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### Interview with David Emery by Mike Hastings

David F. Emery

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## ***George J. Mitchell Oral History Project***

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**David Emery**  
(Interviewer: *Michael Hastings*)

**GMOH# 181**  
December 18, 2009

**Mike Hastings:** The following is a recorded interview for the Senator George J. Mitchell Oral History Project, an activity of Bowdoin College. The date is December 18, [2009]. The place is Thomaston, Maine, I'm at the Thomaston Cafe on Main Street. Our interviewee is David Emery, I'm Michael Hastings, the interviewer. If we could begin, could you state your full name, all three of them, and spell your surname.

**David Emery:** David Farnham Emery, E-M-E-R-Y.

**MH:** And your date of birth and your place of birth.

**DE:** Place of birth is Rockland, Maine, on September 1, 1948.

**MH:** And your father's full name and your mother's full name.

**DE:** Albert Owen Emery; Georgia Elizabeth Farnham.

**MH:** F-A-R-N-H-A-M, very good.

**DE:** That's correct.

**MH:** David, you were interviewed for the Muskie Oral History Project in 2000, in the year 2000, and that interview covered your formative years in Rockland and your reflections about Rockland as a community, a lot of personal history about your mother and father. I'm not going to ask questions that just repeat what can already be found in that interview.

**DE:** [p/o]

**MH:** But I was very interested in the fact that that interview reminded me that you were elected to the state legislature at twenty-one years old.

**DE:** That's correct. Actually, I won the primary at the age of twenty-one, and my twenty-second birthday was September before my first general election.

**MH:** And your early involvement in politics, was that it in college, or had you been involved in high school?

**DE:** Oh, I'd been involved, volunteering in various campaigns, which usually amounted to carrying signs at rallies and stuffing envelopes and all the usual things. It's interesting, I developed an affinity for politics really at a very young age, second or third grade maybe, but during the Eisenhower campaign. And it was kind of odd for a youngster growing up on the Maine coast to be interested in such a thing as that, when snowball fights were probably more of a draw for most kids.

But we always discussed public issues in my house. Now, my grandmother was a New Deal Democrat, and my father I'm sure never cast a Democratic vote in his entire life, nor any of my family going back to the Civil War – I'm sure, I'm certain of it. So there was always some fire and brimstone around the dining room table, all in a good natured fashion. But I remember during the '56 Eisenhower campaign going into the Republican headquarters where my family knew all sorts of people and volunteers. As a kid you don't care about issues and all that sort of thing, but I liked the buttons and bumper stickers, so I remember bringing those home and plastering my room with them, and wearing buttons on my shirt at school. And that was probably my earliest – I don't know, you can't even call that involvement really – but I suppose it is to a degree.

And ever since then I followed the campaigns. I remember in '58, that [was a] very close election between Horace Hildreth and Clinton Clauson for governor. Clauson winning, I guess, was a surprise, but that was also the year Muskie beat Fred Payne for the U.S. Senate seat, and there was a Democratic landslide across the country. Of course, that affected Maine as well. And I've been involved and interested at one level or another ever since.

**MH:** Throughout this interview I'm going to ask you about people that influenced you, and people that you may have influenced. When you first got to the legislature as a newly elected twenty-two year old, who were the people that you worked most closely with, on either side of the aisle?

**DE:** You know, that's a good question, I haven't thought about that for years.

**MH:** And if you don't have a memory on this, we move on.

**DE:** No, no, I'm sure I do. I've got to think about it a minute, that's a long time ago. I knew some of the legislators [from] the Republican [area] by virtue of the fact that I had gone to State Committee meetings and had volunteered and one thing or another. I was, as I am now, very much of a fiscal conservative, so I tended to align myself with several in the legislature who were known for fiscal conservatism. Some who come to mind, Dick Berry, who was the state senator from South Portland and Cape Elizabeth at the time.

*(Aside: Just as a side note, the pancakes just arrived. We're camping out in the Thomaston Cafe, so we're eating as well. We're eating our way through an interview, which is always a good thing.)*

**DE:** And my concern right from the beginning was budgets and spending, so I tended to run with those who had a similar political view. In any legislative body, you begin to size people up after a few weeks on the job, and you notice that there are some, maybe the ones who you thought you were going to like and appreciate, who you begin to say to yourself, “Well you know, this guy really is not [as] sharp as I thought he was.” And then every once in a while you see someone and you say, “Oh, no one knows this person, but he really has a lot going on between his ears.”

I think any good legislator, after a while, transitions from the ideology to the intellectual, because there has to be an intellectual or logical content to the things that you do and the work that you choose to participate in. It’s always been my feeling that there are ideologues on every side, and I suppose they’re the bedrock of both political parties to a degree: they set the tone [and] the shape [of the debate]. But the legislating and the problem solving and the innovation always come from those people who are a little bit more intellectually nimble, who are not always predictable – people who have the courage to think issues through.

And to a degree, after I’d been in the legislature for a few months, the water and oil began to separate a little bit. So there were some legislators who I thought were exceptional. One is still involved, Sawin Millett, who’s a very, very thoughtful guy.

**MH:** Oxford County.

**DE:** When I was there he represented Dixmont and a few surrounding towns up in Penobscot County [ ], and served in McKernan’s administration, and at one point or another moved over to Waterford [ ], which is the district he represents now. But you always knew that if you listened to Sawin, he would understand [issues] from an intellectual standpoint, from a strategic view, what was going on with the budget, or what was going on with education. And you could always know that if you listened to him, you couldn’t go too far wrong. And I think Sawin is one of the guys who over the years I’ve always respected as knowing the state budget and knowing those issues, and that’s the kind of a guy that I used to like to associate with.

*(Taping paused while they eat.)*

**MH:** David, in the earlier interview with the Muskie thing, you talked about a number of your contests, but you didn’t give very much attention, I’d like to talk about your races in the House. You ran initially, as I recall you were unopposed in the Republican primary.

**DE:** That’s correct, in ‘74.

**MH:** And you ran against Peter Kyros.

**DE:** I did.

**MH:** And it was a squeaker. Do you remember the vote count, it was right around fifty percent, right?

**DE:** Yes, it was 94,300 to 93,800, or something like that.

**MH:** And there was a recount?

**DE:** Well, not only [ ] a recount, but there was another recount in Washington, because Peter took it to the Congress to inspect the ballots, and I think his hope was that somehow they'd get the House Administration Committee [ ] to turn over the election.

**MH:** Run by Wayne Hays at the time.

**DE:** Wayne Hays, that's right, who subsequently went back to the Ohio state Senate. Did you know that?

**MH:** No, I didn't – interesting.

**DE:** No, he did, Wayne Hays. There's a curmudgeon if there ever was one.

**MH:** So tell me the story of the recount. The reason I ask this is, I know that you've been involved in many recounts since, and I want to ask you about why you're the go-to guy for the recounts.

**DE:** Well, I've lived through one of the closest ones. Actually the story begins before that, because before you can talk about a recount you [have] to talk about the circumstances that get you to a recount. And I think it's fair to say that if Peter Kyros had taken that campaign seriously and had campaigned with his usual vigor, run TV ads, done mailings, all the usual things, surely he could have found 432 votes, or whatever the final margin was. But he didn't. So frankly, the result is as much Peter's failure to take the race seriously in what was considered to be an overwhelmingly Democratic election as it was to any great insights I had in campaign strategy.

But having said that, the campaign was fun, it was probably [more] fun than any that I've ever done since, primarily because there was no pressure. There was no pressure. I was a kid – I was twenty-six years old – no one thought I had a chance to win; I was kind of the party mascot running against the unbeatable Peter Kyros. But everywhere I went people would say, "Well, I [have always] voted for Peter but I don't really like him." You'd hear that over and over and over and over. Peter had a reputation for being a little brusque with people, maybe a little arrogant. He'd finally reached critical mass, and all you needed to do was to give voters an alternative that was plausible, in a year when it wasn't just Republicans who were in trouble but it was incumbents generally. And that's really what happened.

But I had done some internal polling, just volunteers making phone calls for the last two or three

weeks, and all of a sudden, as is typical in elections where people are changing their minds, [the] undecided group was almost a third of the electorate, and then over that last two weeks they began edging toward me – undecideds started edging toward me, eighteen down, fifteen down, eleven down, nine down. The night before the election we had a massive phone bank and made a bunch of calls, and when the calculations came in I was like three tenths of a percent ahead of him, in our calling.

And I remember going into the State House, oh, I'm going to say six o'clock on Monday night before the election, and I ran into [the] UPI [reporter] who, as I recall, was Dick Taffe. I have no idea what happened to Dick since; I haven't seen him in forty years probably. But I went in to Dick and he says, "Well, how's it going?" And I said, "Well, no one's going to believe this but I think I'm going to win this tomorrow." He kind of looked at me and he rolled his eyes, and I said "Yes, we've been doing some calling and I have volunteers telling me that this is a fifty-fifty race, I've closed the gap, I may be a fraction of a point ahead." And he kind of rolled his eyes and I said, "Well I'm telling you this tonight, and whatever happens tomorrow, you can report it any way you want, but I really believe this." And we chatted for a few minutes and then I went about my business.

[I] traveled around to polling places the next day, as candidates do, settled in at WRKD radio station in Rockland, to get the election returns. And the first numbers came in – and I still have the UPI wire yellow sheets somewhere – the first returns that came in were seventy-one to twenty or something like that, and I mean raw votes, not percentage, and I thought to myself, "Well this has got to be a small town or an island or something, some area that I should have won; it's going to be a long night." Forty-five minutes later I heard a screech from the other room where one of the volunteers was watching the tape as it came in. So I ran out to see what was going on and one of the young ladies who was volunteering on the campaign was just wild-eyed and absolutely speechless. [She] said, "You're ahead, you're ahead, you're ahead!" Well, it wasn't much, it was like 550 to 480 or some such thing, but that had to be significant – unless it was Rockland, and I knew it wasn't Rockland.

So then the question was, where did these votes come from? [ ] I didn't know, [because] they didn't tell you in the wire. Precious few towns had come in. The computer center in Falmouth used to be the place where the data was processed for the state, so finally I got a phone number for them and called [ ]. They said, "We've got a few numbers from York County and a few numbers from Cumberland, and one or two from Waldo," which was in the [1st] District in those days. And then it began to register, that if I was ahead, and I had numbers from York County and Cumberland County in that mix, then something was going on.

So for the rest of that night, I'd be ahead a little bit, and then something would come in and I'd be behind a little bit, back and forth, back and forth, and back and forth. About one thirty in the morning a whole bunch of votes came in, and I was down by about eleven hundred votes and I said, "Well, it's been a good shot." But eleven hundred votes down, with sixty percent of the votes in, and I don't know where these are from, but I can't feel bad about this. And I found out later that that was a bunch of Biddeford [votes] coming in that made that difference.

But over the night it kept coming back, coming back, coming back, and the counting closed down from about one thirty or two 'til morning. [Counters] going home, going to bed – the counting had just stopped. But seven thirty the following morning, I was down by about a 150 votes, I guess, and there were three towns out: Oakland, Newcastle, and Winthrop. I was pretty sure I was going to lose Oakland by a hundred [or so], and I was damn sure I was going to win both Winthrop and Newcastle, and that's the way it worked out. So one tally had me ahead by 691 or something like that, and another one had me ahead by 496. So obviously that was a discrepancy, but I was leading both of them.

The press was going crazy, the phone was ringing constantly; people were stopping by the house. Portland media wondered why I hadn't been in Portland. Bangor media wondered why I hadn't been in Bangor. But I was the asterisk, because the -

**MH:** I want to interrupt here, because I was one of those phone calls, and I'm not supposed to interrupt when you're talking, but I came in, I was working for Bill Cohen, Representative Cohen at the time. I'd stayed up until about three in the morning, and I had been calling up to Maine to find out what the returns were. I came in to work at eight, and Cohen's administrative assistant Tom Daffron was there, as was Mark Harroff.

**DE:** Yes, the media guy.

**MH:** He was the press secretary for Representative Cohen at the time. And I said, "When I went to bed last night they still hadn't called the 1st District in Maine, what happened?" And they said, "We haven't a clue." So we made a couple of calls to Maine, and nobody knew. And so it was actually my idea, I said, "Well, let's call David Emery, maybe we can get David Emery." And we called your mother's house and you picked up the phone, and I identified who we were and I asked what happened. And you said to me, you said, "I think I won." It was about eight fifteen in the morning by that point, I'd made a couple of calls, and you said, "I think I won." And so we always felt that we were the first to know.

**DE:** Yes, well I think that's probably right. You probably knew more than I did at the time. But it was an amazing thing. I mean it's the sort of thing you dream about if you're an aspiring politician. You write the script; you can't imagine what it's like to actually be in that situation. If you lose by ten points or you win by ten points, it's over and done with.

**MH:** A bit like a Jimmy Stewart movie.

**DE:** It is like a Jimmy Stewart movie – either that or a Stephen King movie, I'm not sure which. But it was an amazing emotional roller coaster. You were up, down, up, down, up, down, up, down, and I was just going on adrenaline the next day. So when all the numbers were in and the numbers had more or less settled around the 690, whatever that count was, I went to Augusta and I had a late morning, as I recall, [ ] eleven o'clock press conference at the State House, which of course was absolutely packed. Everyone was there, trying to figure out what

had happened, how this miracle could have occurred. And there was Dick Taffe sitting there with his notepad, and I looked at him and pointed at him, and he just shook his head. And afterward I said, "Dick, I told you, I knew, I could feel it, I could feel it."

**MH:** Of course that same Election Day, the day before, George Mitchell was losing to Jim Longley. Was there a connection between Mitchell's loss and your win?

**DE:** I wouldn't say the connection was with Mitchell's loss, but it was clearly with Longley's win. I mean there was a certain 'throw the bastards out' attitude; there were great changes in the legislature. The only one in Maine who was really inoculated from that was Cohen, who won by a huge margin. He had seventy-three percent or some such thing in that race. But everywhere I went, I'd run into people [who] didn't know me from Adam's house cat, and I'm campaigning, "Well I'm running for Congress." "You in there now?" "No." "Okay, I'm going to vote for you. Who are you running against?" "Well, I'm running against Peter Kyros." "Well, he's had enough, I want new people." We'd hear that all the time. And then you'd see people say, "Yup, I'm for Longley, and I'm going to vote for you." Did that over and over and over. And I ran into Longley all the time, which is not surprising [p/o]. He'd go through a factory, I'd go through a factory; go to some dinner, he'd be at the dinner, and there was kind of a bond there. Obviously I was supporting Jim Erwin, but Longley was always cordial to me, we always got along. As volatile as he could have been, we always got along.

In fact later on when he was governor, he used to come into my office. He'd go to the other [members of] the delegation, go through mostly testy confrontations, then he'd come to my office, take his shoes off and put his feet up on the coffee table and just kind of relax, and we'd chat for a minute and we'd talk about politics, we'd talk about issues and talk about one thing or another. So I like to think that my office was kind of a refuge for him, in the sense that it was a place where he could use the phone, and someone would type something up for him if he wanted. And I always let him know that I was very glad that he felt that way. He was a piece of work, Jim was a piece of work. But I liked him, I got along very well with him.

**MH:** Now, in later years you've become somewhat of a recount expert.

**DE:** Yes, well [I] had to [learn quickly] to survive. [The law firm] Verrill Dana, and Charlie Cragin in particular, ran that recount, both in Maine and then the ballot inspection before the House Administration Committee in Washington. There was some thought rolling around that I was going to be asked to stand aside when the rest of the members were sworn in. That didn't happen; I was sworn in on time. But the House Administration Committee still had the review of those ballots. So after I had gone through this big recount, I picked up the newspaper on Christmas Eve, as I recall, headlines were: "Kyros Accuses Emery of Fraud, Takes It to Election Review in Washington," or some such thing. And I've never really gotten over that, because first of all, it wasn't true, but second, to pull that on Christmas Eve was really kind of a mean-spirited thing to do.

So we had all that expectation of going to Washington, taking the seat and doing good things and



being a good American and all the rest. And then on Christmas Eve, when you should have a little peace and quiet with your family, I mean, in the vernacular, all that [crap] hit the fan. It was really unpleasant. It was unpleasant for my family, and it just added a great deal of anxiety in the process. But anyway, it went to the House Administration Committee and they threw [the challenge] out on the 14th of July, 1975, Bastille Day.

**MH:** Another seven months.

**DE:** Yes, another seven months. Now, seven months didn't mean that every single day something was happening [with the case]. But they put the ballots on an overhead projector, and Peter's lawyers were arguing that this was a vote, or that one wasn't a vote, and it was all just trying to deconstruct the actual balloting. So I paid a lot of attention to the ballot rules and the checkmark rules and what counts and what doesn't count, and how a ballot is spoiled, and I learned that out of survival more than anything else.

Parenthetically, I will say that many of those same problems still exist, although most of the paper ballot issues have receded into history because we don't use so many paper ballots now. But there are still a lot of small towns, including my own town of St. George, that use those paper ballots. [p/o]

**MH:** But they have a machine that reads them, right?

**DE:** No, they do not. We have [election volunteers to] count them, the same as they did forty years ago.

**MH:** Now, my understanding is that during the 1970s, probably prior to '76, when Carter came in, that George Mitchell was also working on recounts. Did you ever end up – when did you first meet him, was it when you were doing recounts, or was it some other time?

**DE:** I don't recall that. You ask me when I first met George: I'm not sure I can remember. I certainly knew him through the '74 campaign, and I knew him as an attorney in Waterville, and I may have run across him at one time or another in that context, but I don't remember that. But I got to know him during that campaign because, naturally, we'd run across each other.

**MH:** Debates and things like that.

**DE:** Yes, exactly; we'd run across each other. And then when he was U.S. attorney I had -

**MH:** Under Carter.

**DE:** Yes, I had occasion to talk to him on occasion.

**MH:** But you had three other campaigns for the House before you and Mitchell locked horns.

**DE:** Yes, that's right.

**MH:** Can you tell me about those campaigns, just briefly, anything particularly outstanding about them, or things that were particularly noteworthy? I ask this because there wasn't a lot in the other interview about those campaigns.

**DE:** Well, when you talk about an Emery campaign, obviously the one that sucks all the air out of the room is '74. '76 was I would say a typical reelection campaign. My opponent was Rick Barton. Rick's theme was "Barton works," and no one could quite figure out where and at what. He was about my age, and I don't frankly remember whether he was a year older or a year younger, and I beat him almost fifty-eight to forty-two, as I recall. In '78 my opponent was John Quinn, who was the consumer advocate, as I recall, and [had] written a consumer guide. And John I think had the view that, because he was a consumer advocate, he had a winning issue, and [ ] quite predictably, [it] never caught on.

The thing that's interesting – because I've been on both sides of this – running against an incumbent who's doing his job is almost an impossible task. And it's not because the rules are an advantage to the incumbent, but the incumbent's in the press every day. The incumbent can pick up the telephone and call a news conference and five hundred thousand people see him on TV that night, always in the paper, and except in an extraordinary year – which can happen on occasion, and I think we may be seeing one in the making – the incumbent has the benefit of the doubt. He has the facts, he has the information, he's been there, and except in those circumstances where things have gone so awry in the public mind that they demand a change, the incumbent is almost always going to have the advantage.

And that's the way it was in '78. John was a bright guy, but there was really no lever that he had, there was nothing that he could develop that was going to give him any advantage. In 1980, Hal Pachios was my opponent. I guess of all my opponents, I've seen Hal off and on more over the years, and I like him, nice guy, and he's obviously been very successful. But Hal had the idea that by virtue of the fact that he was an attorney, he was obviously much brighter than I was, and it didn't help him any. I mean, it was the way he presented himself.

One funny incident that I remember in that campaign, somewhere that fall we happened to be at some picnic or some barbecue or whatever, and the current issue at the time, as you recall, was the hostages in Iran. So I was talking with Hal, and I don't know how it came up but I said to him, "Hal" – I'm trying to remember the context, but anyway, the upshot of it was – I said, "Your name I.D. is improving a little bit." He says, "You think so?" And I said, "Yes, but it probably won't help you much." And he said, "What do you mean?" And I said, "Well, people come up to me and they say, 'Oh, Dave Emery! Who are you running against'?" And I say, "Hal Pachios." Then there'll be a pause: "Pachios, Pachios, what kind of a name is that? It's Iranian." Hal laughed. He was a good sport. And I've laughed about that so many times. And I ended up winning that sixty-eight, almost sixty-nine percent. But that was the Reagan year, that was one of those years where there was just absolutely no way that an incumbent doing his job was going to lose.

Now, the converse of that is, Olympia [Snowe] had a couple of close races in the early '80s. Pat McGowan, if you remember, came very close to her twice, and I think that was a combination of things. Obviously Pat's an attractive candidate and ran a good race, but one of those races as I recall was '82, and that was a very bad year for Republicans. It was the year that I ran against Mitchell, and on top of all the other factors that went into races in Maine, there was an assumption that voters wanted a change – so there was at least a ten or twelve point shift toward the Democratic candidates. So it can cut both ways, but generally speaking, incumbents win, unless they get caught on the wrong side of some issue and can't defend themselves adequately.

**MH:** I'd like to talk to you about your teams, and I say that plural because I know that it's not always a single team. I've worked in offices where there was a Washington team of federally paid people, and then there was another team. Can you talk about the – and you can generalize, I'm not asking for any specific campaign or any specific year – but who were the two or three really strong people on your Washington team, the people that were in your offices in Washington, and that you really look back with fondness on?

**DE:** Well, we can get the campaign side. I don't know as we really had a Washington team. There was fund-raising to be done, there was -

**MH:** No, I meant the federal government, the congressional office.

**DE:** Congressional office, oh yes. I was always very pleased to have an exceptional staff. In Maine, generally George Smith, who is now the head of the Sportsman's Alliance of Maine; Hattie Bickmore, who was the administrator of my district offices; Jim McMahon, a former legislator who I served with, who to this day is one of the most organized people I've ever known in my life; Charlie Smith, who worked with me, went to Alaska and actually is now back, living in Stockton Springs.

**MH:** What did Charlie Smith do?

**DE:** Charlie was veterans' affairs, and Charlie was tireless. He went to all the veterans' organizations and all of the meetings in small towns doing casework, and it was really an exceptional operation. So they were all critical to keeping things running well in the Maine office. Also Guy Scarpino – Guy [ ] was in the Rockland office for a while. Guy is certainly one of the brightest people [who] worked for me; he had an encyclopedic grasp of defense, foreign policy, environmental issues. He himself had been a fisherman for a while, so he knew all the fishing issues.

They were exceptional and did a tremendous amount of casework. It was astounding to me, the amount of casework that we handled. And of course most members of Congress don't have a clue about how to deal with those things; it's the staff that does it. If someone has an issue, [ ] Social Security or immigration, [for example], or various issues coming from the military, it's the staff that deals with those things, and if you don't have a good staff then you're really sunk.

**MH:** And on the political side, campaigning side, who did you really look to for help?

**DE:** Well, as happens, some of the federal people would switch over to the campaign, go off the federal payroll and go on to, you know – George did, Jim McMahon did, Hattie did on occasion. And another person who I relied on heavily was Stan McGeehan; Stan's deceased now.

**MH:** Where was he from?

**DE:** From York County. He was campaign manager and -

**MH:** How do you spell that, McGeehan?

**DE:** M-C-G-E-E-H-A-N, good Irish name. And Stan was retired military, he'd been military attaché in South Africa, was a Marine Corps veteran. And Stan and I remained very close; we did some business things together after I left Congress and came back to Maine, and I miss him. [He] was a very close friend and a very good organizer, very good organizer.

**MH:** When did you first decide to run for the Senate? I mean not the date, but -

**DE:** It would have been during '81-'82, my fourth term. And you look back on it, I suppose anyone would, and you say 'well what if' – what if I hadn't done it; what if the year had been better; what if I'd decided to stay in the House; what if, what if, what if. And I'm sure that if I had done one thing or another thing, it may have changed the numbers in that race, but I don't see how I could have won it [under the] circumstances. It was one of those years. It was after a year-and-a-half of Reagan's first term – bad stuff had happened, good stuff hadn't happened yet (not dissimilar to the situation Obama's in right now), so consequently there was a correction, an adjustment.

Now, you can look at elections historically. Anyone who's ever read a thing about American politics knows that the incumbent party loses seats in the first term of any incumbent president, unless you have a Cuban missile crisis or some such thing like that to change the dynamic. But the world was out there, grabbing me by the lapels and saying, "Okay, you're going to be the next senator." It was everyone's expectation; the Senatorial Campaign Committee and constituents and family and the whole universe was out there pulling me in this direction. After all, here was George [Mitchell], nice guy, bright guy, but appointed. I had a thirty-two point lead over him at one point early on. And all those things kind of conspired to paint a picture that [turned out not to] be the complete picture.

But [I have] no regrets, and as much I would like to have been a senator, I went on to the U.S. Arms Control Agency, where I saw the president and the vice president and the secretary of state and the secretary of defense two or three times a week, traveled all over the world, dealt with intermediate range and strategic weapons systems, [was] involved in the chemical weapons

protocols, spoke in New York, spoke in Geneva, spoke in Russia, spoke all over south Asia, and I spent two weeks in India. I went to Australia and New Zealand four of five times, I served as the acting ambassador to the Committee on Disarmament [at the United Nations] in the fall of 1984. So I look back at that time and I can't say that I would have had a more robust career had I been a senator, as opposed to what I'd done.

Obviously [it was] a very critical time. The work that we did materially led toward the events in Eastern Europe and the Berlin Wall, and the great improvement of relations with Russia, although that goes back and forth. So if it was a consolation prize, it was a really good one, and not bad for a country boy.

**MH:** You've also done some political consulting over the years, since you left the Congress.

**DE:** Right.

**MH:** Can you talk about the nature of that work, and what draws you to it and what aspect of it do you most enjoy?

**DE:** Well, it's mostly in the context of polling, and this began, as I said, back when I ran in '74 for the House, and I developed an in-house means of apportioning calls among the district towns, analyzing the data, writing questions, and it got to the point where the results were as good, at least as good, as the expensive, professional surveys. So after I came back from Washington, Chris Potholm and I started to do this professionally. And it's not what I would call a full time occupation. I have to do other things, as does Chris, but to this day we do surveys, mostly non political, mostly for business and industry, one thing or another. But occasionally for political clients, which is more fun I guess, but as we know, industry pays on a more regular basis than politicians.

**MH:** The technology must have changed a lot since you started.

**DE:** Well, what used to be done with a calculator is now done in a spreadsheet or various computer programs that I've written over the years to analyze the data. [p/o] [The data is] entered [into] a seamless web form and the data's downloaded and processed electronically, so technology [makes it] a heck of a lot easier.

**MH:** I remember, I recall somebody's name, named Peter somebody-or-other who was involved in that whole -

**DE:** Yes, that was Pete Burr.

**MH:** Burr, that's it, that's it. Is he still involved in it?

**DE:** No, Peter's had a sad history, sometime after he'd left my office he had a problem with pedophilia, and actually spent some time in the Augusta Mental Health Institute. Since then, has

had a series of debilitating medical conditions and is now in assisted living in the Portsmouth area.

**MH:** I'm sorry to hear that.

**DH:** No, it's a long, sad story, and you don't wish that in anyone's life, but he made some [bad] choices, [and] that led him down a very unfortunate path.

**MH:** I'd be interested in your take on the current politics of Maine. Just given your interest in party, you've always been very active in party politics, perhaps in some respects, my reading would suggest that, of our elected candidates, you're almost the most active, in terms of the grass roots work.

**DE:** Yes, that's probably right. First of all, it's always been an interest. Second, senators, no matter who they are or what party, tend to be a bit more separated from political grass roots, for a couple of reasons. First of all, they have broader responsibilities, more demands on their time, and also they don't have the immediate political pressure because they are six years between elections, so they tend to deal with big picture more, stay in Washington more, which is how [the system] was designed. House members have to be closer [to the electorate] because they're up for election every two years, so there's a perpetual campaign going on. And that's probably the way it was with me.

I found that to be very tiring after a while. As much as I enjoy the political give-and-take, one of the reasons I ran for the Senate in '82 was, I was just sick of going home every [weekend] to campaign in elections every two years, and the constant pressure of raising money, you'd never get a breath of fresh air from it. Now, my situation was a little better, because if you take a look, I went from 50.1 percent, to fifty-seven and a half percent, to sixty-one and a half, to almost sixty-nine, so the trend line was favorable. I had pretty well broken the district in, which is not to say that I couldn't run into a problem running for reelection in '82, but it probably wasn't likely that I would have been beaten.

But nevertheless, unless you are an incumbent in a safe district – in a city district for a Democrat, or a rural southern district for a Republican, for example – you're almost always going to face reelection pressure. And I was just getting sick of it. I want[ed] to get to the point in my career where I [would] spend more time dealing with issues and less time dealing with the give-and-take of getting reelected. And that was a major factor.

**MH:** When I worked for Cohen, we used to say that it was always easier to run statewide from the 2nd District than it was to run statewide from the 1st, and it seemed to me that you had a disadvantage insofar as you were in the northern reach of the 1st District – you weren't where the population was. It didn't seem to bother you in terms of your strategy.

**DE:** No, I carried Portland twice. In fact, my last reelection I almost carried Biddeford. I didn't carry it, but I almost carried it. So by all accounts, I had broken in the district. In fact,

when I ran for governor last time, I won in York County.

**MH:** What year was that, when you ran?

**DE:** It was 2006. There was a well-respected reporter from the *Portsmouth* [N.H.] *Herald* who thought I lived in York County, after all these years. But I mean, that is a measure of how well I had southern Maine broken in. And so I had pretty much overcome any problem with the population disparity. However, I think it is certainly true, with three hundred and forty-three towns in the 2nd District, or whatever the count is, if you have to go from southern Maine to getting your name I.D. in Washington County, Aroostook County, Penobscot County, Oxford County, traveling over that vast area and getting to be known on a personal level in those small towns, it's very difficult. And so from that context, an incumbent like Cohen, or Olympia, who's already broken in the 2nd District on his or her own time running the 1st, you've only got a few areas. You stop in Rockland a couple of times, and other than that you just go down I-95, you start in Waterville and you go to Kittery, you can just stay within ten miles of I-95 and you got it made.

You can't do that in the 2nd District. So that's really the pressure point right there, is that there's no easy way that you can run from the south and break into the north unless you have some secret reason to be well known in Norway, Lewiston, Machias, Bangor, and Fort Kent.

**MH:** Do you have any favorite campaigning stories about the '82 Senate race?

**DE:** I don't know about the '82 race. That one was more mechanical, and [I know] that's a strange way to put it, but I wasn't in control of that one. I was along for the ride, you know, everyone was telling me, "Well, you're running for the Senate now, you've got to do it the professional way, you've got to have professional media people, you've got to have professional strategies, you've got to this, that, and the other thing." And I frankly wasn't used to that. I was a couple steps away from deciding where I was going to [go] and what I was going to do, and it was not easy.

But I'll tell you, if you want another favorite campaign story, my favorite story was the 1974 race, the first one. I was walking down through York County, as Cohen had done – I was in North Waterboro, as I recall. The strategy of this campaign was pretty basic. I mean you're on the road and there's a car in front, car behind with a big sign, Dave Emery, honk and wave, and we'd stop and talk to people, a woman washing the windows, the postman delivering the mail, the guy in the garage, whatever, you just stop and say hello.

So walking down – was it Route 4? I'll never remember exactly. There was a fellow outside, beautiful Maine scene, nice farm house and gorgeous garden, absolutely gorgeous garden, and he was out there doing whatever he was in the garden. So I went over and said hello to him and we're talking, and he says, "Hold that thought, I'll be right back." Came out of the barn with a shotgun. Well, so I'm wondering, 'what's going on here?' And he says, "See that woodchuck? I've been after the son-of-a-gun for weeks." So he took aim, and he shot the woodchuck on the

other side of the garden. Well I don't know what he used for shot, but if I'd taken a weed whacker and gone through his garden, it couldn't have destroyed more vegetables. That woodchuck couldn't have eaten that much vegetation in its entire life as he blew away with his shotgun. So I looked at him and said, "Well, I guess you got him." It's the funniest thing I ever saw – but he got the woodchuck, but he could not have taken the weed whacker and done a better job with his vegetables.

**MH:** So David, you live now in St. George?

**DE:** That's right, Tenant's Harbor.

**MH:** And I understand your son just graduated from college?

**DE:** He graduated from Georgia Tech, *summa cum laude*.

**MH:** What was his major?

**DE:** Electrical engineering, just like Dad. But the sequel to the story is that he's going to medical school. He's been accepted at the University of Vermont Medical School, and he's interviewed at a number of other places – just came back from UCLA out in Los Angeles. So we don't know exactly where he's going to go, but we know he's going to go [to medical school] because he's already got one in the bag.

**MH:** And your wife Carol's an attorney?

**DE:** She's an attorney, and also the Knox County judge of probate.

**MH:** So Governor Longley's daughter is the judge of probate for Waldo, and your wife is judge of probate, okay.

**DE:** That's right, that's exactly right.

**MH:** Well this has been great. Before I close, since the last interview, the Muskie Oral History interview with you was done in 2000, can you kind of talk about what you've been doing in the last nine years? We'd like to bring it up to date.

**DE:** Well, I've been running my consulting business, which does political polling, management consulting. I've worked on a number of energy projects, which is really the big thing I've worked on in the last ten years or so, most notably developing strategies for renewable energy resources, particularly here in Maine. The current project, which I think holds some significant promise, is the development of energy from wood resources, either in the form of wood pellets or in the form of wood gasification, which has some promise of generating electricity, or possibly bio fuels, although the economics of that is still somewhat questionable.



We have a tremendous opportunity here in Maine to produce a significant portion of the energy that we use, and if we can do that and put Maine people to work and cut back on dependence on foreign oil all in one project, it's certainly worthwhile. That's what I'm working on at the present time.

**MH:** Thank you very much, this has been great.

**DE:** Well, I've enjoyed it, Mike. I hope this gave you what you were looking for.

**MH:** It did. One of the nice things about Maine is it's a lot of miles, square miles, but there are relatively few people, and the degrees of separation are few.

**DE:** It's really true, it really is true.

**MH:** And we appreciate your taking the time to do this. Thank you.

End of Interview