be clerk of the courts and he got to be postmaster. I got elected to the job and I come right off the farm, I didn't know any more, if I was subpoenaed from a complainer, whether I was a ward of arrest when I went in there. Don't know a heck of a lot more yet. But we had a lot of fun. I lived in a great time in life, for God's sakes, from the horse and buggy to the jet age and the atomic age. You know that more has happened in my lifetime than all the time, beginning of the time. That we know about, maybe there has been other civilizations but I don't know about it. What a time to live, eh?

AL: Jean, maybe I'll go back and I'll get your background, and then we'll talk about some common things that you can both respond to. Could you tell me your full name and, including your maiden name, and where and when you were born?

JL: Jean McGloughlin Larson. I was born in Houlton at the (*name*) Hospital, I was born in September, on September 9th, 1925.

AL: And did you grow up in this community?

JL: Yes, well, my father and mother were Canadians and daddy came over in 1926 and they lived across the (*unintelligible word*) border. And then mother came over in 1927, and I was two and so I don't remember that. But I remember around when I was four years old of living in Charles Street right across from Uncle Tom's, as we used to call him, Uncle Tom Doherty and Aunt Lucy Doherty. And then Ann arrived and we've been friends from way back then. And I have no brothers or sisters, I'm an only child, my parents are dead.

AL: What were their names?

JL: Frank and Jenny McGloughlin. And my father was a great friend of his father's and the Rush boys so I've known him all my life. And daddy was in potatoes. In those days contract potatoes. He supplied the money for the fertilizer and, to some farmer, and he had different farmers that, over the years, and then he got, what, a percentage or something?

BR: I contracted with him one year myself.

JL: Did you?

BR: Yeah.

JL: Okay, and it, then they got a certain percent, daddy got a, I never did know, certain percentage of potatoes. And I remember one time with potatoes bringing in Bob. He used to come and call on me, not because of me but because of Anne, his wife. And she was away to college and he'd always come and mother always had apple pie for him. And this day he came, daddy was kind of low, and I've always remembered it. That potatoes were \$2.75 a barrel and

daddy was holding out for \$3 a barrel and the bottom went out of the potato business and he hauled them to the starch factory, was it Bob? Yeah, and Bob came in this Sunday and he, daddy was telling him and he said, "My god, Frank." He said, "You, for twenty-five cents a barrel you held out?" He said, "Boy I'd never do that." And I've remembered that all my life. And that's how far back the Rush boys go.

BR: Twenty-five cents a barrel is licked to all the farmers.

JL: Yeah, well it licked daddy eventually as the years went by, got out of it because there was a, must have been the change of times, is that what happened, and they did away with that. But we were not farmers, we lived in town. So, and daddy was, as long as I can remember, you had to listen to the radio and you had to listen to the Fireside Chats. And Daddy was a great Roosevelt man even though he was Canadian, and mother were Canadians. But my mother's father was a liberal in Canada which was equal to the Democrats and that's. I remember I could hardly wait to vote, and I was going to be a Democrat. That was just, and then George McGillicuddy was town chair. He was town chair for years and years, and we joined the Democrats in that respect. Well, (*unintelligible word*), I think I voted, was it Harry Truman the first one I voted for?

BR: No, you weren't old enough.

JL: Harry Truman, daddy did, I don't know, maybe I wasn't -

BR: Were you?

JL: I think I was old enough. I don't know, I can't remember. But I think -

BR: '48, how old would you be?

AL: Yeah, you would have been, you would have been old enough.

JL: So, I -

BR: Born in nineteen what?

JL: Twenty-five.

AL: Yeah, she'd have been twenty-three.

BR: Oh yeah, she was, well she voted for Harry.

JL: Daddy, Daddy was, died that year so he never did know that Harry, you know, Harry Truman got in.

BR: Oh yes he did.

JL: Did he?

BR: Yes -

JL: Yes he did too, because he died not, no, he didn't.

BR: (*Unintelligible word*) telling me a funny story about that. He said the Smiths invited them over, him and Jen. He said, listen to this story Jean, and they was over there and, that was his father and his mother, and these two neighbors were big Republicans, you know. And they invite them over to do the big celebrating for Dewey winning, and they got bluer and bluer as the night went on and Frank finally said, "Jen, I guess we'd better go home, (*unintelligible phrase*)." Next morning they woke up and Truman was elected. That was a, that was one big surprise, even to us.

JL: But Democrats in the town of Houlton, you know, the thing that always irked me, and still does but not as much now, I'm too old for that. But if there is Bob Rush, George McGillicuddy, myself and, who was the other Democrat?

BR: Anna, Ann.

JL: Ann, and if we were all talking together there'd always be some Republican going by and make the remark that, oh, I see the Democrats are caucusing, and there'd be four of us. They never said that to Republicans, we never -

BR: No, I said, you guys, probably you guys are all getting together and we don't have to bring that up. I said, we know what you're like (*unintelligible phrase*).

JL: But when Muskie was elected governor it was a whole different ball game in Houlton. I mean, we never got any more popular but we did branch out and he made the party. I mean he made the party anyway but he made the party for a county.

BR: And the state.

JL: And the state but, you know, they just never, you wouldn't think of ever electing a Democrat to anything in the state. And back in, what year was Goldwater, I can't remember, we had -

BR: '48, '68.

JL: '68, we had three down in the state, legislative senators, and you know, that was unheard of. But it was all thanks to Ed Muskie.

AL: Now take me back to that year of '54, you were Democrats but you didn't have much voice in the area -

JL: Not much money either.

BR: Well, not much of anything really, but we had the spirit.

AL: What was the first inkling you had that, when you heard that there was a Democrat that wanted to run, do you have memories of what -?

BR: I do, the first time that I recall hearing Ed Muskie's name was a hotel corridor in Lewiston where we was having a Democratic convention and somebody says, "That guy is going to run for governor." As it turned out he got the nomination and did run for governor and that was my first connection with him. And when he came to Houlton I'd take him around to see people.

JL: And he stayed at your house.

BR: He was as popular as a, yeah, as the Democrat here, you know, was just, we were-. I asked to have Paul Fullam, that was the same year Paul Fullam run for the senate, I asked the Rotary club if he could speak and Jim said, "But it's non-political." So I went in with Paul as a guest and the first thing they brought up was sending a telegram to Cliff McIntyre. I said, "Jim, this isn't a political place, is it?"

JL: But he was a Democrat, Jim (*unintelligible phrase*).

BR: I know he was, but he didn't want anything like that brought up, you know, that's how touchy were. So first thing they did is they all want to send telegrams to Cliff McIntyre the Republican to do something. So Muskie campaigned and as I recall he, we had a booth at the Presque Isle fair and we saw him that day. And I says, "If you want a place, if you got no place to stay overnight why don't you drop in and stay overnight with us?" So he did. So that was the beginning of quite a friendship with Ed Muskie.

JL: He spoke.

AL: What were your impressions of him upon first meeting him, what struck you?

BR: Well, he's a very intelligent man, you know, that he -

JL: Distinguished looking.

BR: He's distinguished looking in the first place and his actions, too, when he spoke. He was a very, very good speaker, yeah, very good debater matter of fact. A lot of people didn't want to touch him with debating.

JL: I remember when he spoke in Houlton one time I think was when I first met him, he was at Bob's and we had a bandstand down in the park and he spoke there, remember that?

BR: Yeah, I do.

JL: And there was a lot of people.

BR: Yeah, but they were staying out in the cars on the curb. Remember Father (*name*) was telling us about, he says, "There's a lot more than you thought there were, Bob." I said, "Well." So anyway we proceeded and he campaigned and got through the election. And we were at my place one night, the night of the election, and of course all we had was radio, we didn't have television or. So Father (*name*) was sitting there, he says, "You go down, for God's sakes, Bob, and find out what's going on. Go down to the (*name*) *Times*." So I went down to the (*name*) *Times* and there was Bun Estes, Lenny McNair, B.H. Brown, all the elite Republicans in this town, and Bunny just got off the phone and he says, "Muskie's taken Aroostook County." So I went out the door, I said, "Boys, your empire's crumbling, she's all over." I was so excited I just had to brag. So that's the way she, that's the way it happened.

AL: Now did you see, you said there were a lot of people that came to see him when he was here in Houlton.

BR: Yeah, because he had made quite a name for himself and the papers were pretty kind to him, too.

AL: So he was turning some Republican heads obviously.

BR: Yeah, he was, he had to to win the election, you know, had to, yeah.

JL: (*Unintelligible phrase*).

AL: Sure, sure. Did you get a sense of that, did you ever hear people talking about, "Well that Ed Muskie's okay?"

BR: Oh yeah, there were some that voted for Muskie that never voted Republican, Democrat in their life before, I'm sure.

JL: Oh, they had to, they had to because, the Independent wasn't like, you know, today. I'd like to say the spoilers, I mean it was a Republican or the Democrat, that was it. You didn't always have somebody running as an Independent. And so there had to be a lot of Republicans. They deny it today but, I remember one instance that told, this girl's father told me, he was either, I think he was a Baptist. And this was as Muskie, you know, went on in politics. And they, he brought up, the minister brought up that, you know, he's a Catholic. And this man said to me, he said, "By God, Jean," he said, "I'll tell you I never voted Democrat in my life but I'm going to vote for that because they have no business bringing up religion." And he was one of the prominent men in the town. And so people were all, they voted under the table type thing without saying much but this man, and I think there was more in that congregation that probably voted for him too, but that was the only thing I ever knew.

AL: Do you recall any ideas that Ed Muskie spoke about during that campaign that attracted people?

BR: Isn't that something, blank.

AL: Or was it just his persona?

BR: It could have been because I can't remember many of the issues of that time, do you?

JL: No, I don't remember it being so issue oriented as it -

BR: Isn't that awful. We were just so enthusiastic about having a candidate that had a possibility of winning, we can't remember what went on.

JL: But I think he was the type that was going to move the state forward, you know. That terminology wasn't used back in those days but that's what, and, you know.

AL: Did you meet Frank Coffin as well, was he with Ed Muskie?

BR: Oh yes, Frank Coffin was, two of the best men we ever had running for governor in this state got beat, Frank Coffin and George Mitchell. They were the best Democrats that ever stepped up. And Frank Coffin came to this town and I was taking him around, introducing people in the stores and the banks. We left the car in a parking place and I come back and there was a ticket on it. I says, "I'll take care of that." And he says, "Bob, don't fix it." I said, "Good God, Frank, I couldn't get a tire fixed in this town, let alone fix a ticket. I'll pay for it." You know, it was something, when he said don't fix it. He was congressman at the time when he was running for governor as you recall. And George Mitchell, I couldn't believe when I woke up. My son was in the Air Force, called me from Las Vegas, "Who the hell is Jim Longley." I says "He's the next governor." Gee, that was a surprise. And I got elected and George didn't, that was the year I ran.

JL: We had three in our district that were elected, Bob, and Michael (*name*) was elected to the house, and who was the third one? Glenn.

BR: Well, not, no, because they were (*unintelligible word*) '68.

JL: I remember we had three.

BR: Peter Johnson.

JL: Peter Johnson of Fort Fairfield, he's dead now.

BR: That was after Nixon, so that's what got me in I think.

AL: This was 1974 that you were talking about.

BR: Yeah, I lost the election of '74, yeah.

AL: And you mentioned someone named Glenn?

JL: Glenn Manuel, he was an old, he passed on.

BR: Yeah, he was in Brennan's cabinet, yeah. He was the fish and game commissioner. He's dead. (*Unintelligible Phrase*) last fall...

AL: Yes, I've spoken to his daughter Barbara and hope to interview her about her dad. What do you, memories do you have of him, did, he ran for, was he in -?

BR: He was in the senate, too, the years they won, yeah, he and Elmer and Floyd Harding. You're going to interview Floyd, aren't you?

AL: We have already, yeah. And we've had two wonderful interviews with Elmer Violette as well.

BR: Well that was good, that was good, yeah. Because Floyd is, he's pretty clever that Floyd. I was telling, I went to his fiftieth anniversary in a law practice yesterday and I said to Floyd, I said, I got to tell a story about Floyd. He was down there and sometimes you have to put other lawyers on the stand when they've done the job for somebody else. And he was on the stand and he was examined by the lawyer and then he was cross examined. They asked him who he thought the best lawyer in Aroostook County was, and he said well of course he was. And after it was all over with I said "Floyd, weren't you a little presumptuous in saying that you were the best?" "Bob," he said, "what could I do, I was under oath." I stole that out of a book and told it.

JL: But we've had, we're all the, Bob and I are the last two aren't we?

BR: Floyd.

JL: No, I mean in Houlton.

BR: Oh, in Houlton, yeah.

JL: Yeah, the last two of the Muskie people. Well, Paul McGillicuddy, I suppose there are some. But active, we've been active every, every, since -

BR: Boy, they're getting scarce aren't they, the old timers, we're goners.

JL: Well, but it's, but we had a, we had a great time and I love politics. I don't do much now, but -

AL: Are you involved in the present election?

JL: No, not really, we haven't, I don't know whether we're even going to have a head court. The younger people who are in politics today, all due respect, they don't have the enthusiasm. They're not, they've got to stay with their family.

BR: Or any kind of dedication.

JL: Yeah, they have, well I work and his wife works and we have children and, you know, we just don't have time. And I said to one of them one day, I said, for the love of God, what did you think I did? I said, I worked, I had one son and had a nephew that I raised, and I always had time for politics. I'd have to make arrangements if we were going out to a meeting or something, but this business, always, but this is the times, times have changed. Apparently we not dedicated to family but Bob had ten children and they all turned out marvelous. And, you know, his wife, she was my age, she was always right there helping whatever we had to do. So, I don't want to hear that song, we're just so busy. Busy be damned.

BR: Politics, you know, everybody thinks that's a dirty word. That's the way this country's run, you know, whether you like it or not that's the way it goes.

JL: But, I remember most about Muskie is when we used to have parties when he was governor. And I think the one thing I remember so well, Ann always (*unintelligible word*) the party. I always came with the, in those days you used cups and saucers, you know, and Ann always made fish house punch, that was the famous Jim (*name*) wife punch. And so they all had a good turnout. And I went out into the kitchen to get I don't know what, and who was standing there with a mop in her hand but Jane Muskie, she had spilt -

BR: We had a little casualty there.

JL: Little casualty, and I said, "Oh Jane, I'll do that. And she said, "Well, for the love of God, you don't think I never scrubbed a floor before." And, you know, he, she was the governor's wife, you know, you didn't really (*unintelligible word*). But that was always a funny, one of the funny things that happened.

BR: Getting back to politics, I want to tell you a little story. I used to be the only guy around here that knew Harry Truman was a great guy before everybody else knew it and I was always bragging about him. And they had a little scandal with the deep freeze and the fur coat, remember that? And I used to go to -

JL: She wasn't born for God sakes.

BR: No, I know that, but she could read about it. But anyway that's what was going on then when they were accusing Truman of, Gary Vaughn and favors. And the fur coat and the deep freeze now, this is a lot bigger now when it comes to bribery. Anyway, I used to go to this drug-, certain drugstore and they were always riding me about Harry, you know. So finally I went to a doctor's party, a Christmas party at a doctor's house, and I set in a great big swivel chair and I said to the guy that owned the drugstore, "You know where that chair come from? It come from this drugstore right here." But, I says, "There's nothing wrong with that?" I didn't say there's anything wrong with that. "However, I didn't get any Christmas, but I know why he got one, because he sends his prescriptions here. Now if that isn't politics, what the hell is it?" I never heard any more from those guys. It's always good when you do it, but I do it, it's wrong.

JL: It was always good when we could shut them up.

BR: Yeah, it was good and we had fun, something like that. But that, yeah, going around and seeing people. Poor George Mitchell got beat for governor that year, that was hard to take. I could hardly believe it.

JL: I remember, this was in later years when Muskie was in Washington, that he was coming to Houlton High School. They were having a bean sup-, baked bean supper, remember that Bob? Yeah, right, everybody me that was around me they could remember that. And we had a tremendous turnout, or were getting ready for a tremendous turnout. But Muskie was in Washington and they hadn't closed for the, I think it was in September, it was still running up until August. And we got the telephone call. I don't remember who the little fellow was that, oh that poor man, he just about died. We got the call that, he got the call that Ed wasn't sure whether he was going to make it or not. And Ann Hoban, she's dead now, she was the town chair and we were down there, and I can't remember what, do you remember his name, Bob?

BR: No.

JL: Well anyway, I went down and I said, "By God, you better get word to somebody that, have somebody show up here." We've got this place loaded, everybody, we've got the word out that Muskie's coming." And I said, and I was ranting and raving. And one of Bob's sons was there and said, "My God, I never saw anyone so mad as she was." And I said, "You better," this poor little fellow, he was a little bit taller than you and I. I said, "You better do something about it, by God. We can't have this because we're having-." Al was catering it, was putting up, Al, that was a restaurant here. And they were having it in the cafeteria up at Houlton High. So the word went out and first word came back that he was going to have Ken Curtis, who was governor, I think he was governor then wasn't he, or?

BR: I think he was.

JL: Yeah, he was governor, and of course he was well liked up here, and the *Pioneer Times*, the publisher Marshall Hammond, he always wrote a nice article about Ken. And so he was going to be the master of ceremonies and they were going to try arrange that the senator could make, get a telephone call in to the people that were there. Well I think that was easier said than done. Anyway Ken came, and I can't remember whether Foley came or not, but when the word came that they had got, made the connection in Washington with, up at high school to the cafeteria, so that he could address the people, and he didn't make it but he did address the people. And I left two boys, young fellows thought she's the ugliest woman in the town hall because I raised so much hell, 'got.

BR: Jean, see those lamps? You wouldn't have that many around, you had to use some.

JL: Oh stop it.

BR: You never had to use them, everybody thinks (*unintelligible phrase*).

JL: I did too, when I was over in (*unintelligible word*) with -

BR: Oh, you might have used the one over there, yeah. Look at them. God she's got uh-

JL: I have thirty-eight.

BR: You do?

AL: It's a beautiful collection.

BR: Yeah.

JL: But anyway, but anyway that was a, that was one of the biggest sendoffs Muskie ever got in Houlton with people. And he did speak and I don't remember, which is awful to say but time goes by. And that was the last time I think. Remember the time that he was, we were, he was coming, he was here and he was going to be on the radio and there were call ins to, questions to him. Well now, anybody in their right mind, whether you be your party or the other party, would ever call in and try to pin Muskie on a vote or what have you and think you were going to get away with it. Well this, this, he, this, he was a, this man was the, he was a prominent man in town. And he had, he was chairman of the opponent, the one who was running against Muskie, and I don't, escapes me now. And he called up to try to pin the senator down. Well, in Ed Muskie's own way he could have, he chewed him up and spit him out because you just, you know, how dare. Well I was so damn mad I went down, he run a business here in town, I went down and I said, "I want to talk to you out back." I said, "How dare you call and try and make, to make a fool of Ed Muskie." He said, "I'll never do it again, Jean." And I said, "No, you, I know damn well you won't." But that was, well these are just little funny things I remember from

AL: Sure, yeah.

JL: But Ed handled it just very professionally. But, you know, it was just like I said how dare you. I mean, he was just, I said you're no more than I am, just a small town politician and, you know, that's no great thing. And I couldn't imagine anyone would do that. They did.

AL: Now who are some of the other people, you mentioned Jim Pierce? He was a Republican?

JL: No, no, he was the old time Democrat.

AL: No, Democrat. Now wasn't he from a long time Democratic family in this area?

BR: I, I'm not sure about that.

JL: I don't know.

BR: I don't know.

JL: No, I don't think he could have been because his brother and all their family in Portland were all Republicans.

AL: Okay, maybe he was the lone Democrat.

BR: He might have been.

JL: Ah, he might have been because I don't remember. I remember seeing his father but I don't remember anything about (*unintelligible phrase*). He and Jim Madigan were both Democrats. And Jim Madigan, I don't know what, some relation to Ann, his wife, I can't remember what it was.

BR: Well, Jim Pierce and Ann's father were first cousins.

JL: Okay, and then Jim, how did Jim Madigan get into it?

BR: Well, he was too, he was first cousin to Jim Pierce.

JL: Okay, so they were all cousins together, then, (*unintelligible phrase*). And, but he was, he always, was one thing about Jim, he always said, "Now you know, Jean, I don't really, I don't always vote Democrat." "But-," he said, "here's some money," you know. He always gave money. But he said, "I never felt that I could just vote for the Democrats." And I said, "Can't imagine why not." But he was a much older man.

AL: Oh, he was.

JL: And, he was what, how old was he when he died?

BR: God, he was in his nineties.

JL: He was in his nineties, but he was, getting money here was not a very easy job. I used to sic Ann on Uncle Jim Pierce because I knew she'd do better with him than I would. So, but he was a really you know really an old time. He was always (*unintelligible word*) Muskies and, you know, anything that was going on. But he was much older than we were.

AL: Who were some of the other people, oh, I know who to, did you ever meet McMahon?

BR: Oh, the big fellow that went around with Muskie?

AL: Dick McMahon?

BR: Yeah, I did, yes.

AL: That was in the earlier days.

BR: That was in the early, real early, he drove him around the first campaign he made, just day

and night. God, it was a killer the way they campaigned, you know it? The time they spent and the towns they went to, and the big state, you know, and scarcely very many people.

AL: With very little money.

BR: Yeah, very little money, that's the part that was, jeepers. There was, Don Nicoll, remember Don Nicoll, he's still around.

AL: Yeah, he's the director of this project.

JL: He's the director.

BR: Oh, he is? Gee, a nice man.

JL: You saw him up in Presque Isle when Elmer died.

BR: I did, yeah.

JL: He was, I didn't see him. I knew him but I didn't see him.

BR: Don Nicoll.

AL: Still very, very sharp man.

BR: Yeah.

JL: Is he nearer my age? Yeah, that's what I thought.

AL: I'm going to stop and turn this over onto the other side.

End of Side A

Side B

JL: (*Unintelligible Phrase*).

BR: I think you're seeing things.

JL: Well, that's true.

BR: 'Cause I never lost a bet.

JL: Well good. I just would hate to have a grease spot (*Unintelligible Phrase*).

BR: Yeah, I know it. Oh, to hell with lamps. The chair.

AL: We're now on side B of the interview with Jean Larson and Bob Rush, and we were

talking about Muskie and some of the people in the community that you've known. I have a question, when you were in Houlton and you were politically active, did you have contact with other communities in Aroostook County, or were you very separate?

JL: No, well -

AL: Like Presque Isle, for instance, is what I'm thinking.

JL: Yeah, well, if you were on county committee, and we all took our turns down here on county committee, you got to know, you'd go once a month and you knew what was going on. And speaking of Floyd, he was county chair, and a good county chair he was. This was the year Bob was elected. He, county committee, he said now Jean, he said, do you want me to send some of my people down to help you, you know, with the election? And of course I said, no, Floyd. I said, you take care of Presque Isle and I'll take care of Houlton.

That was the year that we had the three from this area elected. But that was about, they usually had the county meetings in Presque Isle. And then I did calling when Sen. Bill Hathaway was in. I did a lot of calling through the county for him, different chairmen and things like that. But I don't think we ever, you know, did much in other. Floyd, no, what was his name up in Fort Fairfield, that was Bill's -

BR: John Clark.

JL: John Clark, you know, you, they would drop in and things like that and you might hear what's going on in Fort Fairfield and hear news of people. But no, not really, you just did, just did your thing.

AL: Did you know Greg Freeman's parents?

JL: Oh yes.

AL: Anne and -

JL: What was it?

AL: I'm forgetting his -

BR: Oh.

JL: Joe.

AL: Joe, yes.

JL: Oh yeah.

AL: Who were they, what were they like, or what was their role?

JL: They were one of the first ones like Bob and I and Anne and -

BR: Anne Freeman's living, isn't she?

AL: She's still living, yeah.

JL: But there was no finer man than Joe Freeman.

BR: Oh, Joe Freeman was a swell guy, yeah. (*Unintelligible phrase*), so nice.

JL: He was so -

BR: He was a great friend of Muskie's, that's for sure.

JL: He was a, I know Anne as well but Joe was a real, he had a little saying at the meeting and I can't remember what it was. He put an 'S' on something, it came out, and I used to quote it for years but now I can't remember what it was.

BR: Can't even remember it.

JL: No, don't remember it. But he was a gentleman, there was no two ways about it.

BR: He was on the state committee was Ann was, my wife was on it.

JL: She thought the world of him.

BR: Oh yeah, he was such a gentleman.

JL: And then there was a, who was the other one in Presque Isle? Remember, he had the record shop, music store.

BR: Rideout.

JL: No, no. He and Joe, when they -

BR: Oh, Ken Colbath.

JL: Ken Colbath.

BR: And he ran for congress once.

AL: Yes, I, yes, what, and he lived, didn't he also live in Houlton?

BR: He did a long time, he came from Houlton I think at one time, I'm not sure. You, Jean?

JL: No, I don't know.

BR: But I think he did. I'm told that's where Colbath.

JL: He got into Congress. He got into Congress.

BR: Ken, in 1948, put a hundred dollars against fifteen hundred on Harry Truman and went to the victory dinner in Washington.

JL: I didn't know that.

BR: You didn't know that? Yeah, that was something. Ken Colbath. He was a good candidate, too, he made a heck of a speech in this, right down here in this park one night.

JL: Yeah, and he was, they were active in the state. I was always the odd man out because Ken, well of course he was Army but he didn't like politics anyway.

BR: And a fellow coming out of the Army doesn't like politics. That's more bullshit than I ever heard, that's what, all they do is like politics.

JL: Well of course he was, well at the time when Ken was a Guard with (*unintelligible word*).

BR: I know that, I know that, but talk about politics in the Army, I said, "Bobby –"

JL: Oh my God, it's the worst place in the world.

BR: Of course, it's used everywhere. I don't say it's wrong, but when I do it can't be wrong, and you do it it's right. That's all the problem I got was that these Republicans accuse us of doing everything but they're doing the same thing themselves.

JL: But they're just not as mouthy about it as we are. But they, I don't know of any other ones.

AL: Did you ever have political contacts with John Cancelarich?

JL: Oh yes, and do you know his wife?

AL: Yes, I mean know of her.

BR: He's in Presque Isle (*unintelligible word*) isn't he?

AL: Yeah.

BR: You interviewing him?

AL: Don Nicoll interviewed him last year.

BR: Oh, I see.

JL: Yeah, he's an old time one, John.

AL: I know they had lots of people stay at their house on political trips, that's why I asked, yeah. And does the name King Harvey mean anything? Who -?

BR: We know him, we know him, he used to be editor of the Fort Fairfield *Review*.

AL: Okay. What role did he play politically, was he very much Republican or -?

BR: Oh yes, I think. I'm not sure though.

JL: Yes, yeah, he was.

AL: Yeah, did he sort of make it hard to get Democrats -?

BR: He wasn't a bad guy, he was -

JL: He had his own opinions.

BR: Yeah, he had his own opinions but that's what we all do.

AL: Where did he get the name King Harvey?

BR: Well that's his real name, wasn't it.

JL: Yeah, I think so. But he, we had Marshall Hammond down here for the *Pioneer Times* and he was a Republican, but he was fair. And any time you had any pictures or anything that you needed, of course I'd worked there for twenty-one years as a social writer, but you could always take your picture in and he never showed partiality. And he would put in, and as I say when Ken Curtis came that time. And I wish I had kept, I kept it for years, a write up, then I threw it out, the Ken Curtis coming and what a good, because Bunny before, Bunny Estes, you couldn't get the time of day out of him. Of course I wasn't doing that much then, but he was very fair. And when Michael Carpenter run for the house from here, and he always gave us good, good publicity, which you can't get now.

We don't get the publicity polit-, political wise. Not, that's the way politics has changed. And the young ones who are running it, they don't know how it was run, the political game. And of course it's changed some, and they don't know who were old time whatever, Democrats or old time Republicans or what have you. And it's a lot different today in the local, I don't know about King Har-, well of course King isn't there but I don't know how the other papers are. But if Muskie came or Joe Brennan or any of them, you know, you could always get pictures in. But time does march on.

BR: Andrea, I wonder if anybody ever made a study of how many of the old New Deal laws that were passed in the '30's during the Roosevelt administration are still alive, going today. There are many of them, I know.

AL: I think there's been talk about it. I don't know if there's a study or not, but -

BR: I'll let you know how many there are because when people ask me why I'm a Democrat I have a lot of good reasons to say why I am. Now every Democrat doesn't, I remember one time taking my daughter to college and I picked up a guy on the road that was hitchhiking. That was in the '60's with the long hair. And he, there were demonstrations at some college. And he said, I said, "What do you think of that?" And he said, "Well I think that's the right thing to do." So he got around and he said, "What do you think of it?" And I said, "Well, I want to tell you something, I'm a citizen of the United States. I pay taxes both locally, federal, and state. They get a lot of laws passed that I don't like, they get a lot of laws that I want to get passed, that don't get passed. But this is a democracy and we live with what the majority has to tell us to do. And we live and we're going to do pretty good by that. So, by the way." I said, "How are you financing your college way, it's none of my business but." Well, he says, "I got a grant and I got a government loan." "Well," I said, "the difference between you and I is that you haven't even begun to pay your way in society and you want to dictate policy, and I've been paying my way as far as I've been doing and I can't get things that I want. But you want to get it without." You know, he was a little quieter when he got out of the car and thought the thing over a little. So it's kind of nice to know that, and I see a plate down in the parking lot that says 'I love my country but hate my government,' you know, I don't like to see that. You know why I don't like to see that? I don't care what party's running this country, this is the best government there is in the world.

JL: That's right.

BR: It's the best government in the world, I don't care what party's running it. And I, that bothers me to see something like that, hate your government. This hating is bad, very bad.

JL: I mean, you would never think of saying that in our generation, you know. First of all if your mother or father were alive, my father would say, "I'll box your ears," you know. That would just not, that, you know, you could call, you know, say, if you don't, as Bob says, 'you don't like it but to say you hate your government?' No, I don't.

BR: And you got a chance to get rid of it, we have a chance to vote, good God almighty, what more do we want. And why? In my wildest dreams I never dreamed when I was on that farm out there in East Hodgdon, pulling (*unintelligible word*) and picking rocks that I'd ever live in such luxury as I have now. And it wasn't, you know what it is? It was government. It's the government of this country that gives everybody the opportunity. I don't give a damn what people say, I would have never owned a farm if it hadn't been for government because I had (*unintelligible word*) prices on a crop that got me (*unintelligible word*), and I'll be honest about it. Those people that go to the window and condemn it are the first ones at the window to grab that government handout. Without exception you'll find that.

JL: Well you look at these homes, senior citizens homes that for, low, what do they call it, low cost citizens home, check and see who built them. They were people that pulled themselves up by the bootstraps and (*unintelligible phrase*), all the government, all the government -

BR: Everything around here wouldn't be existing in Maine here today if it hadn't been for government.

JL: I think that was one of the things that maybe Muskie brought out in the early, I don't remember much but -

BR: When I saw Mitchell, A Man From Maine, you know that tape? He says, he explained that very well. He said, "People say government doesn't work, I think government works," he says. And I do too, it works great. But we got a few at the top that don't want to pay their share, that's the story, is that. The first thing you hear a Republican say is tax, tax, tax break. And who made the times so good, it's the programs of Franklin D. Roosevelt that made them wealthy. Roosevelt saved capitalism for the capitalists, saved this country from a, no question about it.

JL: I always said, we've been married fifty-three years, and I always said, I never complained about paying taxes when Ken was working and had an income. You never heard me say oh I hate to have to pay that income tax. I was always so thankful he had a job because, you know, this was after the war and pay was not that big in those days. But I think I got that from my father.

BR: Well Mr. Chalmer the doctor, he complained about taxes all the time, I said, "You got an income tax problem? You haven't got a problem. I don't have to pay any this year but I wished I was, at a year that I lost about ten thousand dollars raising potatoes." And that isn't fun but, you know, here is somebody belly aching about taxes, especially income tax, that's a pretty hard thing to cry about isn't it? My poor friend Lawrence Good. He's dead now, he worried about that.

AL: Well you had a chance to meet both Mitchell and Muskie over the years. And a lot of people have said, as even George Mitchell says that Muskie was his mentor and really taught him a lot. But meeting the two different, the men, what did you, did you see any similarities between them, like things that felt like, you know, Mitchell had learned from Muskie or things that were different in their styles?

BR: I think, in my own opinion, that Mitchell was a much warmer man than Muskie.

JL: That's just what I was going to say, yeah.

BR: Muskie was kind of -

JL: He was very aloof.

BR: Aloof and distance in, I wish that Muskie would be running for vice president of the United States, not Muskie but I mean Mitchell. But, they got a man just as good I think, I like him. He'd be my second choice. But I think that, you've seen Mitchell perform, honest to God,

there's nobody like him really. Even Muskie when it comes down to the smoothness, I think Mitchell had him on that.

JL: I don't think Mitchell has the temper that Ed had.

BR: No, he doesn't have the temper, no, he's a lot cooler cat.

JL: Oh, he did have a temper. But I can remember back when he was governor, I mean I never thought of Muskie as a warm man. A respected man, but I remember Ann and I were down, we'd been to one of the teas that they had, the governor had and Ann served or whatever, and they were there. And then afterwards he, Jane, we, I don't know how come were the last getting out but we went in to the sunroom, I think that's what they called it, with Jane and he. And he was very, oh, what do I want to say, he was very warm there. And he said, he said, you know, I had a great idea when I was going to be governor of what I was going to do. He said, forget that, he said, it's much too difficult to get some of these projects that he wanted through a Republican legislature. He said, I thought I was going do, the way he said it I think I was going to do hell and all. But we sat and talked, you know, quite a while with them because we were always the furthest away from Augusta.

BR: So to compare Mitchell with Muskie, I don't think he would have said to my daughter, "Stay over there to one side and I'll talk to you after this thing's over with," I don't think Muskie would have done that. He just wasn't that, he probably, I don't think he would have. Now he might of where it was a long ways away. But I remember when Muskie was running for president, Ann's, not Ann but Lucy Ann's husband lived in Tallahassee, Florida and we happened to be down there and Muskie was coming to the capitol so, "God," Muskie says, "what are you doing here Bob?" I said, "Well I'm working for you here." You know, he's a, yeah, he's a cooler man. But one, the day we saw him, the man is living so you can verify this, Muskie, when he went to New Hampshire and he climbed up on that trailer and made that statement I says, "He's done, Ann." Ann said, "Oh no, no." I says, "He's done and that's going to do him, because he'll never live that down." And that's just exactly what happened. But he told me there's two things he should not have done, he said, when I saw him at a clambake, had a little chance to chat with him. He said he should have never dropped out because he had a lot of votes, he should never have dropped out. He had Pennsylvania, he won that after that again. He never should have dropped out. And what was the other thing? God, I can't even remember that.

JL: Probably shouldn't have cried.

BR: Well, he shouldn't have made the statement. Now, that, that, Mitchell would never have done that. He went up there and John Kennedy went up there, you know, was up there and made some kind of a joke out of it and come out of that looking good.

JL: He didn't have a sense of humor.

BR: Well that's the story I guess, but he did have some sense of humor.

JL: He was, oh yeah, but I mean it wasn't his nat-, he wasn't -

BR: It wasn't his nature, no, no.

JL: No, it wasn't his nature.

BR: What a great brain he had, though.

JL: He was smart.

AL: Now when you say he was so smart, did you hear him figure, talk about issues or figure things out that gave you the impression?

BR: Yes, well I think so. I think, later when I got to know him, when he got to be senator, you know, he explained things a lot better. See, as the governor you don't have much of a wallop like you do a vote in the senate, you know, and the reasons why you vote. No I think he explained most everything well, yeah.

JL: He had to because he was so well thought of in Washington, I remember. He had, who was it, Sam, who was the senator, the old senator?

BR: Lyndon Johnson.

JL: No, no, no, no. Sam -

BR: Rayburn.

JL: Rayburn, didn't he have Sam Rayburn's office?

BR: I don't know.

JL: Well I was there down and his, well in fact the little fellow who I gave hell years later -

BR: I don't think it was Sam Rayburn's office because he was in the house and Muskie was in the senate.

JL: Okay, who was the senator then?

BR: Lyndon was the majority leader, Lyndon Johnson, but -

JL: No, it wasn't Lyndon's office. But it, went in there and he wouldn't have had that if he hadn't been well thought of as, you know, brains wise.

BR: Well what was that other thing? He said there was two things he would not have done again, he would have, yeah, he should have stayed in it, that was one thing. But there was som-, but it wasn't that up there in New Hampshire because that was all done with, it was after that.

He should have stayed right in the thing and I think he could have gotten the nomination probably. And he could have beat Nixon. I looked at him as a chance to run, you know, without being -

JL: Everybody said that, because that was the, all the -

BR: Even David Broder made a kind of apology for the statement he made about the New Hampshire thing.

AL: I interviewed John Day last week, and he said that David Broder had always regretted that, that he hadn't meant to say the tears in order to hurt him. He just thought he saw tears and he really regretted having reported it that way.

BR: Yeah, and now you're a champion if you're, see that would work for his favor now. See how I mean how things work in politics, you never know how the -

AL: Things change, you don't know how they'll be perceived.

JL: You were never weak, you were never weak. A man, no way would a man shed a tear in our generation, and Muskie would have been that.

BR: Well the tricks they pulled on him were something wicked. That Pat Buchanan's the cheapest Irishman I know. I can talk as I want to, I don't care if he's right here, to pull a trick like he did. He said, we've got to get him mad, scratched on his paper in the White House. He tried to deny it now he, he was the guy that tried to get Muskie riled up. They knew if they got him mad that they'd-. But I wouldn't have, I just can't understand him falling for it, you know what I mean? Kennedy or Mitchell would never fall for that sort of thing. Mitchell and Kennedy would turn that around in their favor.

AL: Now you think although Muskie was somewhat aloof or reserved he actually was more emotional than, say, Mitchell?

BR: Apparently he was, apparently he was.

JL: Well he's older than George, he was older than George. But he just wasn't going to, it wasn't his style to be glib, to turn it around like Kennedy.

BR: No, that's right.

JL: He wouldn't have that -

BR: That's right.

JL: He, what he got elected on was clear hard facts, presentation, all that whereas the ones that are -

BR: Kennedy used the glamour, worked for him.

JL: Yeah, but I mean he also, he also had the quick glib.

BR: Yeah, that's right, he is, he's witty.

JL: And George, he wasn't quite as witty, but he would, but Muskie there was no, he never, he just didn't seem to have any sense of humor. Now Jane probably could tell you different but I -

BR: I think it was pretty subtle. Yeah, I think he had a sense of humor.

JL: I never saw it so I don't know, but I didn't know him as well as you did.

BR: He'd tell a funny story every once in a while like the one he that he told about the Irishman going to an English noble, nobleman estate. You heard that one probably didn't you?

AL: No, I don't.

JL: She's too young.

BR: And he said, he spent the weekend there. And all the other young Irishmen were, "What was it like, what was it like," when he got back, you know? He said, "It was almost perfect, almost perfect, just almost perfect." "Well what do you mean by that?" "Well," he said, "if the tea had been as warm as the wine and the wine as old as the chicken, and the chicken as tender as the maids, and the maids as (*unintelligible word*) as the Duchess, it would have been a perfect time."

JL: I never heard that one.

BR: You never heard that one?

JL: No, no.

BR: I thought it was pretty funny.

JL: But you can remember jokes, I couldn't remember. I won't be able to remember that to tell Ken.

BR: Get it in the right order. It'd have been perfect. See, everything's just off one. I remember him telling that story.

JL: Do you see Jane often?

AL: Jane Muskie? I've just met her once.

BR: And that was lately.

AL: Yeah.

JL: She's down at the summer home.

AL: Possibly.

BR: Yeah, she's in Kennebunk.

AL: I think so.

BR: Dan sees the most of her.

AL: But most of the year is in Maryland.

JL: We, she was at Elmer's funeral and I saw her then. But she was, she was an awful nice person.

BR: Awful pretty woman, wasn't she.

JL: See that picture there of her?

AL: Yeah. Well, what haven't I asked you about, issues or occasions or stories that you think are important to add?

BR: Isn't that awful, we just can't think of anything. I was wanting to say what the two things he shouldn't have done, and it wasn't that in New Hampshire, it was after that. He should never have dropped out of the race that soon. That's the story right there because he had more votes than McGovern at that time. But look what the newsmen do, look at the polls now, look what they're doing. They got Bush ahead a point or Bush behind a point or, that's the way it juggles back and forth and so.

JL: I don't remember of any other big things here.

AL: What would you, what did you guys do when all the results came in that Muskie had won for governor? What, do you remember?

BR: (*Unintelligible phrase*) didn't we? We were -

JL: You were, I don't recall (*unintelligible phrase*).

BR: I don't recall, I don't think we had any headquarters, we didn't have -

JL: Oh God, we couldn't afford it. I mean we didn't have any headquarters until probably George Mitchell.

BR: Yeah, George Mitchell was state chairman.

JL: I mean the headquarters, okay. But we didn't have the money and they had children. I had, and you know, like we did do it, Ann and I could do it on the telephone, you know, and there wasn't that many people that were that involved. Glenn would be, and Glenn was a real old time politician. But, you know, there was only about five. You had, I can remember when I first got in the party and having the meetings downtown when it come time for the election of officers. I mean you had to have a caucus and you had to have six people. And we could get five and all else failed, George [McGillicuddy] would call Celia, his wife. She hated politics, too, and she would come down and make the sixth person. But, you know, that, that's pretty bad when you can't get six.

BR: The people that hate politics annoy me like hell, they annoy me something wicked because that's the way this government's run and that's all you are, when you're running for office all you are is a citizen. They always call me a politician, politician, the old politician. So I was down working on construction at this United States post office here and I was county chairman, town chairman at that time. And the state chairman come up and was looking for me so out come the assistant post master and says there's the old politician up there. So I come down the ladder and I said, "Just wait a minute will you, you call me a politician but you know something, it hasn't worked half as good as me as it has for you because, or I'd be assistant post master."

JL: That took care of that didn't it.

BR: That took care of that. He changed his party twice to get that job.

JL: That was Dick.

BR: Yeah, that was Dick. So, you know, it just gets annoying when you're called a politician. I says, "It works better for everybody else than it ever has for me, you call me one and it doesn't work for me." I had two sons I couldn't get into the University of Maine Law School, I had to go somewhere else. So politics, I wrote to fellows and never got an answer from my good Democratic friends, one was on the board of directors. So that's how it worked for me, for all the, what they call me, a politician. If I was any good at it I'd have had a better job, wouldn't I?

JL: Yeah, but you're not, you know, there are politicians. Now, I mean I never had anything in my life, never got anything, but I never wanted anything. I did it for the sheer joy. But most people that run or that they

BR: They want something.

JL: Or that, they're running, they join the party to get, you know, this so they can get something that's out there. I never did that, I was never interested in anything. I was state committeewoman after Ann, but I mean it was all in the party. But these people that wanted jobs and they'd get tied up, you know, you'd never seen them.

BR: All you had a chance to do was contact Muskie or Hathaway or the governor for something they wanted, that's what do they call it, that's when they used the politician. I'd say yes, and I never bothered with most of them. I wouldn't call them at all. But once when I was talking to Muskie I said, he asked me to call you and I'm calling you but there's no, no particular thing that I want to push for that. But see, that's the way they are. I hate to say that but that's the way most people are.

JL: Well I call him to, for people who are Republicans, to Bill Hathaway. But I, that never bothered me. I mean that was the politician in me. But it's -

AL: Right.

BR: But I wasn't very good at it, Andrea, if I was good at it I'd have had a better job, wouldn't I, huh?

JL: Yeah, but you did good, doll.

BR: I don't know about that, Jean. Had a lot of fun.

AL: What do you think would be the most effective way for younger people and communities such as Houlton to get involved? What sorts of things could they do that would really help.

JL: Get the vote out. Get their group.

BR: It's just work, that's all it turns out to be.

AL: Stuffing envelopes and driving people to the polls, and -

BR: I remember when we had to take and lug nomination papers around, Muskie's and Curtis' and Hathaway's. She'd have one and I'd have one, we'd go to the people's houses, we didn't -

AL: Door-to-door?

JL: Sure.

BR: We had to, had to.

JL: This is the first year, of course the reason I say that is Michael Carpenter's running for town council, which is nonpolitical. But I mean the White Settlement Road, if you had Joe Brennan or George Mi-, you hit on the White Settlement Road and that was good to get one family with seven kids or something, then you could get quite a few. Oh, we went door-to-door; did it for years and years.

AL: Have the rules or the laws gotten more complicated on getting people registered to vote?

BR: I don't think so, I think it's easier.

JL: No, it's easier, easier, you know.

BR: But I do think it's, I'm not very crazy about the way they nominate a president now. I think we got better nominations when, see if Muskie hadn't had to go through primaries he'd have been a cinch for the nomination. Everything that I worked for in the state of Maine, like changing the Election Day and eliminating the big box turned out to lick us the very first time we needed it. I wanted the Election Day changed to go along with the national election, and I wanted the big box taken off the top. Just as soon as Muskie was our leading man we eliminate the big box. That's when the Republicans got around to eliminating it, when we had some power, that's the way it works.

So I went to a convention one time and they were meeting me outside, wanting me to sign a petition. "What's that for?" He says, "Well we eliminate the bullet vote in caucuses." I says, "Get away from me. I will vote for one, two or three or anything I want to. Don't tell me that, if it was you guys getting in power you'd want it eliminated too." See, see? Sometimes you think you want something and the first thing you know it's, both the things I worked hard for turned out to lick us, and it usually does, you know. When you're so strong, one issue people will drive me crazy, one issue people drive me crazy. If they, you don't listen to them they're done with your party, they're done with you. Listen, if I think they get sixty or fifty or fifty one percent of the party that does what I want done I think they're doing pretty good. (*Unintelligible Phrase*) or sixty or seven

JL: I don't remember you being that dominant that you wanted people to do things for you.

BR: What's that?

JL: Well, are you talking about, speaking of yourself?

BR: No, I'm not speaking of myself.

JL: Oh, I see, okay, because I was going to say -

BR: When I said, "You sign this petition," I said, "I'm not signing a petition that eliminates the bullet vote. I suggest that I could vote for one, two, three or nobody if I wanted to."

JL: Right, yeah, I like the bullet vote.

BR: But to eliminate the bullet vote you had to vote for two. You're voting against sometime the guy you want, sometimes. Like town council, we had a guy that, that's how we got George in, we bulletted him in. The only way you get a Democrat in, or with minorities it's the only way they can work.

JL: And that was before minorities were minorities. Now everything is, you know, the minority you've got to be careful on.

BR: There was quite a religious feeling in the state of Maine, you know, with the Kennedy election. You remember Theodore White's book? You've seen it. Aroostook County, Maine; it was mentioned in that. And I said I saw them bringing out, I had a chance to bet on Kennedy that day and I says (*unintelligible phrase*) a hundred dollars on Kennedy, I says, "I wouldn't bet five cents on him, they're digging the Baptists up out of the grave and lugging them in there and voting them." Really. And I voted and Frank Coffin lost, that the damnedest you ever heard told?

JL: I know it, but that always, that's always going to be with us.

BR: Yeah, that kind of stuff, live and bear it, I've learned to lived to live a life time -

JL: The things that, of all the things in life that irk me in politics is years ago the Democrats were always poor, I mean I'm going way back in history to the Irish coming over. You know, if you were worth your salt whether you were in Tammany Hall or not, at least you stood up and were counted. But now you couldn't find a, I bet you there isn't twenty Irish Catholics go up to our church that would be Democrats, would there Bob?

BR: I wouldn't know but I don't, I think you're right, I think you're right.

JL: I mean if they followed what preceded them, but you know, they discovered that that was quite illegal and of course I'm an Irishman and so it was illegal, so what. But I think they could, you know, we could have anything we wanted, but of course that's not the way things work. But my mother was a great historian of Ireland and of her ancestry. That was drilled into me right from way back. But if you're Irish you're going to be (*unintelligible phrase*), you should be a Democrat. And it makes Ken so mad, when I say well there an Irishman, and he's not on the voting list, he's on the voting list but he's a Republican, can you imagine that? Oh I have, oh I've -

BR: Well you know this, the job I had as clerk of courts, there's two things I learned. One was always tell the truth and the other one don't be afraid to take the blame. That's the easiest job I had, I said, "Anything goes wrong in this office blame me." It was one of the easiest jobs you ever had, take the blame. You know that? Goes right away. You hem and haw, I remember one day the judge says, "I want you on that phone, Bob, and I want an attorney on the other one." And I says, "Aye-aye sir." I got on the phone, the judge come on, he says, "First of all, Bob, did you tell him he didn't have to be here until ten-thirty?" And I says, "Yes I did." Blew the hell right out of the story. I told him he didn't have to be here so there's no story left to do. So I went into chambers later and I said, "Judge, I'm incompetent but not a liar." But really, people think that blame is bad, it's no problem at all, you now it? Step right up, you step right up and take it it goes right away, but if you hem and haw you'll never get rid of it.

JL: You might just as well stand up and tell the truth right off, he's right.

BR: Yeah, that's what I told my kids. I've seen so many kids testify and they'll stand and lie when the truth would work better. I don't care how bad it is, if you guys do something spit it out right off quick, it goes away faster. But hems and haws, and they prove you wrong, you're,

you're in bad shape. But take her as she comes.

AL: We're almost out of tape here, but I -

BR: Well I think we've said all we need to say.

JL: We've talked for quite a while.

BR: Yes, we have, a lot of stuff not pertaining to that.

AL: Anything, any last thoughts that you'd like to impart that I haven't touched upon?

JL: No, I think you've done a very nice job. I can't think of anything, can you Bob?

BR: I, no, I can think of something but I couldn't tape it. Some of the people are still living yet so I don't dare to tape it.

AL: The one thing that we, let me pause

AL: This is now the end of the interview with Jean Larson and Bob Rush.

End of Interview