

**PICTURES AND ADDITIONAL INFORMATION
DONALD BISSON**

Unless noted otherwise, newspaper clippings from Biddeford Journal
acquired through newspaperarchives.com

Parents: Raymond Bisson and Margorie Bourgault Bisson wedding in 1949



From Journal March 13, 1954



Baby Don and mother

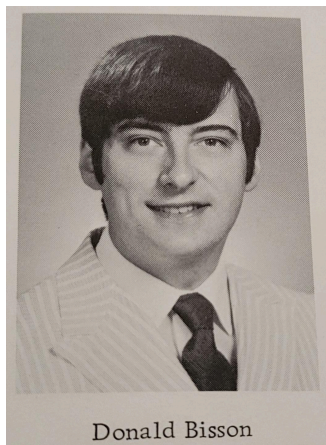


First Communion



From Journal
February 12, 1964

1971 Senior at
Biddeford High School



REPRESENTING the 900 St. Andre's School children of grades one to eight who renewed their promises of fidelity to the Sacred Heart in the Movement of the Eucharistic Crusade, shown with Sister St. Urbain of the school are, front row, left to right, Estelle Beauchesne, Nancy

Ouellette, Estelle Lemieux, Joanne Brochu and Paula Martel; second row, Donald Bisson and Carl LeBlanc. Rt. Rev. Msgr. Aime Giguere received their promises and Rev. Normand Carrier, chaplain diocesan of the Movement, and Sister Cecile-Agnes, principal of the school, were present at the ceremony yesterday.

Don's Dad opening Christmas presents in 1968



Father, mother and brother Danny



Maternal Grandmother: Julia Bourgault-she gave birth to 14 children!
Don's Grandmother and mother, Marjorie

From Journal April 20, 1962



HEADING: the first all-feminine four-generation group in her family is Mrs. Julia Bourgault, seated, of 37 Wentworth street, Biddeford, holding her great-granddaughter, four-month-old Sandra Gregoire, New Britain, Conn. Standing, left to right, Sandra's mother, Mrs. Richard Gregoire, New Britain, the former Patricia Petrin of Biddeford; and Sandra's grandmother, Mrs. Ernest (Alfreda) Petrin, 54 Green street, Biddeford. The photo was taken during a family gathering.

From Journal June 22, 1985



Five Generations

BIDDEFORD — Heading the five-generation group in her family is Mrs. Julia Bourgault, seated, of St. Andre's Health Care, who is holding her great-great-grandson, Jacob Andrew Lemelin of Biddeford. He was three weeks old when the photo was taken. Standing, left to right, are: Mrs. Alfreda Petrin of Biddeford, great-grandmother; Mrs. Patricia P. Seymour of Biddeford, grandmother; and Sandra Gregoire Lemelin of Biddeford, mother of the baby. Jacob is the son of Marc and Sandra Lemelin of 1 Folsom Drive. He was born March 19.

From Journal
May 26, 1989

Card Of Thanks

A heartfelt thanks for a beautiful 100 birthday. I would like to thank all of my grandchildren who came from out of state. Thanks also to everyone for all the beautiful flowers and gifts and also all of the cards sent to me.

Thanks also to the wonderful staff at St. Andre's Home for a special birthday party.

Mrs. Julia Bourgault



Julia Bourgault

Julia Bourgault, 100, St. Joseph's member

BIDDEFORD — Julia Bourgault, 100, of 407 Pool Road, died Sunday at St. Andre's Health Care Facility.

She was born in Three Rivers, Mass., on May 12, 1889, a daughter of Joseph and Rose Anna Fortin Charron, and attended schools in New Bedford, Mass.

Her husband, Agenord Bourgault, died in 1928.

She was a member of St. Joseph's Church.

Surviving are two sons, Albert Bourgault of Norwood, N.C., and Joseph Bourgault of Saco; four daughters, Alfreda Petrin, Alma Laliberte, Alice Croteau, and Anita LeProhon, all of Biddeford; 45 grandchildren; 102 great-grandchildren; and 20 great-great-grandchildren.

A funeral will be held at 11 a.m. Wednesday at St. Joseph's Church.

Burial will be in St. Joseph's Cemetery.

Calling hours will be from 2 p.m. to 4 p.m. and 7 p.m. to 9 p.m. Tuesday at R.G. Bolduc and Sons, 291 Alfred St.

From Journal March 26, 1990

Paternal Grandparents

From Journal June 27, 1966

Bisson Couple Is Honored At Surprise Party

KENNEBUNK — Mr. and Mrs. Joseph Bisson of 127 Pike St., Biddeford, were given a surprise party by their children Saturday at the Glen-Mor Restaurant here in honor of their 40th wedding anniversary. Mr. and Mrs. Bisson, parents of eight children, were married June 21, 1926, at St. Andre's Church. Mrs. Bisson is the former Imelda Fecteau. They were presented with gifts, flowers and money.

Attending were Rev. Donald Garand, Mr. and Mrs. Urbain Bisson, Mr. and Mrs. Raymond Bisson, Mr. and Mrs. Robert Laroche of Sanford, Mr. and Mrs. Fernand Genest, Mr. and Mrs. Armand Bisson, Mr. and Mrs. Jean-Luc Veilleux, Mr. and Mrs. Rene Bisson, Gerard Bisson, Betty Marin, a guest, Richard Bisson, Normand Bisson, Miss Diane Bisson, Miss Constance Bisson, Miss Jacqueline Bisson, Donald Bisson, Daniel Bisson, Miss Madelaine Cote and Miss Lorraine Bisson.

Unable to attend were Paul Bisson, serving in the Army in Alabama, and Mr. and Mrs.

Bisson's grandchildren, Suzanne Genest, Therese Genest, Guy Genest, David Genest, Pauline Laroche, Patrick Laroche, Paul Laroche, Pierre Laroche, Denise Laroche, Michael Bisson, Marc Bisson, Donna Bisson, Roger Veilleux and Luci Veilleux.



Mr. and Mrs. Joseph Bisson

Don's parents (seated) celebrating their 25th wedding anniversary in 1974
Left to right are their children: Connie, Don, Danny and Jackie



From Journal November 23, 1956

From Journal December 26, 1985

Raymond Bisson

BIDDEFORD — **Raymond A. Bisson**, 55, of 110 Pike St., died suddenly Wednesday afternoon at Southern Maine Medical Center following a short illness.

He was born in Biddeford, March 29, 1930, son of Joseph and Imelda Fecteau **Bisson**. He was educated locally.

Bisson was employed the past five years at Reece Corp., Gorham, and prior to that was employed by the Saco Tannery and Nichols Co., Portland.

His first wife, Marjorie Bourgeault **Bisson**, died in 1978.

He is survived by his second wife, Doris LeBlanc **Bisson** of Biddeford; two sons, Donald **Bisson** of New York City and Danny **Bisson** of Dayton; two daughters, Constance LeClair and Mrs. Louis (Jacqueline) Arel, both of Biddeford; a stepson, Marc LeBlanc, and a stepdaughter, Charlene LeBlanc, both of Biddeford; four brothers, Urbain **Bisson**, Armand **Bisson** and Rene **Bisson**, all of Biddeford, and Gerard **Bisson** of Florida; three sisters, Mrs. Robert (Cecile) Laroche of Alfred, Mrs. Fernand (Germaine) Genest and Mrs. Jean Luc (Jeanne d'Arc) Veilleux, both of Biddeford; three grandchildren, two step-grandchildren and nephews and nieces.

A Mass of Christian Burial will be said Saturday at 10 a.m. in St. Andre's Church. Interment will be in St. Joseph's Cemetery.

Calling hours at the Ermond and Conroy Funeral Home, 72 Hill St., are Friday, 2 to 4 and 7 to 9 p.m.

From
Journal
February 12
1974



NOM TAKES A BREAK! At least eight mothers in the area had a perfectly restful Thanksgiving with nothing to do but enjoy the holiday dinner served to them. These ladies are patients in the maternity ward at Notre Dame hospital where the staff treated them to a very special Thanksgiving meal. Seated at the table are, clockwise, Mrs. Robert Davis, Mrs. Marcel Menard, Mrs. Robert Flynn, Mrs. William Cosgrove, Mrs. Walter Benning and Mrs. **Raymond Bisson**. Lying in

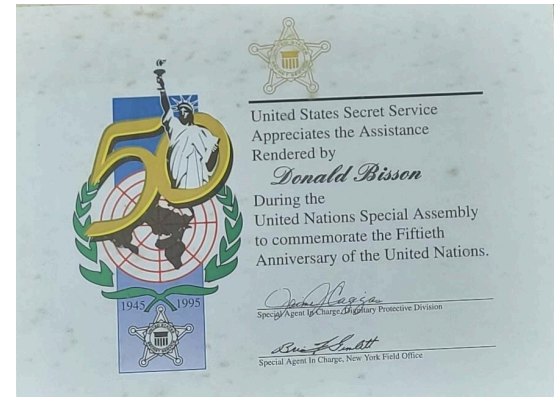
bed are, left to right, Mrs. Robert LaBelle and Mrs. Walter Beaulieu. Making sure that the patients were well taken care of was Sister Annunciata, assistant administrator at the hospital. Assisting the sisters in making the day complete for the mothers were Mrs. Laura Pomerleau, who has served as nurses aid in the maternity ward since the hospital opened, Miss Elizabeth Coffey R. N., and Mrs. Molly Emery, R. N.



GOOD RED BLOOD — Saco Tanning Corp. employees Bernard G. Lemelin, front, and **Raymond Bisson** bare their arms to Nurse Lucille Brockman while donating one pint of blood each to the Regional Blood Bank plan. The firm is the largest industrial donor to the plan in Southern Maine. (Photo by Susan Morrison)

Saco Tannery Employees Top Blood Donors

Don worked in New York City for the telephone company for over 20 years.
He worked on numerous high level projects for which he was recognized.



Upon retirement, Don left New York City and returned to his hometown of Biddeford



Celebrating
50th birthday



Don and his friend, Luis Lopez



Finding a new purpose: Biddeford Food Pantry

From Journal March 16, 2011

Food pantry struggling to stay open

By DINA MENDROS

Staff Writer

BIDDEFORD On Tuesday, Steven (whose last name is withheld at his request) visited the Friends of Community Action Food Pantry on Elm Street looking for food items for himself and his daughter.

He doesn't come to the food pantry all the time, said the man, who works full-time as a cook at the University of New England. But when his cupboards are bare, he's glad to have a place to go to get groceries for his daughter and himself.

"This helps me out," said Steven. "Even though I'm a full-time cook, the price of living is really going up."

Because of the current economy, the pantry is serving more and more people who never thought they would need help.

See Food Pantry
PAGE A3



Top: Volunteer Dorothy Hall packs meats into a shopping cart before transferring them to the freezer at the Friends of Community Action Food Pantry in Biddeford on Tuesday. **Above:** Don Bisson and Susan Riley, who operate the Friends of Community Action Food Pantry in Biddeford, say there is a need for additional volunteers and food donations as the pantry struggles to meet the increased demand for help.

Food Pantry

FROM PAGE A1

said Susan Riley, the vice president of the organization. Riley's mother, Rita, opened the Friends of Community Action in 1981 and it was the first food pantry to open in the state, said Susan Riley.

But now the pantry itself needs help.

Friends of Community Action is in desperate need of monetary and/or kind donations as well as volunteers, said Susan Riley.

Because of the rising cost of food, the growing needs of all non-profit organizations, the loss of a significant donor, and increased need, Friends of Community Action is in danger of closing its doors.

Already it has been forced to reduce the amount of food that it provides to its clients.

The organization spends an estimated \$3,000 a month to purchase the food necessary to serve its clientele, said manager Don Bisson. Then there are additional expenses like rent, and the fee to run the trucks that pick up food, which is purchased at a reduced price from Good Shepherd Food Bank in Westbrook. There's no money to fill their oil tank, he said.

According to Bisson, if no additional money is raised, the 36-year-old food pantry only has enough food to serve its clients for four to six more months.

With rising unemployment, the food pantry is busier than ever, said Susan Riley. Friends of Community Action served 3,500 families in 2010 and that number is growing, said secretary Joanne Petrizzo.

Even middle class people are having difficulty making ends meet and need the food provided by Friends of Community Action, said Riley.

Recently, said Riley, she encountered a man who previ-



GPC Food Bank Photo

Stacks of food await storage and delivery Tuesday at the Friends of Community Action Food Pantry in Biddeford.

ously gave money to the food pantry every year. But after losing his job of 15 years, and with a wife and children to support, he's now a client.

Previously the food pantry only served those who fell within certain income guidelines, said Riley. She ended those restrictions because many in the middle class also need help, she said.

"We don't refuse anyone," said Riley, although those who visit from other communities are also directed to their local food pantry.

Susan Riley took over operating the food pantry from her mother, who has health

issues. Like her mother, Riley and all the others who work at Friends of Community Action volunteer their time.

"I do it," said Bisson "because I feel it's doing God's work."

Friends of Community Action is located at 762 Elm St. in Biddeford. Its hours of operation are 9-11 a.m., Tuesday-Thursday, every week. Families or individuals are allowed to pick up food once a week. For more information, call 287-4771.

—Staff Writer Dana Mendonca can be contacted at 282-1515, Ext. 324 or dnmendonca@pannathillnews.com.

Don with Food Pantry founder, Rita Riley and her daughter, Susan...



...and other volunteers





On Friday, at the Biddeford Shaw's supermarket, Friends of Community Action Food Pantry Manager Don Bisson talks to Douglas Kay of Biddeford about the pantry's food drive at the supermarket. The food drive to benefit the pantry takes place through Thursday.

Pantry seeks aid from Shaw's customers

By DINA MENDROS

Staff Writer

BIDDEFORD — On Friday morning, shoppers at Shaw's supermarket in Biddeford were greeted by friendly volunteers from a local food pantry. They told people about the need for canned good donations to help feed local residents who can't afford to purchase their own food at the supermarket.

Dressed in T-shirts displaying a can of Campbell's tomato soup, volunteers from Biddeford's Friends of Community Action Food Pantry handed out small red shopping bags. They asked customers to fill the bags with canned goods purchased at Shaw's "Cantastic" food sale - the event lasts through Thursday - and donate the bags to help feed the city's hungry.

Not all, but many shoppers were participating in the food drive.

"I always try to donate when I can," said Juanita Lucas from Kennebunk, after handing over her red bag of canned goods. The bag was then loaded by volunteers into a large cardboard box at the supermarket exit.

"It's not much money," she said. "Everyone can afford to donate a few cans of groceries."

"I know they're always in need of food," said Jean Eckland, another shopper from Kennebunk. "I try to help whenever I can."

"I couldn't say no," said Brian Harrington of Cape Elizabeth as he handed over the items he purchased during his shopping trip. "It's for a good cause."

In addition to the Biddeford store, every Shaw's is participating in a food drive for a food pantry in their local area, said Becky Drake, the Biddeford Shaw's store director.

See Pantry Donations
PAGE A3

Pantry Donations

FROM PAGE A1

The supermarket "allowed us to do this because of the need for our food pantry," said **Don Bisson**, the manager for Friends of Community Action Food Pantry. "We spend more and more money and are inundated with more and more people. Our cupboards are bare."

In September, almost 900 people were served by the Elm Street pantry, said **Bisson**. That's a 13 percent increase over the same time last year.

"That's significant," he said.

In addition to the food drive at Shaw's, the Food

Mobile from the Good Shepherd Food Bank in Portland will be coming to the Friends of Community Action Food Pantry on Tuesday from 9-11 a.m. Food will be handed out to local residents. Mayor Joanne Twomey and possibly Gov. Paul LePage will be at the event, said **Bisson**.

Such fundraisers are important, he said, not only to raise donations but to raise awareness of the public "to see the desperate need."

The food pantry spends \$2,700 a month to purchase food, said **Bisson**; that doesn't include rent, utilities, insurance, the cost to run and maintain two vehicles and other

operating costs.

Volunteers from Friends of Community Action Food Pantry will be collecting canned good donations at Shaw's on Route 111, Biddeford, on Saturday, 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. and Sunday, 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. Donations to the food pantry can be made at Shaw's through Thursday.

The food pantry is located at 162 Elm St., Biddeford. Hours of operation are Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday, 9-11 a.m. Proof of Biddeford residency required.

— Staff Writer Dina Mendros can be contacted at 282-1535, Ext. 324 or dmendros@journaltribune.com.



SUBMITTED PHOTO

Pictured are **Don Bisson**, the Biddeford Friends of Community Action Food Pantry's volunteer manager, left, and State Rep. Alan Casavant.

Biddeford food pantry gets a boost

BIDDEFORD — A caravan of vehicles descended upon the Biddeford Friends of Community Action Food Pantry in late September and delivered several hundred pounds of donated food and more than \$500 in cash donations that were raised during the Sept. 23 Help the Hungry/Rock the Vote event sponsored by Alan Casavant, one of two candidates running for mayor.

"It was a really good feeling to load and unload all of

this food for people who really need it," said State Rep. Alan Casavant, who decided his campaign event should also do something to benefit the city.

"It's a lot more than we expected," said **Don Bisson**, the pantry's volunteer manager, of the donation. "The generosity of this community is often overwhelming."

Although **Bisson** said the donations were very much appreciated, he offered suggestions for those who want to help

their neighbors in need.

"For about a dollar, you can buy one box of macaroni and cheese," he said. "But if you donate a dollar, then we can buy 10 boxes of macaroni and cheese from the Good Shepherd Food Pantry."

Each month, the pantry spends nearly \$3,000 in an attempt to keep its shelves stocked.

"My policy is no one ever leaves here empty handed," **Bisson** said. "We're here to help."

From Journal August 3, 2012



Mayor Casavant helps with Food Mobile handouts

The Food Mobile visited the Friends of Community Action Food Pantry in Biddeford from 8-10 a.m. Wednesday, Aug. 1. Pantry Manager **Don Bisson** said he counted at least 224 people in line to receive free foodstuffs from the truck. Mayor Alan Casavant visited the pantry early in the morning and helped serve the people in line. Pictured, from left to right, at the event are **Bisson**, Casavant and pantry President Susan Riley. To donate to the pantry, send checks to: Friends of Community Action Food Pantry, 162 Elm St., Biddeford, ME 04005 or call **Bisson** at 282-4771.

From Journal November 12, 2012



Le Club Richelieu supports food pantry

Le Club Richelieu recently donated \$5,000 to the Friends of Community Action Food Pantry in Biddeford. Pictured at left is Leo Simoneau, president of the club, with pantry manager **Don Bisson**. Le Club Richelieu also donated \$5,000 to the Barbara Bush Children's Hospital in Portland and \$5,000 to St. James School in Biddeford. Those who wish to join them in their pantry donation can contact **Bisson** at 282-4771 or send a check to Friends of Community Action Food Pantry, 162 Elm St., Biddeford 04005.

SUBMITTED PHOTO

From Journal January 29, 2013

Police chief to offer weddings in clerk's stead

By DINA MENDROS

Staff Writer

BIDDEFORD — There's now a new option for those looking to tie the knot locally. Police Chief Roger Beaupre, who is a notary public, has offered to perform nuptial services in his office by appointment. The only payment he's requesting is a contribution to a local food pantry, he said.

After learning that the city clerk no longer offered the service because of the lack of time and staff, "It struck me as an opportunity to offer that service," said Beaupre.

In the past, said Beaupre, he has performed wedding services for family members and friends. Now he will be offering this service to the public. All he asks in return is that the newlyweds make a donation to the Friends of Community Action Food Pantry.

"I was very, very happy," said **Don Bisson**, director of the nonprofit food pantry, when contacted by the police chief about the plan.

"It's a win-win situation,

From Journal November 30, 2012

The Biddeford Primary School Thanksgiving food drive yielded 700 pounds of canned and dry food for the Friends of Community Action Food Pantry. Pictured here loading the pantry's truck are **Don Bisson**, general manager of the food pantry, and students, from left to right, Hasan Mustafa, Kyle Rumery and Chris Brichetto. Shaw's in Biddeford donated two turkeys for a raffle held for all of the students and staff who contributed. To make a donation to the food pantry, call 282-4771.



From Journal August 3, 2013



Food mobile makes stop in Biddeford

A food mobile visited the Friends of Community Action Food Pantry, located at 162 Elm St. Biddeford, on Tuesday, July 16. Organizers say the event was a big success; approximately 360 people were served. More than 7,500 pounds of food was provided by the Good Shepherd Food Bank. Pictured at the event are, left to right, **Don Bisson**, manager of Friends of Community Action Food Pantry; Colby Perron; Biddeford Mayor Alan Casavant; Louise Pettengill; and Rachel Caya. To donate to the food pantry, mail checks to: Friends of Community Action Food Pantry, 162 Elm St., Biddeford, ME, 04005.

From Journal December 2, 2013

Hannaford donates turkeys to local food pantry

BIDDEFORD — Thanks to a donation from Hannaford, 75 families in Biddeford had free turkeys for their Thanksgiving meals.

Each year, the Friends of Community Action Food Pantry runs out of turkeys for Thanksgiving, said food pantry Vice President and Manager **Don Bisson**.

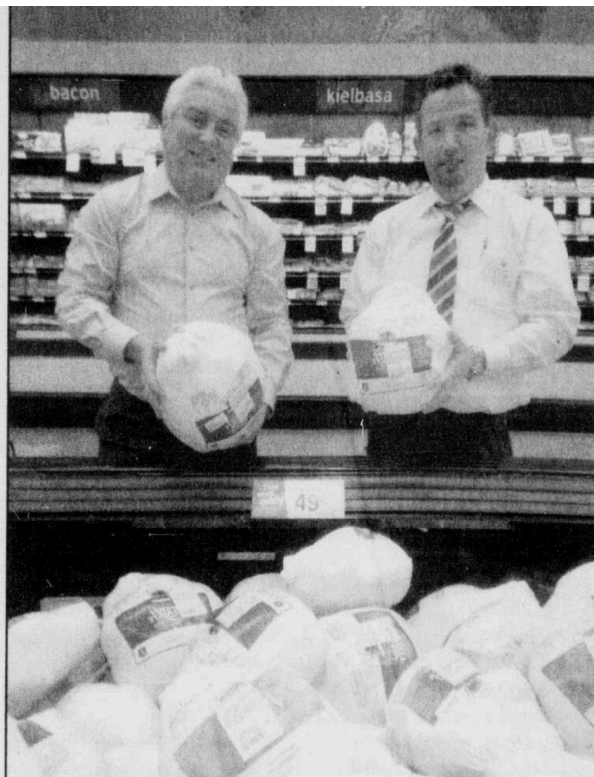
"I am so happy that Hannaford donated these 75 turkeys to my food pantry," said **Bisson**. "I am so thankful and

grateful for the participation of Hannaford Supermarket to care about hungry people in need.

"A million 'thank-yous' to Hannaford Biddeford Store Manager Barrett Johnson for giving families in need a wonderful Thanksgiving meal," he said.

The Biddeford store also donated 20 turkeys to the Knights of Columbus for its free turkey dinner on Thanksgiving Day at the Most Holy Trinity church hall in Saco.

Pictured recently at the Hannaford store in Biddeford are, left to right, Friends of Community Action Food Pantry Vice President and Manager **Don Bisson** and Hannaford's Biddeford Store Manager Barrett Johnson.



From Journal June 4, 2014

Hannaford helps keep pantry in action

By DINA MENDROS
Staff Writer

BIDDEFORD — As the date for the state inspection for the Friends of Community Action Food Pantry van was drawing near, Don Bisson, manager for the food pantry, was getting desperate.

The organization's 1987 van was more than 30 years old and was on its last leg.

People "told us there would be no getting another (inspection) sticker," he said.

Without the van, "we would have no transportation," said Bisson, and no way to pick up food and bring it to the pantry where it could be distributed to those in need.

And the need in Biddeford is great. In 2012, the Friends of Community Action Food Pantry served nearly 15,000 people, he said — up 2,000 from the year before.

So Bisson starting reaching out to local companies, including the Biddeford Hannaford supermarket, which has been a major supporter of the pantry, providing donated food several times a week.

When Bisson called, "I heard the desperation in his voice," said Hannaford Store Manager Barrett Johnson.

About a month later, Bisson received a call from Barrett telling him the company was ready to write him a check for \$10,000. That was enough to purchase a \$7,000 van from Weirs Motor Sales in Arundel; it was originally priced at \$9,000, but Weirs reduced the price for the pantry.

There was even money left over to help purchase food in the future.

On Monday, Bisson was smiling ear to ear as he showed off the van, which was freshly painted and in fine working order. Bisson was especially excited to show off the sliding side door, which he said didn't work on the older van.

"Hannaford fortunately came to our rescue," said Bisson.

"I'm happy we could help," said Johnson, a Biddeford native. "I grew up in the

See Hannaford Donation
PAGE A3

From Journal June 8, 2014

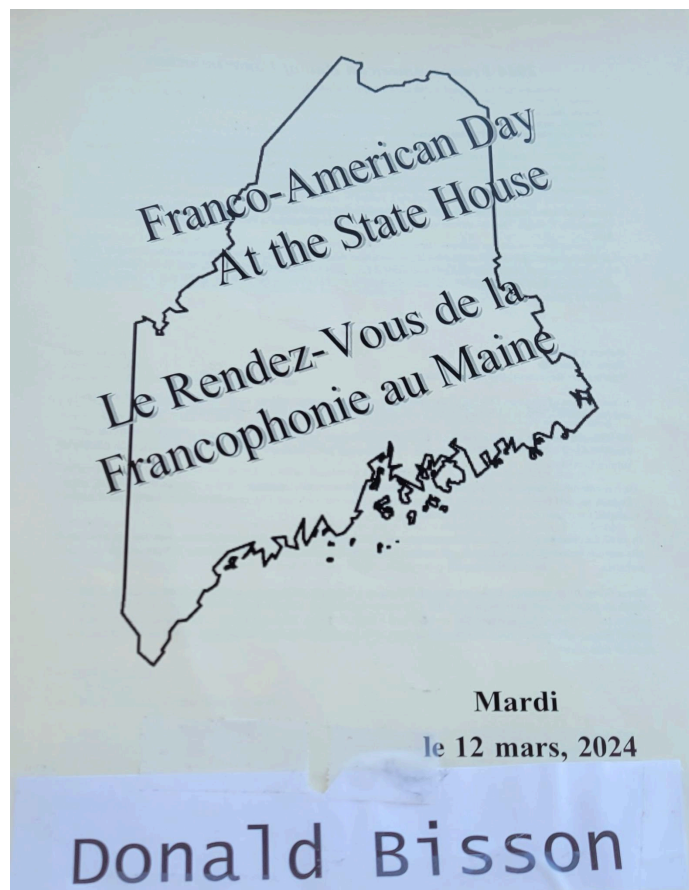
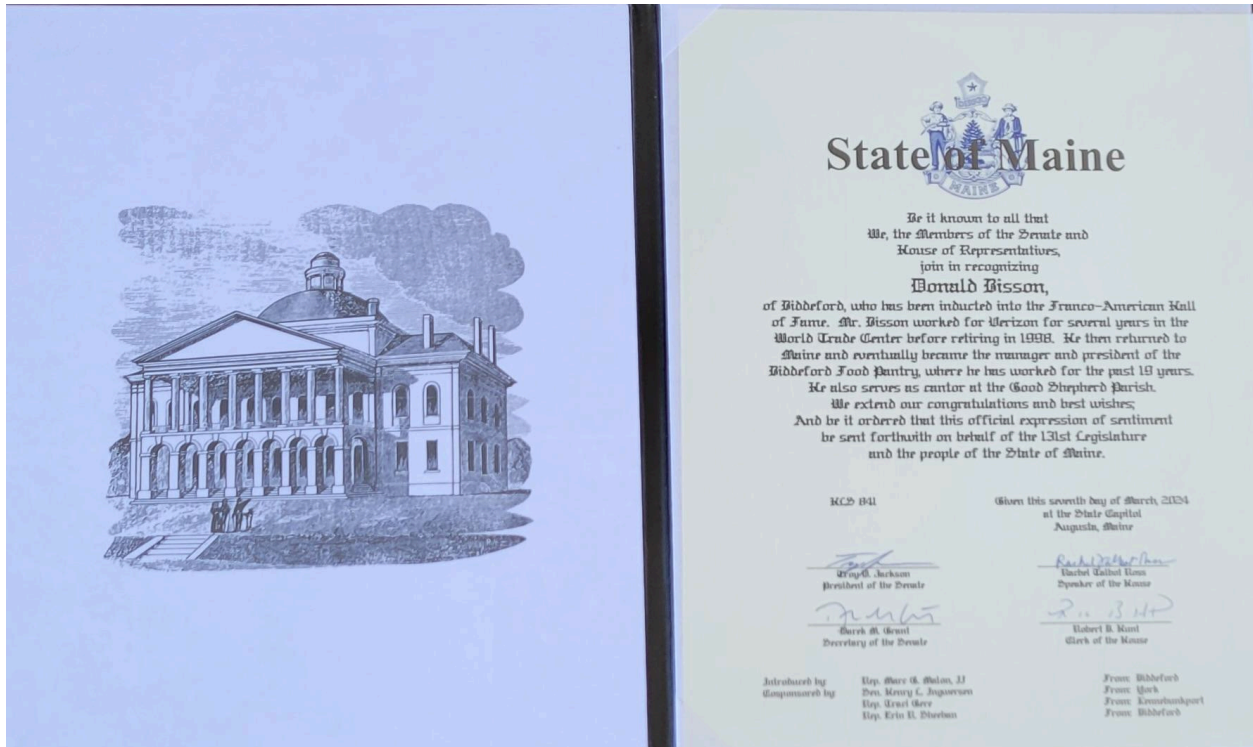


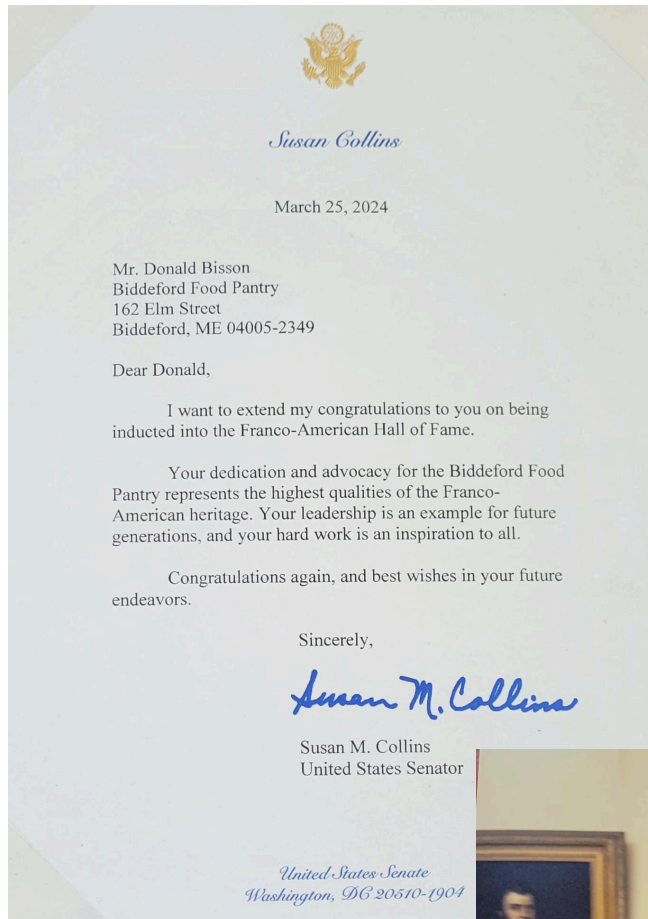
Coming together

Pictured on Monday, June 3 at the Biddeford Hannaford grocery store parking lot are, left to right, Don Bisson, manager of the Friends of Community Action Food Pantry; Heather Paquette; Hannaford regional vice president; and Barrett Johnson, manager of the Biddeford Hannaford supermarket. Paquette handed Bisson a \$10,000 check to be used for the purchase of a van.

DINA MENDROS/Journal Tribune

March 12, 2024 - Inducted into Maine Franco-American Hall of Fame





With Governor Janet Mills



On June 19, 2024 Don was invited to attend a Biddeford Saco Rotary Club meeting
Thinking he would be there to receive a donation for the Food Pantry,
he was shocked that they were honoring him with their 2024 Humanitarian Award



Don and
Biddeford
Mayor
Marty
Grohman

With Jim Godbout

