

Interviewer: Tom Girard (TG)

Interviewee: Dennis Dutremble (DD)

Date: Saturday, December 13, 2025

Location: Dutremble home, Biddeford

Transcriber: Nicole Morin-Scribner (NMS)

TG: My name is Tom Girard. I'm a volunteer with the Biddeford Cultural and Heritage Center. It is December 13th, 2025. I am the interviewer. Today, it's my privilege to interview Dennis Dutremble. We are conducting the interview at Dennis' home in Biddeford. Dennis, do you prefer to be called Duke during the interview?

DD: Yeah.

TG: OK, so Duke, where and when were you born?

DD: I was born at the old Trull Hospital in Biddeford, Maine on April 28th, 1947. I'm a baby boomer.

TG: How did your family come to Biddeford?

DD: My father's parents came to live in Biddeford in the early 1900s. He was just 9 years old. They set up here. My grandfather became a police officer in 1928.

My grandmother, the family had been here for a while. I don't know when they immigrated here.

TG: Is this on the Dutremble side?

DD: This is on the Dutremble side. My mother came from New Hampshire. She was born in Berlin, New Hampshire. Her parents bought a farm in Lancaster. She lived there most of her early years on the farm in Lancaster. While visiting one of my aunts, it was her aunt actually, who lives in Biddeford. She met my father on one of those visits. That's when the Dutremble family with the Dubreuil family started.

TG: Did your folks ever go back to visit relatives from Canada or back to New Hampshire?

DD: We went back to New Hampshire often, to the farm, to see my mother's brothers and sister. That was great. I still remember that. I still have pictures of them. I still have great memories of it.

Canada, we would go very occasionally. I did more of that on my own with my wife. When we were married, we'd go visit my relatives in Canada a lot and her relatives.

TG: Was that in Quebec?

DD: Quebec. It was Sherbrooke. Some of them Sorel. Interestingly, when you talk about the Biddeford Cultural and Heritage Society, my wife and I tried to find our ancestors, especially on my father's side. After my grandfather was killed, his mother moved back to Canada. We tried to find out the history and where my relatives were. We haven't gone back.

TG: I know at least one of your father's brothers in Biddeford, didn't his siblings follow him?

DD: One of my father's brothers or my grandfather's brothers?

TG: What relation is Dick to your brother? I always thought...

DD: Dick is my father's brother. My grandfather had 12 children. My grandmother Roseanna had 12 children.

TG: My God.

DD: They were all born in Biddeford. They are around in the Biddeford area except for one who may have moved to Vermont, Lucille, when she married.

TG: They all were born in Biddeford?

DD: They all were born in Biddeford, and they all lived very close by. We had almost every year, at least once or twice, great family reunions when we were younger. Now, they've all passed. All 12 of them. My father and all of his siblings are passed. The same with my mother.

TG: Where was your father age wise with his siblings?

DD: Third. He was the third. There was Irene, Ben and then my father. There were three boys and nine girls.

TG: What was your mother's birth name?

DD: Dubreuil. D-U-B-R-E-U-I-L. Another really great family. Grew up on a farm where I spent many of my summers. I would go up to Lancaster and work the farm with my uncle to help him out in the summer. I was very young. I was maybe 14 the last time I went. I would go every summer.

TG: How did your parents meet? Can you tell us a little bit about their work and their life during their marriage?

DD: They met when my mother was visiting my aunt Jeannette, which was my grandmother's sister. She lived on the corner of Green and Mason Street, which is where all of the Dutrembles and all of the relatives of the Dutrembles were. By coincidence, they met on the street there. They started a relationship. That lasted a few years. They married in 1945.

TG: What did your parents do for work?

DD: My mother didn't work until all of the kids were out of school. Let me change that a little bit. My parents owned a grocery store across from St. Joseph Parish Hall, where that Civil War canon is. They worked that for several years before they sold it. My father became mayor. Probably in the early-mid 1950s until 1973-74 that they owned and operated that mom and pop store. Back then, mom and pop stores were the primary place where people got their groceries before the big supermarkets came in. My mother would do a lot of baking. At Christmastime she would make all of the salmon pies, tourtieres (French meat pies). She would do all of the cooking. Obviously, she'd spend a lot of time in the store. My father would make deliveries. Of course, we had free reign of the store. That was quite something, growing up in a store like that. I have great memories of that store.

TG: How many years was your father running that store?

DD: First, he bought it with his brothers, Ben and Richard. Then, my uncle Ben bought a store on Main Street. They split and he purchased part of the store. Then my uncle Richard, my father bought him out and became sole owner with my mother. I would say it was from the mid 1950s. When he became mayor in 1973, I think that's when they sold it. So, it was quite a while, 10-15 years. [NOTE: changed from 20-25 years by the interviewee during the transcript review process]

TG: That's a long time.

DD: It was good. It was fun. I've been doing my math quickly. It's probably closer to 10-15 years. My mother worked at Laverdiere's once they retired from the store. My

mother worked at Laverdiere's until she was 81. *[NOTE: A pharmacy chain based in Waterville, Maine. At its peak, the company operated more than 70 stores in small towns throughout Maine, New Hampshire, and Vermont. Aside from the pharmacy, the stores sold general items]*

TG: Where was Laverdiere's?

DD: Walgreens

TG: Oh, where that is now.

DD: Before then, it was in the Five Points Shopping Center. She worked there quite a while. She loved it. She really loved it.

TG: Can you tell us a little bit about your siblings? I know you have brothers.

DD: I have four brothers. My brother Don and I were very close and competitive. Even from a very early age. I have some great Dan and Don stories. They call me Dan, my family. We had some great, great stories with Don and with Rick and Al and Larry too. But Don and I were two years apart, and we were the first. Some of them are great memories but not so great when they happened.

TG: Was he older than you?

DD: Two years older. He passed in 1998 at the age of 52. He was very young. His heart, seems to be a trait of the Dutrembles to have heart problems. He was older by two years.

TG: He went to St. Louis also?

DD: Right. We played on the same basketball team, the same baseball team. He didn't play football. I was a couple of years behind. I was always on JV or Freshman. He was quite a guy. Quite a guy. He went on to college and got a real severe case of diabetes at the age of 21. That eventually contributed to his death. He still kept building his own houses and teaching at Massabesic.

Rick is two years younger than me. Again, it's the same relationship I had with my brother. We had two years younger and we were competitive there. We all became pretty competitive in sports because back then we played basketball in our backyard. It was rough. The surface was always bumpy but boy, did we love it. When we got really competitive, we used to go to the Mayfield and play basketball there with others.

The same thing with my brother Al. He was quite an athlete also. He always competed and try beat my records at St. Louis. When I got inducted into the Hall of Honors, in the sports honors, he introduced me. He spoke about how I broke all of these records in rebounding and assisting and highest scorer. When I got up and started talking, he came up, took the mike and said, "The only reason he got more rebounds than me (now he is 6'5") is that when I played the shooters were really good. They always made their baskets, so I didn't have a chance to rebound like you did." I just said to the crowd, "No. Don't believe it. I was just better than him." (laughter) We always had this competitiveness. It's always been friendly competitive. We love each other. As a matter of fact, he was here yesterday.

Larry was the youngest.

TG: Was Larry also an athlete?

DD: Not as much. Larry was more into hands on stuff, construction. He became a director at Navy Yard Nuclear Department. When Larry was a kid, he used to idolize me sort of. I used to have a game with him when I'd say, "I'll give you a nickel every time if you can catch the football." He'd stand there and try to catch them. I'd give him the ball. We still joke about it today. He still says, "Hey, do I still want to make a nickel?" (laughter)

TG: In your unbiased opinion, which of you was the best athlete?

DD: Oh, it's still me (laughter)

TG: I hope you hear that, Alan. (laughter)

DD: Alan was tall. He was a good shooter. He was a strong rebounder. He was a good athlete.

TG: I even remember him being a good baseball player and pitcher.

DD: He was an excellent baseball player, yeah. My father taught him how to pitch. My father was an athlete who left school early because of his own father's death. He didn't get to play in the high school sports that he would have. There's a reason why he was called Babe. He was a good pitcher. He was a hitter. I can still remember when we'd be playing softball, and he would play, especially in these benefit games. He'd go up to bat and hit them over the fence in Biddeford field by the house where Pontbriand used to live, Willie Pontbriand. It's just amazing. He was a good athlete.

TG: Did the name Babe, is that after Babe Ruth? Is that because he was such a good baseball player?

DD: He was actually invited by the Boston Braves (again this is hearsay) to go up there. He went up for one day and just came back. I guess it was just too much for him. I don't remember the whole story, but he was an athlete. He didn't get to play in high school, which is why he probably enjoyed watching us play so much. Not only for the sports, but other activities too. He just supported us in school. He supported us in college. He supported us whenever he had a chance. My mother, too. They were both out there watching the games.

TG: What was it like growing up in Biddeford for you?

DD: I always seem to go back to Biddeford, and I see it in black and white. I see me and my brothers riding bikes, being on the streets, playing football in front of my father's store, which you couldn't do today. We'd have pick-up games in front of the Parish Hall. We'd go to Shaw's Hill sledding. Our parents bought us a 5-person toboggan. It was a great community to live in as far as the Franco-American culture. Most of the people we knew were relatives of my parents. My parents on both sides are primarily here in Biddeford. My father's father, my grandfather, and grandmother had huge families. They then married into huge families. So just about everyone, especially in a two or three block radius, right downtown, were related to you. It's just like every soul.

I remember almost being grown up and going downtown. It was like being in a mall. The stores are all open. The sidewalks were full with hundreds of other people. It was just so different than what it is today.

I very fondly remember that. The church. The ringing of the bell. I don't even think they do this anymore. At noon, every day the Catholic churches would ring their bells, the Angelus. You look back and get a very warm feeling. Back then, you are so young, you don't appreciate it like you do going back.

At Christmas time, my father, this is one of my Don and Dan's stories, Dan and Don. My father used to get a truck from Casco Bottling. I don't know if you remember Casco Bottling, the Casco soda. They used to let him use one of their trucks. Every Christmas season, he and the boys (neighborhood young men and teens) from the Blue Diamond Club. I don't know if you've ever heard of the Blue Diamond Club. The back part of the building at the time, there was a whole apartment complex, created a club for boys, teenagers. It was called the Blue Diamond Club. They had chairs in there. They had ping pong tables. They did this for the local youth.

TG: This was behind your father's store?

DD: Yeah. Right now, it's a parking lot. There used to be an apartment building which is still there and that store above it where my grandmother lived. Then there was an attachment that was quite as big as it is now and a huge garage next to it. When we worked at the grocery store that my father owned, we used to put all of the empty bottles there. You'd open it after a week, and it was bottles everywhere. You'd have to go sort it out. They created that Club.

At Christmastime, a lot of these 15- to 18-year-old boys and young men would get in the truck with my father and a car and go up north to cut their own Christmas trees from fields that the owners would let them. I don't know what the contract was. We'd go up there and my brother Don, got to be old enough, I think he was 10 or 11. My father brought him with him one year. The next year I said I wanted to go. My father said, "You are still too young." So, I snuck into the station wagon, my father's green and white station wagon. I snuck under the blankets and tools underneath and hid myself. My brother, Don, helped me. I was under the blankets, giggling. About a good half-hour, 45 minutes later I threw it off and said, "Surprise." My father stopped the car dead in its tracks. He said, "What are you doing here?" I said, "I'm going too." Now remember, this is in the winter and I got in there with just a shirt, pants and some of my Sunday shoes. My father had to find a phone to call my mother. She had been out looking for me. There was a little bit of a fear going on with my mother. We continued. Now my father was in the station wagon and somebody was driving the truck, one of his older friends.

We got to the place. We started working on trees and somehow, the truck was in one place and my father's car was in the other. I was too young to remember how that happened, but he told the people that we are going to meet you there at such and such an hour, say 2 o'clock. If we are not there, leave. It means we drove the car back home. If I go there, I'll go with you in the truck. I remember that part. While they were cutting trees (I hope this story is not too long) my father sat me down with my brother and said, "You sit here. Don't do anything." And told Don, "Watch him." We are sitting here and I moved down a little hill. We are in the woods and I see a bog, a little swamp. I said, "Don, let's go down there." Don said, "No. Dad said stay here." I said, "No. No. Let's go down in there. We can play in that water or whatever." Now remember I'm in my shoes. We go down. There is a big log going across. I said, "I'm going to walk across." He said, "Don't do that. Don't do that." I started walking and I fell in the bog. I sank in the mud and start screaming, "Don, it's quicksand! It's quicksand." I've seen these things on the Tarzan movies about quicksand. I'm screaming and crying and Don doesn't know what to do. "Go get Dad. Go get Dad." (laughter). He starts running up

the hill and as he runs, he keeps falling. I can still see him falling and yelling, "Dad, Dad!" He gets up there and tells my father. My father runs up and pulls me out of the water. He brings me up and sits me down. "Now. Don't move." So, I didn't move. When we started leaving, my father decided that he and one other person would go to the truck. He only had about 15-20 minutes to get there. The other people took off with the car. I start walking, following my father. My shoes are all crappy and wet. One would come off. He'd sit me down. Another one would come off, and he'd sit me down. He did this two, three times and then said, "The heck with it." He grabbed me by the belt and started carrying me out like a suitcase. My father never got angry, but he was a little upset. We got to the truck just in time. We drove off. I'm sitting in the middle of the truck. He's on the left and there's the driver. Two guys were still in the truck and started pounding on the rear wall of the truck. My father gets out of the truck to see what it was. He said, "Stay here." Well, me being me, I decided to get out of the truck too. There was a huge moose tracking the truck, coming down. My father says, "Get in the car." I start getting in the car and my shoe came off. He took that shoe and threw it in the woods. I'll never forget that expression. He takes me and throws me in the truck and we take off. He sort of blamed Don for that. (laughter)

TG: Is that the most upset you ever saw your father get?

DD: My father never got upset.

TG: Great story. You touched upon it a little bit, what are some of your favorite places on Main Street when you were growing up?

DD: The Puritan was always a hot spot for kids from St. Louis. Reilly's Bakery was my favorite place on Main Street. We used to go in there and get bags of crumbs. They used to for cents they'd give you this whole bag of great stuff.

I always was fascinated when I drove with my parents over the bridge and saw all of the lights in the mills on at night. All of those buildings that you see now that are maybe condos or restaurants or whatever, back then when you walked across all that you saw was every window, hundreds and hundreds of windows all lit up at night because everybody was working there. You could actually hear the sounds of the machines, the spindles. When you cross that bridge, I always found that very fascinating.

I found the sign on one of those buildings as you go up Main Street, there used to be a place called Main Castle. I don't know if you remember it. Across the street on that building, there was a sign there that really got me started interested in history. This was one of the forts that stood against the Indians. I think they actually mention that the

Saco Indian, but it's a longer name. I started getting fascinated with the history of Biddeford and Saco at that point.

Not too many people understand when I say this, but my grandfather was murdered.

TG: This is the patrolman?

DD: He was murdered not too far from where my father's grocery store is. Right behind the Parish Hall on that side street, Kossuth and South Street. The kids never knew about that. We were never told that. They never spoke to us about it.

TG: Were they afraid to scare you?

DD: I don't know. I must have been at least in junior high when I found out. In 1958 or 59, I would say. In those years. Paul Lamb, myself and Joe Murphy (from St. Mary's) we used to stand on that corner. It was a hangout place for us. One day, state police cars, State Police cars with their sirens and local police surrounded my father's store. What the heck is going on? They were there. My grandmother lived upstairs. The person (Richard Snyder I believe his name was) who killed my grandfather had escaped. He wanted to talk to my grandmother about releasing him, to sign a paper that would release him. To say that it was ok to release him from jail on parole. I guess at that time, to kill an officer you had to go through approval from the wife. Then it passed on to the sons. Again, that was what I was told. My uncle Ben said he would never sign. My father said he would never sign. My father, by the way, saw the whole thing happen. I don't know if you knew that. My uncle Dick, who actually was a sheriff, saw the man who killed his father that he never knew because he was only 8 months old when he was murdered.

TG: What was the motive behind the killing?

DD: My grandfather worked the second shift. He would go to St. Joseph's Church every day before going to work. He would walk from the church, up Kossuth Street. The police station was downtown at the time, right below City Hall. He saw a car parked on Kossuth Street. It was a car that had just been reported stolen the day before. He remembered. So, he jumped on the running board in 1932. He told the guy he was under arrest. The guy just pulled out a gun. They actually started moving, started turning the corner. The guy pulled out a gun and "bang". He shot him twice and he got hit in the heart. It was almost sudden. My father, who was right on the corner of that V, where South Street and (Crescent Street).

TG: I know exactly where you mean.

DD: He was actually coming out of the Journal Tribune Building. He was delivering papers. He heard the shot. He saw somebody fall off. He didn't know it was his father. At the time, it was a busy area. It's not like today. People go to the mall, right? Back then it was downtown so there was about 7 or 8, 9 or 10 people there. He went up and looked down and saw his father. My father looked at me and said, "Dad looked at me and smiled. I never forgot it. Never until the day he died." It's a very sad story.

TG: When was that?

DD: 1932.

TG: So, your father was a young man.

DD: 9 years old. 9 years old when that happened. I don't think I have a copy here. I have a big copy. The Journal Tribune, April 8, 1982, was the 50th anniversary. Months prior to that, I did the research. I wanted to find out everything. The Journal Tribune published on two separate days a very extensive article about the whole history of that. I interviewed people. I went to witnesses and relatives. It was one of the most interesting and yet sad things I've done. I mean, to find out how all of this transpired. The Journal Tribune published it on the front page. On the Sanford edition, it was all on one page and another page. It was a nice story about then, and a lot of people didn't know it. Even some of my own cousins and some of my aunts. Most of my aunts were still living, not all of them. My aunts and uncles said they read that story and a lot of them couldn't stop crying. They just cried when they read this story because it hit home. About how they grew up, what they did when they grew up. What the effect was immediately after the killing and how they heard the news.

I interviewed witnesses who were there. One man, who was driving his horse drawn cart from a livery store downtown. He saw it. He was one of the first people there. An interesting thing, I don't want to mention his name but when I went to interview him, he was in his 90s. He lived in Saco. When I went there, he shut all of his shades. He was still nervous about retribution because he was one of the witnesses at the time. The story depicts the whole thing pretty accurately. I got that from my father, my aunts and witnesses.

TG: It's a moving story.

DD: Yeah. It is.

TG: How about downtown socially. You mentioned the Puritan. Did your family eat out much?

DD: No. We hardly ate out. The treat for us was going to the first McDonald's in Portland. That was when I was older. It was my younger brothers who got to enjoy that. We went out on special occasions, very special occasions. Either a major anniversary or when somebody got married. We did not go out a lot. As a matter of fact, I think at the time we went to the Wonderbar once or twice that I can remember. [NOTE: The Wonderbar was a popular restaurant, located on Washington Street, that hosted many of the City's banquets and parties] My father worked from 8 in the morning until 9 at night, every night.

TG: Did he come home for dinner? Did you do family dinners?

DD: We did big Sunday dinners because he had worked until noon on Sunday. Then we would have dinner. We had Saturday night. We had our regular frank and beans on Saturday. Burgers in the afternoon. Beans and franks at night. Friday night was wash the floor night. We'd get on our knees and wash the floor, the linoleum. I remember this like it was yesterday. My father would come home, and we would watch the Borax, Zane Grey, 20 mule team whatever that was, program. After that were the Gillette fights at 10.

TG: Zane Grey, wasn't that Ronald Reagan that narrated that?

DD: Yes, it was. Ronald Reagan. We would watch that. The kids by that time, the greatest programs for were the Little Rascals, the Three Stooges and Laurel and Hardy. We were taken with those programs.

We would go out a lot to Sebago Lake. My father and mother would. At noon, we would close the store. We would all get in and travel to Sebago Lake for the day.

TG: That's interesting, vs going to the Beach. You were closer to the beach.

DD: The beach at the time, Biddeford Pool, was a long drive because the old roads. You'd get sick. The old Pool Road. We wouldn't go to Old Orchard Beach. I can still remember. You'd go to the center and take a left. Two rights from there, we'd go to the beach there. I have all kinds of pictures of my mother and father being at the beach when they were younger. I think when they got the store, their lives were pretty much there.

TG: You are old enough to remember not having a TV. When did the family get its first TV. Do you remember that?

DD: We were living on Green Street the first time, in the 3rd floor apartment. We went from Green Street to Wentworth to where my father lived and lived there for 35-40 years

afterwards. On Green Street, I would say I was 5-6-7. I was on Green Street when that Christmas tree story happened. It was right across, you come down Birch Street and there's a big building right there. We lived on the third floor. Yes, I remember our first TV. I still remember the ice man, the delivery guys for our refrigerator. When I watch Jackie Gleason, old reruns, and I see that, I say, "That's us, right there." That's what I mean by still living in black and white. The first TV we brought in, we were all amazed by it, but you really couldn't see anything through the snow [NOTE: the snow refers to random black and white dots seen on old analog TVs due to lack of a strong broadcast signal]. There was only one or two channels, and it only played some times during the day. There was one program from Portland. Then there was Clara Bell and what was that?

TG: Howdy Doody.

DD: Howdy Doody, yeah. I remember those programs. I remember at night there were a few stations, but they all went off, and you had that symbol.

TG: The test pattern.

DD: Yeah. The test pattern. You'd watch it until the last red/white button would go. Do you remember that? (laughter). But the first TV was interesting. My brother Don would like to say, "I heard that if you look at it through a mirror, it takes a lot of the snow away." We tried that. We tried putting a fish tank in front of it. Of course, when we had the first color TV, it was a piece of cellophane with blue on the top, red in the middle and green on the bottom. I don't know if you remember those.

TG: That was your color TV? (laughter)

DD: That was our color TV. (laughter) Oh my God. I still remember that. We were in the apartment on Green Street, on the third floor. So, I still remember that.

TG: Good memories. St. Joseph Church, is that where your family worshipped?

DD: Yes. That's where I was married.

TG: Were any of your parents, uncles, and aunts active in the parish when you were growing up?

DD: They were all well-known through the history of the family and my grandfather. The community was really good to my parents. As far as helping out, all of us, Don, myself and Rick, I don't think Alan did, were all altar boys.

TG: I had that question on here.

DD: We were all altar boys.

TG: You were old enough to be there when it was in Latin. [NOTE: Catholic Masses largely stopped being exclusively in Latin after the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965)]

DD: Oh yes. They did. I still remember when I was learning, Brother Anthony was the one who was running the altar boys. He was the one who made you learn Latin. I can remember one time when he had me and another guy, we had to serve Mass. He wanted to know if we had learned, I can't remember if it was the Confiteor or the Act of Contrition [NOTE: the Confiteor is a Catholic prayer of general confession, meaning "I confess" in Latin]

TG: There was the Confiteor. That was the longest one we had to learn.

DD: Oh yeah. This was the Confiteor, and I hadn't really learned it. This friend of mine says the opening prayer. Then the altar boys had to recite the Confiteor. I really didn't know it all so (mumbling incoherent words). So I faked it and mumbled incoherent words real softly. This guy didn't say a word. So, Brother Anthony said, "Why didn't you learn like Dennis did?" (laughter). I said, "Oh my God. If he asks me to say it out loud, I'm dead." But I did learn it, the whole thing. I don't know if I could ever recite it again.

TG: It was certainly different times.

Things you did for fun. You talked about the Mayfield, going over there. I know a lot of kids, at least on that side of Biddeford, would hang at the Mayfield. They used those basketball courts and baseball fields.

DD: That became in the summer as soon as the snow left; that's where we went. Every day, we'd run there. No bike, we'd run there. Actually, that's where I got most of my experience in baseball and basketball. Then it became especially basketball. Then, there were no referees, and you played rough. You just learned the basics. You got better and better at it.

TG: I can remember watching you, Dick Agreste and Ted Caouette playing summer nights. It was competitive.

DD: It was very competitive. At its peak, you had enough people to have 6 teams. There were 2 courts. You played. The winners played. It was very competitive. It was a great time.

Ice skating in the winter. We used to go to the Westbrook Skating Rink. The climate has changed. Back then it was always icy, and you never had problems.

TG: Today, going by it, it's the first day I've seen it frozen in years.

DD: Yeah. It glistens right now. Between that and St. Louis Alumni started their own skating rink, which is where I met my wife.

TG: Oh.

DD: I met my wife at the St. Louis Skating Rink. We were young. We met there and it never stopped.

TG: I bet her parents were happy about that.

DD: Oh yeah. (laughter) They were. Again, they knew the family. My uncle Ben lived right across the street from them. They knew the family. They knew I played sports. They knew we were church people. I never really got any negative feedback from them. They were always pretty supportive. At least to me.

TG: Did you skate on speed skates?

DD: Yeah, oh yeah. You wouldn't even think of putting on hockey skates. No. The sharp blades. My brother Don was one of the good racers. He was just unbelievable. We did a lot of skating. My wife and I, when we were younger, used to walk to Westbrook. We went by yesterday and she said, "Do you remember how cold it was when we used to walk sometimes?" I said, "Yeah." We'd walk by Louie's Pizza. That's where Louie's Pizza used to be in one of those buildings. That was quite a walk back then in the cold.

TG: Both of those skating rinks were packed all weekend. At least in the 60's.

DD: Who were the brothers who owned those

TG: They owned Westbrook?

DD: Yeah. They ran Westbrook. The reason I say that is because my wife and I, later on after we were married, bought the house, our first home from one of the owners. I can't remember their name.

TG: Did you or any of your brothers or your father play softball?

DD: My father did. That's why he was called Babe. We'd go to the Mayfield, in that first original field behind the little clubhouse. Bob Cote, Coach Cote used to run it. We used to love to go watch. I watched Art Descoteaux play there. My father played there.

TG: That was a very competitive place.

DD: Again, back then there were tons of teams.

There were more activities for people. You asked about what I remember. I still remember the snowshoe clubs, Le Voltigeur and Rochambeau. How big that was. I still remember when they had the national or international festival here. Every snowshoe club in the country came over.

TG: Where did they snowshoe when they did that? I remember the clubs, but I don't remember anybody snowshoeing.

DD: Most of them would go in back of the Rochambeau. At that time, it was undeveloped. There were fields there, woods and Indian Cliff. They did a lot there in that whole area where the Cole Farm was. Where the dump was. Back then you wouldn't put much stuff there. It was all burnt. It was a burning dump. You used to see that smoke every day.

TG: Now it's Rotary Park. It's beautiful.

DD: It's beautiful.

TG: Did you ever swim up there, at the range?

DD: Yeah. Then my parents forbade it.

TG: Same with mine. We weren't allowed to go there at all.

DD: We told our parents, months later. They would say to us, "What are your kids not telling us?" (laughter)

TG: Now, that's a beach with lifeguards and everything.

DD: It's a beautiful beach. It's a great spot.

TG: Did you play broomball when they were doing that up there?

DD: No. That's one thing I never did. Broomball, I didn't do it.

TG: It's pretty brutal from what I hear.

DD: It was. Those are all my friends, Don Loranger and Dick Saucier. Those were all friends of mine. Talk about Joe Saucier. Talk about my friends from the past or people I knew.

TG: Little League.

DD: I played one year and then I coached.

TG: Your father was involved with the startup of that. They needed another little league in Biddeford.

DD: We were not allowed to play in East Biddeford. There was a cutoff as there were too many kids. So, my father, Sid Angers, and the barber Bert Gagne. I'm trying to remember the others. They all deserve credit for what they did. I was 12 years old my first year and only year playing. It was great. They gave of themselves. They fixed that field to get it ready. I'm glad they did. People afterwards, my brothers Rick and Al.

TG: Al was quite a little league player.

DD: I mean, he was a giant in little league. So was this guy Lessard.

TG: They were dominant pitchers.

DD: No-hitters. One would pitch a no-hitter one day and the other one the next day.

TG: I bet that's something your father did that was very beneficial for kids in the community.

DD: That's right. I don't know if you realize there's a monument now at that place where the cannon is. If you go where the cannon is, across from where the store was, where the biscuits factory used to be that blew up. We all heard it blow up. That's a vacant park.

TG: That was York County Biscuit Company wasn't it?

DD: Yeah. The Simards owned it. The Greens worked there. Chucky Green

TG: His father was the foreman of the warehouse, wasn't he?

DD: He opened the door when it blew up.

TG: Really?

DD: Yeah. They lived in that same building, our first place on Green Street. We were on the third floor, and they were on the second floor.

TG: Was anybody hurt in that explosion?

DD: No. Nobody got hurt. We were living at the last Green Street residence, behind the store. That house on the hill. It was about 5:30-6:00 o'clock in the morning. We heard the explosion. My brother Rick and I were in one room. Don was in another room. Larry and Al were in another room. My parents were in the fourth room up there. It woke up. I said, "The damn screen fell off the window. We had screens back then

before air conditioners. (laughter) The little, stretch ones. I heard my mother scream, "There's an explosion!"

We all got up. The building was on fire. My father's store, actually a lot of his siding got blistered. It actually knocked stuff off the shelves. That was quite an event. At that spot now, on the sidewalk right behind the cannon is a monument. There's a whole area, the canon memorial, and it's dedicated to my father. What he did for the youth of the area. His coaching, the Blue Diamond Club and all that. It's a good honor for him.

TG: Great story.

Do you have any Depression era stories from your parents or aunts or uncles. What it was like to grow up for them during that time.

DD: Growing up for my grandmother who was without the breadwinner. My grandmother had to go work in the mills. I can still remember going down to City Hall when I was a young kid, the Overseers of the Poor. I don't know if you remember that. You'd get food there. Somehow late in my grandmother's life, we used to go there and get food for her. Even though the store was right below and she could get what she wanted. It was tough. My father had to leave school. My father couldn't graduate. They all took care to make sure that the youngest would get out of high school. Irene, Ben, and my grandmother were all affected deeply by that. It was a tough time economically in this country. It was tough for them. It was tough for them.

TG: Did your dad have to, not have to, did he extend credit to his customers? A lot of the small stores did.

DD: All did. You had a little box with all of little slip books. There had to be at least 20-25 of them. You had to carry, sometimes, a lot of people. Even though back in the 50s and 60s. The 60s is when the mills started closing and the shoe shops. It got a little tough. He'd carry people for a while. It wasn't a highly profitable business back then.

I don't think he had a lot of money. There wasn't a lot, but we never knew that we were. Compared to today, it's like night and day. They did very well to take care of their family. Everyone of my aunts and uncles did the same. You look at the family and the kids; they've all become successful. Just a great family. Go up to my aunts, they always made you feel like you were like a million dollars. My uncles the same way. If you walked in, they made you feel like a million bucks. I think all of that goes back to, they remember what it was to live and struggle without their father.

TG: Can you talk about little bit about your experiences of school, St. Joseph and St. Louis?

DD: I went to St. Joseph with the nuns. It was interesting. I can still remember going, especially on a rainy day. Everything was in school. The big school on Birch Street. Now it's an apartment building. That was my first school. I was there until the 7th grade. Then they used the Birch Street School. I don't know if you remember that.

TG: Yeah.

DD: That's where I went in 7th and 8th grade. It was interesting. You'd learn French. Catechism in the morning, the first thing every day. All English classes in the morning, French in the afternoon. I had some good teachers. Sister Celine. Mademoiselle Langelier, a lay teacher.

The first time I actually slipped out a bad word in class in the 4th grade. I said the word for shit. I said a bad word. The teacher looked up. "Dennis, write it down." So, I did. "Tear it up. Now eat it." (laughter). I sat there. Oh my God. Now everybody is looking at you, right? I was just something I was doing and I said "shit." She made me write it down and chew on it. Ten minutes later, I was still chewing it. She said, "Dennis. Do you need water to wash that down with?" She was so nice. I said, "Yeah." She knew well that I was going to go out and spit it out. She said, "Go grab some water and it will help you swallow it." (laughter) That was Sister Louise Francoeur, that was her name. I've never forgotten that story.

I still remember the principal. I don't remember her name. I remember her coming in. We had done something right. She had me stand up. She wrote across the board "Congratulations." I was young enough to not understand what that word was. But those are the things that I never forgot about the grammar school.

TG: What was she congratulating you for?

DD: I don't even remember. But what strikes me is that she wrote that whole word across the board, in cursive. I think I was in the 2nd or 3rd grade. I said, "What's that word?" She explained it to me.

TG: Do you remember class size?

DD: There were 25-30. They weren't big size classes. I still have the picture somewhere of my First Communion. We are at the Parish Hall. They had us on stage. There has to be about 250-300 kids in that picture from all of the classes in that age group. We are very young, like 7 or 8 years old.

TG: Who were the tough disciplinarians, the nuns or the brothers do you think?

DD: I would say the brothers and the lay teachers. I don't ever remember that experience. They were always so nice. Even with this "write it down." You don't see that. They were all so very nice. The lay teachers and the brothers, you didn't mess around with some of them. And then some of them were so nice that sometimes they were taken advantage of. I don't know if you remember Brother Anthony.

TG: I recall who he was because I think he was at the junior high when I was in high school.

DD: There were two of them. Brother Anthony, the junior high teacher, with glasses. Then Brother Anthony in high school was a friendly person. He didn't want to...and sometimes kids would take advantage of that. I learned more from this guy when I became a teacher, him and Bob Cote. This guy treats you like a person. They all did, but this guy really went overboard.

TG: All of his reputation.

DD: My senior year is when they first brought four girls into the boy's side. Before that we were forbidden to even look at the windows where they were. I think it was the best experience for people our age, freshmen through senior year. A lot of what they taught us made us what we are later on in life. I'm proud to have been a graduate of that school.

TG: In sports, you had a really nice sports career and lots of experiences at St. Louis. Can you talk about that and the rivalries with Biddeford and Thornton? Playing on a State Championship team?

DD: You appreciate it more when you look back. You don't know how many people say, "I wish I was back in high school." You give it your all. You think you are doing your best, but I'll tell you, sports is an important part of my life. These extra-curricular activities also make sure you do what you have to do in school. It not only made me a better person, a tougher person. It also made me realize how important an education was and how to use it to make sure you are a better person for yourself, your wife, your kids. And you pass that along. I think St. Joseph and St. Louis were ideal for kids to go to school.

Yes, I love sports and Biddeford was our main rival. These are all kids we played against at Mayfield. We were all friends. When we played that game, I'll tell you, it was something.

There was no friendship on the court except when it was done. The same thing in football. Our junior and senior year was when Biddeford first came up from Class B to Class A. Those were tough games. We were a tough team back then. Both games were very, very close. But we beat them.

Thornton, I used to love playing them. It was always interesting to play against Thornton. It was fun playing them: Ted Caouette's cousin, Ron Caouette; the Cote's. It was just a great experience. It was against Thornton Academy that I put in the basket in the last second to beat them in my senior year. I loved it. I still remember the crowd erupting. Then I'm running by the Thornton side and I'm looking up smiling. My father picked me up after the game. Driving out, I had my window down. I'm looking out and waving at them. One of them was a Thornton kid, threw a snowball and hit me right in the head (laughter). I ended up teaching there for 28 years. Jim McGavin, one of the head master there who I played against when he coached. He said, "I hated the way you guys played." It was great.

TG: You probably had, I'm just going to guess, one of the most disappointing losses in your sports career when you were a sophomore against Thornton.

DD: Yes. I still remember the Saturday game being postponed because of snow. We played in Saco. They took, I would say 75% of the bleachers from St. Louis field and brought them to Saco. When we walked on to the field, there was still snow on the side. The field was like a stadium. There were bleachers all around because they had brought all of those bleachers. I can still remember running in with the team, I was a sophomore, hearing all of the Thornton side and the boos. Then when we got to the middle of field, all of the St. Louis fans. It was very exciting. It was a very tough game. Charlie Baillargeon was the quarterback. Charlie Belisle was the fullback. Talk about a guy who really made it. He made it in college. He was very disciplined. I still remember the seniors and juniors who were players. I didn't play in that game. I remember them walking in the clubhouse and being very upset. It was tough.

TG: I won't mention a name, but I had a cousin and his mother said when he got home, he cried like a baby after that game.

DD: Oh yeah. We won the championship our senior year, but we had lost a game to Deering. We thought that would knock us out. I can still remember being in the bus and one person started crying and another person screaming, "Don't cry. Don't cry. We played our best." It was a very big disappointing thing. Then, it all worked out. There were no playoffs in those years. We ended up having the best record.

TG: You shared the championship with Bangor?

DD: Yeah. That was a fun year. We played Cony and before Cony touched the ball, we had scored 28 points.

TG: Because they kept turning it over?

DD: The kickoff, it had to be 35-40 mile an hour winds. Ron Petit would kick that ball, and it would float and start coming back. After our first touchdown, we recovered the next two or three fumbles. Before they even touched the ball.

TG: and they weren't even onside kicks.

DD: No, they weren't. Then we went up to Rumford. What was the name of that school?

TG: Stevens (Rumford).

DD: Stevens. We had to go up early because it was far. They put us in the Armory. I still remember, of course we had the tank there and the jeep. I remember climbing the tanks, sitting up there, and seeing what it was like. Bob Cote said, "You guys aren't taking this game serious enough." We had won big the first 4-5 games. We were clobbering people. "You aren't taking this seriously." So, the game starts. We kick the ball off to Stevens. We nail them on the 3-yard line. (laughter). I'm on defense. First play, 97-yard touchdown for Stevens.

TG: My God.

DD: Coach Cote took us all off the field, "Sit down!" You know Bob, how calm he is. "I told you guys at the Armory that this was going to happen." We went on to beat them 45-7. All they ever got was that touchdown. But, talk about learning a lesson. "You guys weren't taking it seriously enough." At the end of the game, I think it was Bull Lemieux who used to take the films. Paul Lamb had hurt his arm during the game and they were taping it up. We are all walking off field, and the cheerleaders all ran up to the field to shake our hands. They took Paul's hand and shook it. The guy dropped like a balloon. It's all on film. (laughter) We rode him around for a long time after that. Yeah, you're tough Paul. You're tough.

The two toughest games that year were Sanford and of course, Deering. Deering, the guy's name was McPhee, I think. He played linebacker and made All State too. It was the first time that I hit somebody. I thought this is going to be a long game. It was tough. Before, I thought I was pretty tough myself, but that humbled me.

TG: You are big guy.

DD: He played against me, in front the whole time. He said the same thing afterwards. He hit me. I was the first hit of the game. We kicked off. I was in the middle. He was right next to the kicker. I had to go block him. I hit him. But it was like, Oh my God, I've never been hit this hard. The whole game, we fought tooth and nail. It was an interesting game for us. I'll never forget that guy.

Then, when I went to college and played basketball under a Coach McPhee (laughter), his uncle. It stayed in my mind. TG: What was your favorite sport?

DD: I loved them both. I loved football, obviously. Basketball, for me, was like playing at the Mayfield all of the time. It's more intense. I mean, it was intense in football, especially where I went both ways. The only time I'd get off the field was when we were kicking off, the only time. When I was receiving, the extra points, I was always on the field. You breathe hard. You watch football today and I see people breathing. That's what it was. You had 5-6-7 plays in a row where you are fighting hard. You are breathing hard. It was a real challenge. I loved it. I loved the people I played with and the coaches. But basketball was like playing at the Mayfield. No matter how short a runt I was, compared to the big guys, I held my own. I was always proud of that too.

Baseball I played for 3 years. My senior year I went out. I was actually the captain. But I realized I needed to go work if I wanted to go to college. I started working night shift at Delorges Bakery. I was with Michael Guignard. I don't know if you remember Michael.

TG: Oh sure.

DD: Guy Roy and the guy who owns Pate. Dick Pate.

TG: Don't know him.

DD: You know Pate Motors. We were the ones working, making donuts at night.

TG: Did you stop baseball that year?

DD: Yeah. I was okay but I wasn't in it, so I left baseball and went to work the spring of my senior year. I worked at night.

TG: What about social events in high school, Homecoming, Winter Carnival, things like that.

DD: Especially Homecoming and the prom. I went to 2 proms. Mine and my wife's when she became a senior. The dances at St. Joseph's Parish Hall, those were quite

something. I grew up there. Having the dances there. My parents said, "You can't go to the Lightening Club." Remember the Lightening Club on top of Doiron's Pharmacy? That's when they started bringing groups in, singing groups. We said, "We want to go."

TG: There were no Parish Hall dances during Lent, so they tended to go there then.

DD: Yeah. I can remember at one of the Parish Hall dances, I think I was a freshman. I know I was. They used to have parents chaperone. You had to play music that was, you know... I can remember the DJ, DJ Brown? He put on the twist, the first time when he came out. He left to go to the bathroom or whatever. The thing was up there by itself. The chaperone went up and ripped that record off. You could hear "RRRrrrr". The students were dancing. I looked and all of the seniors, I looked up and they put this waltz ...but they all did the twist. All of the kids did the twist (laughter).

The dances were where you met friends. You walked around in circles. I don't know if you remember that. You walked around in circles to see who was there, who was not there. Looking back, you appreciate it more. My wife and I went there almost every time there was a dance, by the time she was old enough to go.

TG: You were probably a junior then, right?

DD: Yeah. She was a freshman.

TG: You talk about how you met your wife. Children?

DD: Shawn and Sharon. Shawn was born in 1970, 2 years after we were married. I was still in college. Sharon was born in 75. Two great kids. They are doing very well.

TG: Are they here, locally?

DD: Yeah. One lives on Scadlock Road, right after Granite Point. They built a house there a few years ago. They used to live in Dayton.

Sharon lives in South Portland, right across from the first school I taught at. I taught at Henley School in South Portland for 2 years.

TG: Is that a grammar school?

DD: Yeah. 4th and 5th grade. I was the only man in that school. I still remember Mr. Hatfield, the Superintendent who hired me. At the time, I think my first salary was \$1800, maybe \$2600. Teachers had a hard time finding a job. I walked into Hatfield's office and interviewed. He said, "Look, I'm not going to beat around the bush. You have recommendations from the teachers and people you subbed for and student

taught with. Do you want the job?" I said, "Yes." He said, "There's a school, Henley, and we need you there." I said, "Fine." So, I went there. I still remember the first all school gathering. We meet upstairs in the hall, assembly. The principal, who became a good friend of mine, was a former Sister. She talked about everything and said, "By the way, if anybody of you think about getting rough, I've got Mr. Dutremble here. He can protect." I'm sitting there thinking, "That's not why I became a teacher. I didn't become a teacher to have kids fear me." But that never panned out as far as me being a disciplinarian.

I loved the kids. I had a good time with them. As a matter of fact, one of them I just saw on Facebook, and we sort of became Facebook friends. I still think, looking back, they're in their 50s and 60s now. When I go see my grandchildren play sports, I said, "I wonder how many kids are children of people I used to teach?" That connection is always interesting. I loved teaching. I loved working with the children, the students. I just really enjoyed that a lot.

TG: Did you move to Thornton from there?

DD: Yes. I was there 2 years then I went to Thornton. There was an opening in the Geography Department and Social Studies Department. I applied for the job. I was working down at the Beach [NOTE: Old Orchard Beach] in my Delorges truck. Back then, Dick (Agreste) and I took jobs.

TG: Did you do that in the summer?

DD: Yeah.

TG: I think Bob Cote did when he was younger too.

DD: Bob Cote and Dick Jacques did it. We took their places. Dick first and then I went in a year after. We had the Beach route. Dick had all of the restaurants. I had all of the stores. Talk about helping out when you are growing up with a young family. That was great help. I remember Dick told me about an opening at Thornton Academy. I was in my Delorges uniform, all sweaty after I was done work. I went right to the headmaster's house. I said, "I want to apply for that job." I told him who I was. He said, "I know who you are." (laughter) He became one of my close friends. One of these guys who used to say when I used to go to the legislature part of the school year, "You're a pain in the ass, but you're a good pain in the ass." (laughter) He and I became really great friends. I went there for my first interview, he said, "The fact that you came to my house the way you were, shows me a lot about you. You've got the job." That's when I started working at Thornton with the sophomores and seniors.

TG: You were there with Bob Cote and Dick Agreste for a long time.

DD: Bob Cote, Dick Agreste, Norm Trottier. Those were all St. Louis teachers. Bob Cote, I still say the same thing. I never called him Bob. It was always Mr. Cote.

TG: Everybody, right?

DD: You just respected the man. Going back to Bob Cote, when I was a sophomore and feeling my oats, a football player on his team and he's teaching American History to us. I remember Paul Lamb or Dick Agreste, one of them was sitting next to me. We kept on talking. Nothing bad, you know how kids try to talk. By that time, I think everybody called me Duke. We are sitting there. Paul and I, he catches me of course trying to sneak in another discussion. He said, "Duke, stand up. I want you to learn a poem for me. I want you to come back to class tomorrow and recite it in front of the class. "I'm Nobody."

So, I went home. I'm nobody. Who are you? Are you nobody too? Don't tell. They banish us, you know. I can still remember. I'll never forget. [NOTE: Poem is actually written by Emily Dickinson]

TG: I never heard that poem.

DD: There are different variations of it. But those are words that always remember and I never forgot. I used to coach with Bob Cote afterwards. I went to Thornton and he hired me as a coach. I never forgot that.

TG: Would you still recite that for him once in a while?

DD: Oh yeah. "Hey Bob. I'm nobody." What I used to do is coach freshmen with Jack Morrisson. Then I went to JV's for football. Jack and I were the scouts. We'd go and scout all over the state. We'd come back and report. He'd look at you like he was listening to every detail and ask questions. We'd ask, "Can we go to the game this week?" "No. You've got to go scouting." "That's right. I'm nobody." (laughter)

TG: Love it.

DD: This man and my father, what influences they had on my life.

TG: I've never heard anybody say a bad word about Bob Cote, never.

DD: No. No. He was a true gentleman, a mentor. A lot of us, Dick and Norm, we all played for him. You never forget a man who was a great coach, who was a great teacher. He prepared you.

TG: He had everything in perspective.

One thing, two things the Dutrembles are known for are sports and politics. Can you talk about how you got involved in politics? What influence did growing up and being educated in Biddeford have on your political career?

DD: The thing for me is for me and somewhat for my brothers, was learning about my grandfather and the legacy of what he did for the city. And what my parents, my uncles and aunts did for the city had a very deep impact on me as far as public service. Remembering my father in 1958, keeps popping up. In 1958 when he first ran for County Commissioner, how we were proud of that. We, as the 4 eldest children at the time, would go out and deliver his pamphlets all over York County. Some of it, you were chased by dogs. Some of it, you got the door slammed. But it became for me a yearly thing. Doing it for him.

Later, my Uncle Dick became Sheriff and my father was County Commissioner and they became involved statewide. The Governors and Ken Curtis and Muskie and Peter Kyros, you get to meet them. [NOTE: Kenneth Curtis was Governor of Maine from 1967 to 1975 and US Ambassador to Canada from 1979 to 1981. Ed Muskie served as governor of Maine from 1955 to 1959; US Senator from 1959 to 1980; United States Secretary of State from 1980 to 1981. Peter Kyros was US representative from Maine from 1967 to 1975] It generated an excitement. You would start doing it for them at the same time that you would do it for your parent, my father or my uncle. We would distribute pamphlets or talk it up or stand at the polls. You'd do it for all of them. You get to know them. I took a very deep interest in it almost immediately.

I remember one of the times, Peter Kyros, this may have been when I was in college now, said to me, "Do you want to come work for me this summer as an intern?" I said, "Absolutely." I was in the Portland office for Peter Kyros for a couple of years. Before I took my job as a Coca-Cola driver my junior and senior year.

I got to meet everybody. When Bobby Kennedy came to St. Jean's Hall, I remember meeting him through Peter Kyros. Ed Muskie, I got to know him very personally. I got to talk to him. It was just a time. You start meeting and respecting them. You respected the politicians. Hathaway, Bill Cohen. [NOTE: William Hathaway served as US House Representative from 1965 to 1973 and US Senator from 1973 to 1979. William Cohen served as US House Representative from 1973 to 1979 and US Senator from 1979 to 1997. He served as US Secretary of Defense from 1998 to 2001] Susan Collins in my later years. [NOTE: US Senator since 1997] She and I are good friends. Politically, we are on the opposite side, but that's when respect was part of the political

game. There's very little respect in public service today. I don't use the word political. I use the word public service. To me, it was public service. I worked. Was I a politician? Absolutely. But it was for public service. I presented politically my side of the spectrum while others presented their side.

My first foray was when Annette Ouellete ran for mayor, and I was on the same ticket as her. Back then, you had slates. I ran for Councilor-At-Large. I got the 2nd most votes in the city behind the person who ran for Councilor-At-Large who won the most votes. The law at that time or the ordinance said you can't have 2 Councilors-at-Large from the same ward. We were both in the same ward, Ward 3. So, I couldn't serve. That was my first time. I loved it. I decided that I wanted to do it, to help out, for a career.

I ran my first time in 1979 for the legislature for this district, won and never left. I did it for 16 years. I served 2 years in the House and 14 years in the Senate. During that time, I've sat in the same room with Kennedy, Jimmy Carter, Bill Cohen, George Mitchell in Washington, several times. Olympia Snowe became a very dear friend to me and Governor McKernan. [NOTE: Jimmy Carter served as President from 1977-1981. George Mitchell held many public offices including US Senator from 1980-1995. Olympia Snowe served in US House of Representatives from 1979-1995 and US Senate from 1995-2013. John McKernan, Jr. Served in US House of Representatives from 1983-1987 and Maine Governor from 1987-1995.]

You still argue positions. You still fought the positions but it was with a degree of respect. You knew that after it was done, it's the story of Ronald Reagan and Tip O'Neil. They fought like heck, but they still had lunch together. [NOTE: Ronald Reagan was President from 1981-1989. Tip O'Neil was US House of Representative from Massachusetts from 1953-1987 and Speaker of the US House from 1977-1987] Serving was respectful. I think a lot of people would still like to do that today, but it's become very, very difficult.

TG: Do you think growing up in Biddeford, which was very Democratically dominated when you came up, do you think your views changed as you grew older and interacting with the opposition?

DD: Yes, because the difference between me and the other people who were Democrats around the state is the Biddeford Democrats were rather conservative. They were very conservative, both socially and economically. I became more liberal socially, with rights and stuff. I don't even consider that political. I just think that's the right thing. I became leaning more to the left when I talked about things like equal rights for everybody. That became different.

Economically, I was probably one Democrat who was more conservative, again because of my upbringing and cautiousness of spending too much. I did make friends from both political parties. I think I earned their respect and they earned mine.

You talk about Democrats and being from a Democratic community, my first term in the House of Representatives. At the end of the year, you have all of these speeches that people make. A lot of it is a little comical, a little light. I remember getting up and speaking. "When I first came here, I was afraid. I remember my father saying, "See that corner of the House? They are all Democrats. On this side, they are Republicans." I remember I was afraid. I heard a lot of things about Republicans. I still remember that when I looked in the corner, some of the leaders, and I shook. I shook violently. After all, I **do tremble**." (laughter). The place erupted.

TG: That's a great line. (laughter)

DD: The thing is that's the kind of atmosphere we had. Even in the Senate. I did one of these similar things. People liked you for who you were. They knew you are arguing your side, defended your side and your ideals. But they knew it was for the people of Maine. It wasn't for you personally. It wasn't more for the party, but for the people. Today, I think it's changed significantly.

TG: I'm going to throw out some things to see if you have memories of them. In 1963 there were some big fires in Biddeford, the Hooper Street fire, the Grafton Lumber fire. There was a fire on top of St. Mary's School when I was in the 8th grade, that same year.

DD: The Hooper Street fire happened when I was at my friend's house on Cutts Street, Reynald Breton. I don't know if you remember him. He just passed away.

TG: Yeah. I think I played little league with him. I think he was on my little league team.

DD: Rotary? You remember that?

TG: Yeah.

DD: We were at his house, sitting on his porch. His parents owned the three story building on Cutts Street. We were on his porch. All of us were there, Paul, Dick Laroche and others. We were supposed to have baseball practice that day. We looked up and saw the smoke. Then we start hearing the engines. Then we start hearing the whistles blowing again. We said, "We've got to go see this." We watched the whole thing from the first building at Diamond National and started watching it. House by house, watching it. The wind was fierce. The fierce wind was just blowing. We were on the other side of the tracks watching it. It was just unbelievable what was happening

that day. How fast it went. In the afternoon, that whole place went down. It was in the New York Times. The funny thing about this is the New York Times showing the whole building, the picture. There is one man standing there. It was my father. He was just watching.

I remember the Grafton Lumber fire. Every fire department within reach would come. I remember at night going home and watching the red glaze in the sky. You could just see it.

During the big Maine fires, I was probably 6-7 months old. My parents used to take me and Don in the car and go fight the forest fires of 1947-48.

TG: I had that on here too.

DD: Oh yeah. We'd be out there. We had the car close by. We were out there fighting with everybody else.

I don't know if you remember, maybe in the 60s, there was a big fire out there that lasted maybe 3-4 days. That was just a microcosm of what they went through. You brought me there to the big fire.

TG: Where were you when President Kennedy and his brother were assassinated? What are your memories of that?

DD: I was watching TV when Bobby Kennedy was assassinated. Again, being interested in Bobby Kennedy and the Kennedys. We were watching it when it happened. That was very sad.

When John Kennedy was murdered, was assassinated, we were having basketball practice at the Parish Hall. Ray Pepin came in, the mailman. I think that one was Ray. There was two of them.

TG: Ray was the mailman. He was Don's father?

DD: Yes, he is. We there and he came in and started screaming, "They just shot the President. They just shot the President." We said, "What do you mean?" I remember Dudley Coyne saying, "Are you sure it's not a publicity stunt?" "No. This is for real. This is for real." So, we ended the practice and went home. I can still remember walking into my house. The first thing I see is Walter Cronkite crying on TV when he broke down. And my mother is sitting there crying, saying, "Oh my God." As a junior you are saying, "What is going on?" You start questioning right away. What's going on? [NOTE: *Walter Cronkite was an American broadcast journalist who served as anchorman for the CBS*

*Evening News*¹⁾ from 1962 to 1981. During the 1960s and 1970s, he was often cited as "the most trusted man in America"]

We had a scrimmage that Sunday with St. Ignatius. We still had it. My parents said, "How can you do a practice game when this is going on? Right before I left, again watching all of this on TV, is when Jack Ruby killed Lee Harvey Oswald. Talk about seeing tragic history in that whole weekend, that whole time. JFK was somebody that everybody just loved. I never got a chance to meet him. My father and mother went to see him when he was in Lewiston. They actually had him sign a bumper sticker. We've never been able to find that thing. It had John Kennedy's signature on it.

Then Bobby Kennedy. Ted Kennedy, I met at the high school when he came here. He was in a primary against Jimmy Carter.

TG: That would have been in 1976? Sometime around then?

DD: It was in 1980. In 1976, Carter won.

TG: Kennedy ran against him in 80?

DD: Yeah, the primary. In 1976, Carter came to the Parish Hall

TG: I remember that.

DD: I was the Chair at the time. So I got to meet him. In 1980, Ted Kennedy ran. I actually met with him personally. He asked me for his support. I was a Kennedy man all the way. We were here. We were living here at the time. My wife gets a phone call. She said, "It's for you." I said, "Who is it?" "It's for you. It's the President." "President of what?" "It's Jimmy Carter." I got on the phone. "Hello." "Duke. This is Jimmy Carter." I said, "Oh my God." "I'm looking for your support." I had already declared for Kennedy. I said, "Yes, Mr. President. I want you to know that I think you are a great man, but I've always supported the Kennedys. We are just in love with them, and I'm going to support Ted Kennedy. He said, "OK. Do what's in your heart. But at the caucus, make sure that everybody is treated equally." (or something to that effect)

TG: Make sure it's fair.

DD: Make sure it's a fair caucus. And I assured him it would be. At that caucus. I was Chair for maybe 10 years. Every caucus you had, if you had 50 people show up, you were lucky. You had to pick the delegates to the State Convention to show support. We had over 3500 according to the papers, maybe closer to 4000. What are we going to do? So, we took the whole school over, all of the classrooms. It was in the new gym.

There was plenty of room. All around, loaded with people. You had to find out who was for Kennedy and who was for Carter. I had to have all of the people on the City Committee go up and get... it was just impossible. There were too many people, you couldn't do it. I was in the middle of the floor. I said, "You know what. We can't do this. We are going to go to voice vote. How many are for Jimmy Carter?" People screamed. "How many are for Ted Kennedy?" It was overwhelming. Ted Kennedy was there that day.

TG: The Kennedy's home was in New England.

DD: That's right. He had come down and greeted people.

That's another story I'm going to tell you. It was clear. We were able to get through it very fairly. Every committee had a classroom. They took the tallies and we reported it to the State. Before the caucus, Ted Kennedy was there in the lobby with me and dignitaries, the mayor. Ted Kennedy was right there. I was standing shoulder to shoulder with him. Before, we had met in the Superintendent's Office. It was just me and him. He told me what to expect. He said, "I want you when you recognize somebody, just tell me who they are. Like, "Here, this is Tom Girard." That way he'd say, "Tom." Like he knew you. (laughter).

Then I supported Walter Mondale and Ferraro. [NOTE: Walter Mondale served as US Senator from Minnesota from 1964-1976 and Vice President from 1977-1981. He was unsuccessful in his run for President in 1984.]

TG: Geraldine Ferraro. [NOTE: Geraldine Ferraro served as US House of Representatives from New York from 1979-1985. In 1984, she was the first woman to run for Vice-President]

DD: We were in Portland City Hall. I'm standing next to Walter Mondale. I had driven up with him from the airport. They had asked me to come with him. I was standing up right next to him. I'm looking around and see police with guns, rifles. These Secret Service, they have pouches with their hand in it. They are called Uzis, I imagine. I don't know. I see that and I said, "Maybe I should take a few steps back." (laughter). You know that's the real world when you start seeing stuff like that.

TG: You must have to want that awfully bad to lead that life.

When Jimmy Carter came to the Parish Hall, there were thousands of people. Only a certain number could fit into that hall. I greeted him. I was Chair. He met my father and whoever was the Mayor at the time in 1976. Yeah, it was my father. I'm talking to

Jimmy Carter, and the Secret Service is right next to him again. He looks up. He looks at my father's store. He said, "That window on that building was not open yesterday." Secret Service rushed to that building, jumped into that apartment, and ran upstairs to check it out. There was nothing there. We don't even know who opened the window. But they picked that up. Yeah. You've got to really know that this is the kind of thing you are dealing with when you get up to those high-end offices like President, Vice-President and even Governor.

TG: Those are interesting stories.

You've recently received a really nice recognition and inducted into the Biddeford Hall of Fame. What has that meant to you?

DD: It means the world to me. It means that you get recognized for your achievements and what you have done. You know that you try your best. You do your best. You hope you are doing your best. Being recognized for it to me is very important. Again, you look at my father's history, my uncles, you don't go around blowing your horn. You never say, "I did that. I did that." But when somebody recognizes you did that, you are proud to talk about it. Being recognized by an organization that researches and does something cultural and for the history and heritage of your city, it's very touching. I value that. You never go looking for it but it's great when you are recognized

TG: What is being from Biddeford meant to you?

DD: I think the cultural aspect of it, seeing an ethnic group, the work that comes out of this city was recognized everywhere. The working men and women of Biddeford have a high work ethic. They have a proud tradition. Strong family values. For me, the political structure of the city has always been, I have followed it for as long as I could. I've actually researched it in the past. From Papa Lausier to Pomerleau to Deschambault. It's always been an interesting thing for me.

I think Biddeford has always been a proud community. Dealing with what they had to do when they lost the mills and the shoe shops. That was economically, one of the toughest times for our city, and they came through it.

I think past mayors have done a great job for what he's done in the last 10 years. I think he brought the city up even further. When you look at a lot of people now, outside, who would not normally look at Biddeford as a place to live are really happy to look at Biddeford as a place to live.

You are proud of our community and what it stands for. If I look at Biddeford, I see it as a proud community with a proud work ethic, a proud tradition. That's in all aspects. Whether you are talking sports, talking work at the mills, talking service jobs, the whole infrastructure of our city which includes everybody. I'm just so proud of this city.

TG: Who were the biggest influences on your life?

DD: Besides my mother and father, obviously Bob Cote, my Uncle Raymond on the farm in Lancaster. I went up there at an early age, maybe from the ages of 9 to 14. Struggled and realized the life of a farmer and it was tough. It was tough. Get up every morning early to milk the cows. Then going on to the hayfields. Every day, bailing. Picking up bales. I think it helped me immensely physically when I was doing that work. My uncle taught me how to drive. I was driving tractors at 10 years old. I was driving standard trucks at 10 years old. I've been able to drive big machinery since then. When we built this house, I did the road here with bulldozers. George Gamache, the contractor, let me put the road in. I used the dump truck to pick up stuff at his pit, bring it here and dump it.

TG: Is that George the father?

DD: George Garnache the father, yeah. I did all of the landscaping here. That was part of paying for this house. At the time, getting better prices, I worked for him. That was all from my Uncle Raymond. He was like a hero to me. My father and my mother were heroes, and Bob Cote was a mentor. I would say, Brother Anthony to some degree. To me, it was Bob, my father, and mother. I've always looked up to my grandfather. As a matter of fact, I've carried his picture for years. I look at it on my phone, every day.

TG: We'll have to get that picture on your site.

How has your life turned out compared to what you thought it might have been when you were younger?

DD: When you are very young, you want to be a fireman. It developed better than I would ever expected. I think meeting my wife at a young age and marrying when we were in college, struggling through the early years makes you stronger. I look back and say, "I couldn't have done much better." Would I have loved to continue in politics? Absolutely. I just couldn't. After that congressional race that I lost in 94, we had some debt. We had to pay it off. We did what we had to do.

I left teaching after 30 years and went to work for Blue Cross Blue Shield as a Government Relations Director. I had to leave that job because of health in 2005. I only had a short stint there, 5 years.

I keep saying, "If I could have done it. I would have done it some more." If I could have done it, what's happening today maybe wouldn't have changed a lot, but they'd certainly have somebody standing up and saying something. Anybody who seems to get involved in this stuff today, should have been stopped the nonsense.

I think one of the reputations I had was not attacking people. Even during my run for Congress. They went after me. I didn't. I made a conscious choice of that. I don't know if you ever heard that story or not. I had great support from my staff. They were great. The State Committee, the National Committee, they gave advice. My publicity committee made the films and commercials. One of them won the #1 award. They were great, from Boston.

We met at Christian Potholm's home in Harpswell. He is a professor at Bowdoin College. He is very famous. He has written tons of books. Strong supporter of the Collins, McKernan and Bill Cohen. He is well known. He was my pollster, advisor, and wanted to support me. He did, strongly. I'll always respect him for that. We met at his house, my wife and I. We had the people from Boston, some State Committee members, my staff and the DNC [*NOTE: Democratic National Committee*] on the phone saying that I had to go negative. They do these investigations. There were 2 or 3 books out that my opponent did on me. They called my school, my work, everything. They couldn't find anything, but they still made some pretty negative commercials. They said I needed to go negative. I was ahead in the polls but there seemed to be this undercurrent that was brewing against the Democrats. It was the time of the bank scandal, the first healthcare bill with Clintons. I said, "No. We are not doing that." They said, "If you don't do this, you are going to lose." My pollsters were Crest and Cooper out of Washington. They are one of the top pollsters in the country. Dot and I said, "We will talk about this." We went into the next room. I said, "Dot, I don't know if I want to do that." She said, "You've never done that. You've never gone after people. You never do negative." I said, "And I don't want to do it now." This is part of the thing of how I get people to work with me. I work on issues and not personalities. We went back to room and said, "We are not going to do it." They said, "You are going to lose." My direct answer was, "Then, I'll lose. But I'm going to do it my way." We did lose..

My pollsters told us that the undecideds on election day went down 9-10 out of 10 for Republicans. I mean there was just this wave that occurred. It was probably American

First, Contract with America. Remember that? [NOTE: *The Contract with America was a legislative agenda advocated by the Republican Party during the 1994 congressional election campaign.*] I never, ever regretted it.

The next day I was in my garage putting away my signs dressed like I am now. Two TV stations come up, GME at the time and WCSH. They came up to me and asked, "What do you think?" "I would have loved to have gone and made a difference." "Would you have changed anything?" I said, "No" "What about the negative part?" I said, "I'm a teacher. One of my classes is Political Science. I teach our vote. I teach politics. I teach government service. I've never said anything to these kids about doing it like that. That's the way it is, and I never regretted that decision."

Now Christian Potholm wrote a book about that. One of the chapters was "He could have won if he had gone negative but stuck to his values". I'm still proud of that. Am I upset that I lost? Absolutely. It took me a while to get over it.

TG: Anything else you would like to share with us?

DD: No. That's enough. No. I'm going to write a book someday. It's going to be a lot about me and Don stories. A lot of it's going to be my stories with my other brothers. (laughter)

TG: You should. You have such a proud history in Biddeford. You really should.

DD: It would be. I have tons of stuff. When I did write the article about my grandfather, I went to all of the newspapers. They loaded me with stuff. I had my grandfather's handcuffs, his badge. The gun was given to Dick, but I had some of his bullets. I turned them over to the police station just a few years ago. You shouldn't have bullets.

I only found out when my father died that he had this stuff. There's this story from when we lived on Green Street. Behind my father's store, we used to play in the yard with a ball. We used to play with a stick. We played with either wiffle balls or rubber balls and we'd use this stick. We got beat up pretty bad. We later found out it was my grandfather's night stick. Not knowing as a kid about the historical significance of something like that.

My wife and I went to Washington DC. We went to the Police Memorial. We went to his site and traced his name. We went to look for it in that big building that used to be the immigrant building. Same thing in Augusta when they put up monument there. It's an interesting history. There are so many facets to it that I'm sure if I sat here and remembered more would come out, but it's been an interesting life to say the least.

TG: You've got to write that book.

DD: The thing that held me back was getting that heart attack at the age of 39. When they told me that I'd never work again. That was directly from the cardiologist and the surgeon. I was pretty upset at that. I remember I said to the doctor "What are the odds here." He said, "5 years." I said that in my speech at the Honors Ceremony. They told me that in 5 years, 75% -80% with my heart condition is severe and after 10 years, you are gone. That's the statistics as they are.

TG: That was in 1986? [NOTE: This was changed from 1979 to 1986 by the interviewee during the transcript review]

DD: 86. Yeah. That was a hell of a thing. That changed my life, my wife's life, and my kids. My kids were still in school. From the time that happened in March on my son's birthday until the operation in September, I had no idea what was going to happen. I went back to work 2 months later. I obviously surpassed the statistics and those statistics today if you go back and say this is what happened. It says zero to the point where I persist and am still alive. For some reason, I was left here for a reason. Coming from my good Catholic background, I always thought I could have continued. Since that bad happened, I continued running for the Senate. I became a Majority leader. I became a Senate President and ran for Congress. I look back everybody, my parents, my mother especially, "You really want to run for Congress even with what you went through health wise?" I said, "Yeah. I do" (laughter).

But in 2005, it all caught up. Between that and my physical injuries due to falls in basketball and whatever. I had to leave work. Actually, the doctors told me and my wife, "It's either your work or your life." Both here and in Boston. My doctors are in Boston. They couldn't find out in 2000 why I just started deteriorating even worse. They said that in Boston. They saved my life for a second time. Anthem found out. I don't know who told them. "We understand that you were given an option. We think it's time."

TG: Well Dennis, thank you for sharing your story. We really appreciate it.

DD: I am glad that you came over. It's a pleasure. I'm proud of these moments and I appreciate them greatly.

TG: As you should be.

