

George J. Mitchell Oral History Project

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Edward M. “Ed” Bonney
(Interviewer: *Andrea L’Hommedieu*)

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Andrea L’Hommedieu: This is an interview for the George J. Mitchell Oral History Project at Bowdoin College. The date is April 29, 2010, I’m at Bowdoin College, this is Andrea L’Hommedieu, and today I’m interviewing Ed Bonney. Mr. Bonney, could you start just by giving me your full name.

Ed Bonney: My full name is Edward Mason Bonney.

AL: And where and when were you born?

EB: I was born April 5, 1933. I believe I’m the same age as Senator Mitchell, and I was born in Oxford County in a little town called Buckfield, Maine.

AL: Oh, Buckfield, you’re not far from where I live in Auburn, actually. What was Buckfield like?

EB: I really have no idea. I was born during the Depression, and my folks had to leave Buckfield because there was nothing for them to do. So we moved to Lisbon Falls, Maine, because there were jobs in the woolen mills and stuff like that, something for someone to do. The pay, I’m sure, was awfully minuscule, but at least it would put groceries on the table. For people not born during the Depression, there really isn’t a sense of appreciation, I think, of just how hard it was to get something to eat.

AL: Right. I mean, you were very young in the Depression, but did you learn from that as you got older; did your parents talk about that?

EB: Yes, they did. And they were Roosevelt Democrats, because Roosevelt was the savior. I know my dad and my grandfather, his dad, they lost all of their monies when the banks failed, and to the day my father died he always kept money under his mattress.

AL: I don’t blame him.

EB: He didn’t trust banks, even after accounts were insured, he still didn’t totally trust banks.

AL: And what were your parents’ names?

EB: My father's name was Mason Turner Bonney, and my mother's name was Beatrice Evelyn Dean, she was from Turner and he was from Buckfield.

AL: Oh, so they were local.

EB: Local people.

AL: And did your father have a business before the Depression?

EB: No, well he was a farmer, as his father and grandfather were farmers. But you couldn't make a living farming, there just was no way you could do that during the Depression.

AL: And so they went and worked in the woolen mills.

EB: My dad did, and my mother stayed at home. I have one sister, her name is Shirley, and mother took care of us while dad worked in the woolen mill. And then the Second World War came along, and he was too old to serve but times financially got better during the Second World War, not just for him but for everyone.

AL: And you were probably around ten during the war.

EB: Yes, I was probably seven or eight when it started. My folks had the radio on when the announcement was made that Pearl Harbor had been bombed. I think it was like one o'clock in the afternoon here, because it was early morning in Hawaii. But I do remember that.

AL: Did they understand the significance of what had happened immediately, or did it take time for people to understand how major the bombing was?

EB: Well, I think it really sunk in when President Roosevelt addressed the country over the radio, the "Day of Infamy" speech. It didn't happen that afternoon, the significance, but it wasn't long after that that everybody knew the significance of what we were in for.

AL: And talk to me about nights at the dinner table, did your parents talk about politics, did you get a sense of what was going on?

EB: I have to be honest and say no. They may have, but I honestly don't recall that being the topic of conversation. I think discussing the war, during the Second World War, that was usually the topic of discussion, and things that were perhaps going on within the family and locally. But no, I would say that mom and dad were nowhere near as political as I ended up being.

AL: And you talked about the woolen mills, what other things would describe Lisbon Falls area when you were growing up, what was it like in terms of neighborhoods and social activities and things like that?

EB: Well, Lisbon Falls Main Street does not look too much different today than it did then. There are a few buildings gone, the movie theater is gone, a couple of the five and dime stores are gone and so on, but it was a very, very small town, very, very small, and most everybody worked in the mills, either in Lisbon Falls or in Lisbon Center or wherever the mills [were located], everybody worked in the mills. And I would say the big form of recreation was, they had lots of bars, everybody would go to the bars. And it was a great joy for my sister and me, because the jukebox, as I recall, cost a nickel, and they'd give us a quarter's worth of nickels, and we could play all kinds of songs. And I know that once in a while we'd be taken to dances at dance halls and so on, and we'd be given a quarter to go to the movies once in a while by ourselves, but social activity in those days would not be analogous to what social activity is viewed today as. I mean there was no camping, nobody had any money to do things that people take for granted nowadays.

AL: Now along the way, going through school, were there any teachers or anyone that influenced you? I'm trying to get a sense of when you felt a propensity for politics.

EB: Well, I'll get to that. Shortly after, or near the end of the Second World War, my father had a chance to go to work on a farm in Durham, Maine, so we moved to the Southwest Bend area in Durham. And actually I think the dirt road is called the Snow Road or something like that, and we lived in this rented house for a little while. And then someone that he knew said that Allen L. Goldfine, who was Bernard Goldfine's brother and owned Winthrop Mills, had a big farm and he needed someone to work on the farm. And so my dad got recommended, so we moved to Winthrop, Maine, and I think probably I was in like the seventh grade when we moved to Winthrop.

And we lived there, I know I finished the eighth grade there, but I came home from school near the end of school and my father said, "We have to move, because Mr. Goldfine's company has gone into bankruptcy and they're literally padlocking all of the houses." Winthrop Mills was a big farm with all kinds of houses. If you've ever driven through Winthrop over to Monmouth, you go by Winthrop Mills. Well we lived in that twenty-one room house with the cupola on top – it was pretty luxurious. But that's how Mr. Goldfine treated his employees.

But long story short, we moved, and both my mother and my father had relatives in Freeport. And in those days, relatives would take you in, they wouldn't give you the money like today to go stay at the Holiday Inn, they'd take you in, so we moved to Freeport. So I went to high school in Freeport, met my future wife in school there, completed high school there, went on to Emerson College in Boston, didn't finish Emerson because the Korean conflict was very, very heavy, and although you could get student deferment I knew I'd better go in. So I enlisted in the air force and I served four years in the air force. During that time I took additional courses at Austin College in Sherman, Texas. I do not have a degree. I suppose if I were not seventy-seven I could go convince somebody that I've earned a degree, but as I sit here, I don't have a degree but I have all kinds of credits.

Got out of the air force, and in the air force I had been what they call an air operations, air traffic

control specialist, so when I got out of the air force the federal government was waiting to hire folks from the air force and the navy who had been air traffic controllers. So I became an air traffic controller at the New York Center, which controls the whole metropolitan area from the Boston center area to Philadelphia, almost to Washington, D.C., I did the long range stuff.

By this time my wife and I had had two children, and we were living in Queens, and my wife said, "You've got a nice job, and you keep it, but I'm going back to Maine, because I'm not going to bring the kids up in Queens." I'd been, by that time, military and civilian, I'd been in the air traffic control business for six or seven years and I said, "The hell with it, I'm going back to Maine with you." Didn't have a job, long story short. Then the Kennedy campaign came along, and my wife and I went up to Lewiston to see him, in the middle of the night it seems.

AL: In what was later named Kennedy Park?

EB: Yes, and damn, we got really inspired. And then when he made his speech about 'what can you do for your country,' we sort of looked at each other and said, "I guess we'd better do something." So we both became involved in local politics in Freeport, Democratic town committee, attended state conventions, I became the chairman of the Cumberland County Democratic Committee, and that's when I first met George Mitchell, is when I was the Democratic chairman in Cumberland County.

Kenneth Curtis had announced that he was going to run for governor, and my wife and I had known him when he was the secretary of state prior to that, and also when he had been in, I think he worked for Congress. But anyway, we knew Ken, Ken knew us, and we got to know George. And I was working at the time at W.T. Grant Company on Congress Street in Portland, and George's law office was right in Monument Square. So every once in a while he'd call me down there and say, "We got to organize something here, we got to do something for Ken, got to get some of these towns really working," and so on.

George and I developed [a] relationship and mutual respect. And then one day he said, gee, "I'm going to be state chairman of the Democratic Party," he said, "I've got to hire an executive director." He said, "Are you interested in that?" "Well," I said, "what are you going to pay me?" "Not much," he said, "not much, maybe twelve thousand bucks," which wasn't bad money.

AL: And was it full time, or was it part-time?

EB: Oh yes [full time].

AL: Oh, so would have to leave your job [at W.T. Grant].

EB: Yes, and the office was on Lisbon Street in Lewiston, in the Jacques Cartier Building, which had a clothing store on the [first floor] storefront, as I recall. And I said, "Well what am I going to do as the executive director of the party?" He says, "Well, we're going to raise some

money, we've got to get ready for the 1968 Democratic National Convention in Chicago, and we got to print stuff," and he said, "we've got our own print shop and stuff like that." I said, "Well, okay," because I wasn't making that amount of money at W.T. Grant's, so I said, "Yes, I'll do it. But," I said, "I'll be honest and tell you, I don't know what the hell I'm doing." He said, "Don't worry about it," and he said, "by the way," he said, "I'm only going to be with you six months because I've got something I'm going to be doing, but Severin Beliveau is going to be coming in to chair the party." And I'd only met Severin once at that point, because I was a Cumberland County boy, and Severin was [from] Oxford County and [lived in] Kennebec County.

So anyway, we got ready for running the office, and George says, "I want you to consider what you want to do for staff," because I'd inherited some staff. And he said, "Your choice, you don't want them, get rid of them," he said, "we'll bring somebody in from Muskie's office." And of course during this whole time in the early '60s I had met Judge Coffin, Frank Coffin, who had been the chair of the Democratic Party in Maine, I'd met Senator Muskie, Bill Hathaway was a congressman at the time, as I recall, Peter Kyros was thinking of running for Congress, so I'd met all of the players.

AL: Don Nicoll?

EB: Oh yes, Don was the first executive director, I succeeded a fellow named Ed Schlick, I think his name was.

AL: Yes.

EB: Have you talked to him?

AL: Years ago we did.

EB: Well I replaced Ed, I think Ed wanted to run his own business or something, but anyway, that's how I replaced him. And he was a great print media guy, so we had this great print shop, which I didn't have a clue about running but I sure learned fast. But George was a great help. I would say probably I was only with him – see, he hired me like late in the year, and then at the convention the following year, six or seven months later [at the] state convention, is when they brought in a new chair, so thus my tenure as executive director under George wasn't very long, but the relationship that had preceded that, including working on the Curtis campaign, being part of Ken Curtis' 'kitchen cabinet' and stuff like that, I got to know him pretty well, him and his first wife Sally.

AL: And what was he like, at one-on-one, person-to-person?

EB: Sometimes he was humorous, but I thought he was too serious at times. I'd go to his house in Falmouth, I'd say, "Well we did this, this week." "Well that's good, that's good." I think he was happy but he never displayed much enthusiasm like I would – I'd say, "Damn, that was good." But I always admired his intellect, and I always admired his ability to think on

multiple tracks on a problem and that, I'm sure, was based upon not only his education but his being a lawyer and so on. Political problems, sometimes the resolution is not really evident at first and you've got to figure out: how are we going to get around these people and get what we want? And George just had a wonderful knack of doing that. And sometimes you wondered where he was going with it, but when you ended up, you were right where you wanted to be, so I had a great admiration for him.

AL: And during the Ken Curtis campaign when you worked together, what types of things did he lend to the campaign that were valuable? Was it organization or strategy?

EB: It was strategy, and [he had] the intellect that was needed on issues. That's my impression. Others in the circle, so to speak, might have a different view, but if you really wanted to know what the background was on something, George would bring you up to speed pretty fast. And he's a great fund raiser, too. Bob Dunfey, who owned the Eastland Hotel at the time, boy, he and George raised a lot of money, a lot of money. And you need to have people like that to ask their peers for money. I could go ask some of the same people for money and they would not, they would give me money, but not the level that George and Bob and others were able to raise money for Ken Curtis. So it was an interesting ride.

AL: And then Severin came in and you were working with Severin, what was that like?

EB: He was 180 degrees from George. He was very gregarious, he was funny, he wasn't married at the time. By that time I was pretty well, I'd got pretty well established in the job. And he was pretty up front, he said, "You're going to focus on the organization, and you're going to run the behind-the-scenes back office stuff, and I'm going to run the front office stuff." I said, "That sounds good to me, Severin." And I think to this day, Severin and I hold longevity within the party for the number of years served as chairman and executive director.

AL: And how many years was that?

EB: The entire Curtis administration, eight years.

AL: Eight years. And when you look back on those years, what sort of accomplishments were the two of you and others able to make?

EB: Well, we survived the 1968 convention in Chicago, which was really a great – it was my first convention, and it was Severin's first convention too. It was also the convention which we knew Hubert Humphrey was going to pick Ed Muskie as his VP candidate, but we couldn't do anything because the Humphrey people wouldn't tell us for sure that they were going to do it. I remember sitting down with George and Severin, two or three others, in Chicago, and it was like the day before, no, it was two days before Humphrey was to make the announcement that Ed Muskie was going to be his vice presidential running mate. And we knew we had to, we were at the Holiday Inn on Lakeshore Drive, which was where the Maine delegation was, and George says, "We have got to get ready for a big party." And I remember Severin saying, "Well, when

do you want us to put it together? And if we hire musicians and ten thousand dollars worth of food and stuff, and Humphrey doesn't choose him, what are we going to do?" George says, "I know he's going to choose him as the vice president, so let's get ready to do this."

So after George left, Severin and I are looking at each other, where the hell are we going to get the money to do this? And so we just went out and did it, so we got hold of the musicians' union or whatever it was called – that probably wasn't the title – but you had to deal with all union entities, and we got somebody, I was assigned a driver from Mayor Daley's office, Severin had a driver, so I said to my driver, I said, "We need somebody from the mayor's office to expedite stuff for us." We had him right away. And we put together a big, big party at the Holiday Inn for conventioners, and it went off well. And in the meantime, I was not privy to the conversation but Severin told George that we needed to have the money, he'd better call in the money, and he did, George raised the money. But if you were to ask Severin about that, I think we both had a little, we were a little -

AL: Apprehensive?

EB: I think it went beyond apprehension, but all went off well. The other thing that Severin and I did is something that has never been done before, we chartered a 727 United [Airlines] aircraft to fly the Maine delegation to Chicago. The Maine delegation had always gone to conventions in the past sort of on their own, but Severin, being the type of guy that he was, said, "We really ought to do it like other people do it." So we did. So we chartered a 727 United aircraft and flew everybody to Chicago.

Now we all knew that this was going to be a very difficult and dangerous convention, because of all of the protests, and the newspapers were just painting such a black picture. But the gravity of the situation really became apparent to us all when the late Bill Caldwell, who was a writer for the Portland papers – we took the press with us from Maine – and he came aboard with a hard hat, which would have done him no good during the riots, but he had a hard hat with him. I think it was from Cianbro or whatever the name of the company was at that time, and we sort of had a little fun about it. But he was wise, you know, the protests were really something that will forever be etched in my mind, and everyone who was in Chicago at the time.

AL: What kind of feeling did it leave you with?

EB: I could not believe [what was happening]. We had like three hours one afternoon, my driver said, "You've been working too hard, I'm going to take you to the Field Museum." And of course somehow the police knew that these were Mayor Daley cars or something, we got through everything, we got right to the Field Museum. And the Field Museum was one of the staging areas for the Illinois National Guard. And I will never forget my wife turning to me and saying, "Look at the barbed wire on those frames in front of the jeeps," she said, "they're going to move down Michigan Avenue with those jeeps," and they did. And it made you feel like you were in a different country, and the television was just hour after hour, and it was not like today with CNN and all those, but the riots and so on in downtown and in Grant Park, that's all you

heard about, and the newspaper headlines.

The Democratic Convention really was the catalyst for the protestors of the Vietnam War, and Eugene McCarthy was revving them up, and it was a hell of an experience. I can't say it to you any other way, and I think Severin and everybody else that was in Chicago at that time would tell you that you couldn't really believe you were in America. And it was the first time at a convention that there was really tough security. I've been told anecdotally that other conventions, you just got your credentials [and] you went where you want. You had to go at a specific time, you had to have your credentials around your neck, they had to be verified, it was totally different; an introduction to Democratic politics that a few years ago I never would have imagined that I was going to be experiencing.

Fast forward a little bit, Severin and I ran the [Democratic Party] operation, I think [elected officials] in Maine [were] Democratic at the time, John Martin was running the legislature. And then we had to get ready for the '72 convention in Miami. By this time, Democratic Party rules had changed. When George was chairman, it was the old way, the State Committee would pick the delegates, it was sexist to say, but it was the old-boy way of running Democratic politics. During the time between 1968 and 1972, Democratic Party rules changed. You literally – and I'm not saying it was a bad thing, but in order to elect delegates, it was like the quota system, and Maine being the type of state it was, it was difficult to really adhere to all the rules but we did, we adhered to the rules.

There was a great division, the Vietnam protest, we had a state convention as I recall in Portland, at what was the old Expo building, and we had contingents of Black Panther demonstrators and others that were ringing the Expo building. As I recall [now], Vice President Biden was our speaker, he was a senator at that time. [] To participate in politics during that particular era, there was some danger to it, which people probably today would not appreciate. But there was danger, there were riots. And even in Maine you had protestors outside of the Expo building protesting the Democratic State Convention. But we handled that all right. As I look back on it, we were probably more concerned than we needed to be, but at the same time we were all very cautious and so on.

I forget when George became a federal judge, I'm getting to being seventy-seven, I don't remember.

AL: He was appointed in '80, and he was a judge at that time, and he wasn't a judge for a long time.

EB: No, he was not.

AL: So late '70s.

EB: Late '70s, yes. When Ken Curtis' second term was ending, by that time the Democratic Party, I felt very comfortable, I'd really organized the day-to-day stuff, the systems, had a great

staff. Charlie Micoleau, who is now with Curtis Thaxter [law firm], he worked for me. Tony Buxton, who was at Preti Flaherty [law firm], he worked for me. We had a great staff. But at the end of the term, and Severin was going to step down, because he really wanted to lobby and practice law and stuff, in a sort of what they call bail-out time.

AL: I just want to interject, were there any women working in that office at that time?

EB: Oh yes, Mary Jane Lesperance worked in the office. I think her name was Grace something, Grace Ridlon maybe, she became the secretary of the Senate. Yes, we had women working.

AL: I just wondered, because they sort of started to come in in bigger numbers around that time.

EB: Right, and the dynamics of the State Committee started to change dramatically.

AL: Oh, really?

EB: There were more and more women being elected to the State Committee, and that was good, that worked out well, I'm all for it. But Severin said, "Well, you want to stay on as executive director of the Democratic Party?" I said, "Geez, I've been here eight years, I never thought I would be here that long." He said, "Well what would you like to do?" I said, "I don't know what I want to do; I want to continue to make a living." And he said, "I think that the executive directorship of the Maine State Bar Association is going to open up," and he said, "I'm on the board of governors of the Bar." And he said, "Let me talk to Carl [O.] Bradford" – Carl later became a Superior Court judge – he said, "I'll have Carl give you a call [to] see if you're interested."

Well again, I didn't even know [anything about the job], I'd seen the president of the Bar lobbying at the legislature when I would be around the legislature, but did I know what that job was going to be? I set here, it probably is humorous, but I didn't really know what it entailed.

AL: But Severin thought you would be good at it.

EB: Well, apparently. And we joke about it now when we see each other socially. So anyway, I didn't really think much more about it, I still had another year or so to go finish up. So one day Carl Bradford calls me up and he said, "I understand you might be interested in the Maine Bar job," and he said, "we're going to hire the first non-lawyer ever to be hired in the hundred years of the association[']s existence] to be the executive director." Well, I mean, I could almost feel the pressure at that point. So he said, "Board of governors is meeting this afternoon, and Severin's going to be there and everybody's going to be there, and bring your resume down." This was like at noon time. He said, "We want you down here at three o'clock." And I said, "Well Carl, I don't have time to put a resume together." Well, he basically said, "Oh the hell with it, just come down and talk to us."

So there I go, down to their headquarters, and Severin's there, Carl's there, Bob Marden, who had been the chair of the Republican Party.

AL: From Waterville.

EB: From Waterville, yes, and Herb Silsby, who later became a judge. I knew he was a Republican, but I knew his relative that worked at the legislature. So anyway, I go in there, and they have this big round table and I sit down, and Severin gives a big spiel about: this guy is a whiz on running things and organizing things, plus he's politically astute. And so they asked me questions, and I'm feeling a little less uncomfortable, and Severin said something like, "And he's a good friend of Ed Muskie and George Mitchell," and so on. And then Bob Marden from Waterville said, "Yes, I've seen Ed around the legislature a lot, he's a pretty fair guy, he's well respected by both sides of the aisle," which was news to me, and some of the others.

And then this big tall guy, Charlie Smith from Biddeford and Saco, because I had told them I'd been in air traffic control, and Charlie looked at me and he said, "So where did you control traffic?" And I said, "At the New York Center." And he said, "Oh, you're high complexity [controller]." And I said, "Yes, I am." He said, "Well I have my own plane and I fly out to Florida and I fly all around," and he said, "you probably controlled me at some time." And I said, "Maybe, but my expertise was European departures and arrivals, once they came into our air space, that was really what I did so I didn't do some of the en route stuff." So it goes on, and by that time I've been there an hour-and-a-half, and Severin and Carl are doing a great job. Finally Charlie Smith looked at everybody and said, "Look, if Ed can control air traffic, he sure as hell can deal with us lawyers and judges, so give him the job."

So they said, "Now we want you to stick around and have dinner with us afterwards." And I said, "Yes, I guess, but I got to call my wife." So I called my wife up and I said, "I'm not going to be home till late tonight, because I got a new job." And there's silence on the other end of the phone. "What are you doing?" I said, "I've got a new job," and I said, "it nearly doubled my pay." And there was more silence. So I held that job twenty-five years.

AL: Really.

EB: Twenty-five years. Every time that I would think that I wanted to do something else, they would just make it impossible for me to leave.

AL: An offer you couldn't refuse.

EB: No, you couldn't refuse it.

AL: So you probably over the years got to know a huge portion of the legal community in Maine.

EB: Everybody, oh yes, judges.

AL: And what was it that you did that was integral to the system?

EB: Believe it or not, I edited the *Maine Bar Journal*, [] and I took it from a little newsletter type thing to a very slick magazine which you probably have here in this library someplace. I also made continuing legal education a very, very profitable thing for the Bar Association. They used to do one or two programs a year, now they do three hundred programs a year. It's big business. But that's what they wanted, they wanted somebody that would not only bring ideas and so on, but had the wherewithal to make them happen.

AL: Right, follow through.

EB: So I took them from less than a hundred thousand dollar budget to six-figure budgets and so on. Took a while to do it, but all during this time I maintained my political contacts. Harold Pachios became the chair of the State Democratic Party, and he consulted with me on running conventions and stuff like that.

AL: Tell me about your history with Ed Muskie and getting to know him, and your impressions.

EB: Yes, I had known him for a long time, and then even after, when I became executive director of the Bar Association, I still had contact with George and Ed Muskie, and Bill Hathaway, Angus King, he worked for Bill for a while, and I knew Angus when he got ready to run for governor. I still kept in, and the folks at the Bar Association knew who I was and knew that there was no way that I was not going to stay involved, and they had no problem with that.

Ed Muskie, the first time I met him, he scared the hell out of me, because he was so big and so well known, and such an icon. And I really, I wasn't uncomfortable, but it was not a, you know, 'God, I'm in the presence of Ed Muskie.' But he took a liking to me. I found him to be intellectually at a very high level. He didn't come across that way a lot, but he was. I admired him for that, I admired him for all his accomplishments, [the] Clean Water [Act], all the environmental things, he was on the cutting edge of those things.

Personally, sometimes at social events we'd just sit down and talk by ourselves. He was always very interested in my family, was always telling me about his family. Jane, [his wife], she always sought me out at some point to talk to me. George not so much, he was, you know George, he's gone on to bigger and better things, but we still have contact. I must say though that, as of today, it's probably been two years since I've had any contact with him at all.

AL: With George.

EB: Ed Muskie had a temper. I've seen that flare up more than once.

AL: In what kind of situations did you see his temper?

EB: It could be the smallest things, something, some aide might have done something wrong, or something really wasn't ready when it was supposed to be ready. George I know felt the wrath of that more than once, because he shared that with me. But Ed Muskie was just a great man. And I think that Ed Muskie would be so proud of George, for the accomplishments in Northern Ireland, and President Obama having faith in him, and Hillary having faith in him to send him to the Mideast, and so on. I know he'd be very, very proud, we're all very, very proud of George. I've never met [George's] current wife or his son. I do know his daughter from his first marriage, and I haven't seen her for a while. The other thing about both Ed and George, if they both walked into the room right now, we would be old friends.

AL: So there's a warmth.

EB: Yes. I never saw George really, I've seen George get upset but I've never seen him display his being upset like Ed Muskie would.

AL: So, different temperaments.

EB: Right, and George, I remember many times we'd be driving someplace, we'd be talking about stuff, something might have gone wrong, nothing that I might have done, but he'd really be upset about it, he'd share it, but if it had been Ed Muskie in the passenger seat, he would have been probably blowing the roof off.

End of Side A
Side B

AL: We are now on Side B. And you were talking about sort of a little comparison in the temperaments between the two men, and you said that you drove with George Mitchell. Maybe often?

EB: Yes, when he was state chair, and even at other times, I'm just pulling this out of the air, but if there were a Democratic get-together in Belfast, Maine, well, the chair and the executive director of the party had to go. He lived in Falmouth, I lived in Freeport, so it was easy for us to get together. So we'd ride places, and I think we even went up to Starks, Main, one time, wherever that is.

AL: Oh, I know where that is. I do.

EB: And they had a little brochure for our attending the meeting, "Democrats are making sparks in Starks" or something like that, I'll always remember that.

AL: What was he like in the car, in terms of, I'm thinking of, was he talkative or really quiet?

EB: Both.

AL: Both? Did it depend on the situation?

EB: Right, right. And sometimes when you're driving from Portland to Belfast, that's a little hike, you know, you run out of small talk to make.

AL: How about baseball games, did you ever listen to those on the radio?

EB: No, because I'm not a baseball fan. If George was, he never asked me to put it on. We usually had some music or something on. I was always impressed, as I said earlier, with George's intellect, his manner, his ability to interact with people. And as I said, again, earlier, if there was a situation or a problem that needed to be resolved, he'd find about five ways to resolve it and then pick the best one. Most people don't have that ability, but he certainly does. I also think that had he continued to stay as a federal judge, I wouldn't be surprised that he'd be on the Supreme Court today, he's just that type of person and is respected by - I'm sure he has detractors, but unlike most of us, I would say the majority of people really admire him and respect him.

AL: Is there anything that I haven't asked you that you think is important to add, or that I missed in going through the history?

EB: Oh, I think we've covered about everything. I wish that I, if I were writing something for you, I probably would have thought of a lot of things that are not coming to me verbally. I'm not apologizing for that, I'm just saying this is the way it works. I do think that the Democratic Party that George and I started out in is much, much different than it is today. And as I alluded to earlier, those changes really started happening in the '70s, with George McGovern's election at the convention to be the standard bearer in the presidential election.

AL: Has it also been influenced by two, I'm thinking of two things, term limits, and the way campaigns are financed. Does it take away from the party, the state party as being the center of those things?

EB: The state party, in my opinion, is nowhere near as - in closed quotes - "powerful as it was in the '60s when George and I started it." It was very influential, not only issue-wise but who was going to be serving as Democrats in elected office. And I'm not certain that changes have been bad, I just think nowadays it takes forever to accomplish something, whereas in the early '60s, I hate to say it but there were king makers and things happened, and money was raised, and so on.

I like the diversity, I'm impressed with the diversity of the party, it's not all old ladies and old men, there's a variety of people of different views and different philosophies and ages, and I like the diversity. But again, it takes a long time for something to really happen. And Ed Muskie said something to me, we were at the Falmouth Country Club and he'd just had a knee operation

or something, he was really hurting, but he said, “Come sit down and talk to me.” And he was sort of musing about the old days when he got started in the ‘50s, and when he was governor, and he said, “Boy, we used to make things happen.” And I said, “I know what you mean,” and I said, “I’ve served in both worlds, and I started things, a few people made things happen, and now it’s totally different.” But things still happen.

Anyway, I would say that George Mitchell and Ed Muskie, Severin, until the day that I die, they’re going to be at the top of the list of anyone that I’ve ever met, and I admire them all, and I really think it’s great that you’re doing this project [on] George, and I really look forward to seeing what you put online. I’m really interested to see how my musings track with other folks.

AL: Well thank you so much.

End of Interview