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## Oral Interview of Carolyn Blouin by Jenny Meagher for a Project on Activist Women in South Berwick, Maine

Carolyn Blouin

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**University of Maine Raymond H. Fogler Library Special Collections Department**

Oral interviews for a project on the history of activist women in South Berwick, Maine

Interviewer: Jenny Meagher (JM)

Photographer: Susanna Ross (SR)

Interviewee: Carolyn Blouin (CB)

Date: June 18, 1992

Recording number: 1992.2.8.c2.a

Length of recording: 63:44

[transcript begins]

JM: Jenny Maher. It's 2:10 [pm]. It's June 18, 1992. We are at the house of Carolyn Blouin on  
475 Emerys Bridge Road in South Berwick.

CB: Oh, say it again? It's called Old Joy Farm and only recently have we had to put 475 Emerys  
Bridge Road, but you know the post office now has to have a lot more—

JM: Oh, really.

CB: Yeah. And so that's how come.

JM: Are you gonna hold this, or?

CB: Oh, let me say one other thing. It's not a facetious old joy. It's because it belonged to the  
Joy family. They built it over 200 years ago. So that's why it's joy.

JM: I see. And you were mentioning to us before when we were getting the tour of the house  
that that um you're not an original—

CB: No.

JM: Mainer—

CB: Maniac is what I what I call us.

JM: But you, where were you originally from?

CB: Sweet Briar, Virginia.

JM: Really. And is that where you went to college?

CB: Yeah. Mm-hm. I lived there until I was 12. And, um, then part of my family moved and then I got a scholarship when I graduated from high school in Pennsylvania. And went back to Sweet Briar.

JM: I see. And when did you move to South Berwick?

CB: In 1945, we bought it on V-J day [Victory Over Japan Day]. And we came up the summer of '47 and we came up for the summer in 1948 and we've been here ever since.

JM: That's right. And you were saying that for six years you left it as it—

CB: Yes.

JM: —pretty much as it was.

CB: In 1953 we remodeled. Because by that time my husband had his business going. And although it was touch-and-go, we still, for example we had space heaters and when you went out in the evening and left a sitter you wondered you know, whether you really should go because maybe there might be something catch on fire and there the kids were. And we just didn't want to live there on kerosene lamps. We didn't have the kerosene lamps though all that time. We did get what you put in the barn you know and you got juice from that. But, um, that was the way it was.

JM: So, we're all three of your children born by that time?

CB: Yeah, mm-hmm. Yeah, our kids are, are getting old at this point. No, we um, we had Denny who was born in 1940. And he's now in Halifax and he has a son who is 16. And we had Debbie who is the librarian out in Arizona State. And then Craig who was born in several years later. And he is now a photographer but basically, he is helping my husband who is retiring. He, um, he has had a business that has been completely consuming him and he loved it. Uh, and now he's 87. And he's been, you know, quite well and so on. But it just doesn't make sense for him to keep on. But it's very hard for him to give up. And what's he going to do? He's an artist but he doesn't want to just, you know, paint. And so, Craig has

come in and said that he will be the family representative of the business. Not the CEO but he is helping down at the shop. And that's one thing—everything's a shop, you know. A business is a shop. I couldn't get, usually people say I'm going to the shop, I figured they were going shopping. But when you go a factory or business you go to the shop. And so that's what Craig is down at the shop a lot of the time now.

JM: Now this is an advertising shop? Or?

CB: We do business mostly with banks. We did business for a long time with a lot of telephone companies and so on. But basically, originally, we made exhibits and display for banks. And then they would go from one bank to another. They were large and they went railway express and so on. And uh, they, well, for example, the very first exhibit that we had was the homes of the presidents. And this was 1948 when that was a presidential election. And so, pictures of all the ones and then a blank. And then question mark. Who's from, you know, what is this picture going to be? And we remember then that we used we had that kind of exhibits that went from one bank to another. Maury got his first business client in Boston, the Home Savings Bank way back. And then got more. And then he traveled more and we got them all sort of all over the country. And so, in the long run, that was a long time ago, we, we they were big heavy exhibits. And then eventually they became plywood and then later on they are just on thick cardboard. And now we make, largely we make fixtures and things like that for banks and we go in and do a survey as we call it. And tell them what would, you know really be helpful. Basically, my husband's business has been based upon certainty. You have to make a profit. You have to make enough money so that you can continue in business. But basically, it's been, he's been trying to help our clients. Help them do better business and also quality. And so, we've changed as the times have. And we do largely the various things that banks need. Like, uh, their desks and, um, tables and uh, the things. You know a lot of them have displays as you can imagine. Well we do a lot of those

displays in the back. And so on and we send one of our salesmen out and he goes and makes a study and then we, you know, we tell them what they should have here and there.

JM: I see.

CB: And banks have been wonderful clients until lately of course. We never had to worry about whether we were going to get paid or not. But now it's a little different.

JM: Right. I'm wondering now, you mentioned "we" a couple times. Are you a part of this business? Do you help out?

CB: Well I am, I am still a vice-president. Uh, well, no, I'm not really. I'm just a member of the board, let's put it that way. But when we started, um, I was the only employee because you know he just he'd given up his job and he got started and he needed somebody to write letters. Well fortunately when I'd been in high school I had taken typewriting. I had, somebody taught me after school because of course I didn't take that commercial course. So I could type. And so, I was, you know, I was the typist. And in the long run I did everything that was necessary until there was so much to do that I couldn't do it all. Which was good. And I was with it for quite a while, for many years. And then I decided that he certainly didn't need me that much anymore. And I wanted to sort of be free of it. And for one thing, I don't think very many families have a husband and wife that agree about everything. And I certainly didn't. Uh, and he had a problem with me. And I just figured that I'd been there long enough. And that I definitely did not want to have people that were working for us be embarrassed because the boss and his wife didn't quite agree on certain things. And that, let's not publicize that. But, basically, it just seemed to me that that I didn't have to for the future of the business. And so, I've been doing other things ever since. But I did also take a couple of other jobs just, just to show myself that I could, you know. I worked over UNH for a while.

JM: What did you do there?

CB: Um, I worked in what is now the, huh, the New England Center. But then I was helping with them coordinating various conferences that they had. It was the Whittemore School and they had conferences of businesspeople and so on. And I was, I wasn't there a very long time. First, I started out in the women's athletic department. In the office there, yeah. Yeah.

JM: Now I'm wondering when I, when I called Amy she had mentioned that you were both in town management in the [19]50s.

CB: Town management.

JM: I believe I may have heard her—

CB: Well, no. I just, I'm a troublemaker. Let's put it that way. No. Just for example, I belong to the League of Women Voters. You know there is a new League of Women Voters of York County. I did belong to the League of Women Voters originally in Montclair. When the kids were little and we were in Montclair. And I think it's a great organization and I believe that democracy is the hope of the world and I'm upset about things as they are now. Ah, but the League of Women Voters has a bumper sticker that says, "Democracy is not a spectator sport!" And that, if it's going to, if it's going to continue it's got to be indulged in by ordinary people. Many, many more. And so yes, I mean, I've been I've been paying attention to government but I've never had an elective office. Never. And I do try to go to the town council meetings when I can. Um, and, um, you know whatever other meetings are necessary. But no. Yeah, I'm just, just a troublemaker.

JM: Well it seems like being part of the League of Women Voters is quite a position itself. You must have done a lot of organizing?

CB: No, not a whole lot because you see it is of York County. And that means that you have people from, from various towns in it. And we did have a women's, yes, we did have a League of Women Voters here. Because we have a town manager form of government. Just before we got a town manager form of government which is just at the time that we

moved here things were in terrible shape. Uh, and there was a real nice guy who was the head of the board, I guess, I don't know what they called it. But there were three members of the board. And all you had to do if you were you know running the town was to have a guy that that you know would do what you tell him to do. And two votes wins out of three. And it was in bad shape. And so, we had a really knock-down drag-out town manager battle at the time. And it, I won't go into that but, um, the town has gotten over it now. And, but it, the town manager form did win. And, but at that time the town was completely split and it was, things were in just dreadful shape.

JM: Now is this when you and Amy worked together? Maybe that's what she was referring to—

CB: Probably is.

JM: —she referred to it as town manager—

CB: Yep.

JM: I think I heard at it as management.

CB: Yeah.

JM: Now, can you tell, I'm not really familiar with, with the forms of town councils and the different positions. Town Manager, is that like mayor or how's that—

CB: No, well the town manager is a paid, a paid employee of the town. And he has, uh, the con—the constitution tells what his what his privilege, his rights are. And he works with an elected town council of which there are five members. There originally were seven. It's been changed to five at this point. And they tell him what to do. But he also has certain rights so that he does not have to ask them for permission to do many, many things. If he gets in trouble of course then, then they have to work it out together.

JM: So, did he do many things without asking that caused problems?

CB: No. At this, we had, to begin with we had a wonderful town manager. His name was Robert Weiss and he's still a very, very dear friend of ours. And that/s many years ago. That was

1940, 1949, I think, or 1950. And he now is down in Manchester, Connecticut where he was the top man. And he is now since retired. Um, but no we have not had a lot of very good town managers. He was just tops and w've only had maybe one or two since then. And so that means that you have to have a good Board of Selectmen, our town councillors, and that hasn't always worked very well either. But at any rate, we have an excellent town manager now. He's been here almost two years and he is, he had resigned and was going to leave the 1st of July. Have you have you seen the problems we've been having lately?

JM: I'm not familiar.

CB: We've had [laugh] our policemen, our police chief has had all kinds of problems and now he's suing the town. And he's a good police chief too. And it doesn't make sense to sue the town. And you know, when you want people to have confidence in you and here you are, you're suing the town so that means there's gonna be legal bills and my tax money is gonna have to pay for those legal bills and things like that. But at any rate, we did have that. And then, in addition to that, and please don't put too much of this in. But the fire chief, who is a real good guy. They had, um, they have an annual banquet I guess which is unofficial. And all, you know it's a volunteer fire department. And at that, I guess there was a disagreement of some kind on the dance floor and the fire chief I guess and his wife had kind of problems and they had well, almost a fistfight with some of the people. So that got in the Portland papers and the Dover papers. And now, we have, I just read yesterday in the Dover paper that's, that, there's a guy who is a real estate man who is suing the town because one of the town councilmen made racial remarks about him. So, it's always an interesting town to be in.

JM: Sounds like it.

CB: Yeah.

JM: But, I I'm interested in and what kind of, what kind of work you did during that time with town management. What—

CB: Well, all of them of course we had to organize the fight to begin with. And because we had to prom— we had to know what a town manager form of government would consist of and how it would work and so on. And we had, I guess for months, all kinds of meetings and so on. And those they all had to be very carefully planned and Amy was in the midst of that, she and her husband and so on. And then afterwards all we could do was just give support. And basically, I have done really nothing other than just try to keep in touch with what's going on and talk to people. Um and hope that, you know, that right would come out.

JM: So, you were calling people on the phone that you knew or were you canvassing downtown?

CB: Um, well yes, it depends on you know what the issue was and so but certainly before we would have town meetings or special meetings, certainly, we would make phone calls, we would create big lists. And then you'd check up at the if the voting was going to stop at say 8:00 pm, around 5:00 pm you'd, you've been, you have people that were at a desk and checking people off when they came in and the people that hadn't been checked off that you expected to come in you would telephone and say you know "Do you need a ride?" and stuff like that. Um yes, but that was that was the kind of thing that should go on regularly. I mean it wasn't anything special.

JM: So that's what you feel should be part of that democracy, the idea of working for something.

CB: Sure, of course.

JM: And so what kind of things were your fighting for?

CB: Well, we were fighting basically so that there would not be anybody taking advantage of, for example, of money that should be spent for welfare and things like that. Because at one point there was one special store that was having most of the welfare. Um, you know was,

was being bought there and that kind of thing. I'd just as leave, I'd just as leave not have that mentioned though because the people that had that I mean at that store that's all, all you know in the past.

JM: I just want to let you know, what we, it's on, if you'd rather not say something then it may better to have it not on the tape.

CB: Yes.

JM: So—

CB: Okay.

JM: Please feel free if you don't want to answer questions, that's fine.

CB: Okay. All right.

JM: I understand.

CB: Okay.

JM: But I just, I'm interested in that you say that you were a troublemaker. Now, I'm just wondering—

CB: Well, I went, I went to the dump about two or three months ago. And uh, Don Bachelder drove up with his stuff and I was dumping my stuff and he said, hi, haven't seen you for a long time and I said, no Don, you know I'm fine how's your wife, et cetera, et cetera. And something was going on at that point, I don't even remember what. And I said you know how about it and he said well then we talked awhile and so and I let him know how I felt. And he said boy, you certainly are a troublemaker. And I said you know I am and it's just too bad. And he said, well, said he, we need, we need troublemakers but he said not too many. [laughter]

JM: That's great.

CB: Yeah. So, no, it, there just are always things that in a small town and this is getting larger and it's not used to being as large as it is. There are always things that people who have

been here a long time, generations a lot of them, don't like the changes. And a lot of us newcomers, because of course, we're still newcomers, don't like some of the changes either. But basically, the idea is that we have to accept the things that are best for the town. And for example, zoning. Way back, shortly after we came here, they wanted to have a small you know basic zoning. So, after a great deal of altercations at a town meeting they okayed a committee which would study and they would report back to the next annual town meeting that's a year later. So, that came up a year later. Came down that article on the agenda. And Gordon Rate got up, and Gordon Rate was a very dear friend of mine, and it doesn't, that name doesn't have to be mentioned, I move that this be indefinitely postponed. And that was seconded and the whole town and we voted and it went over just not even to hear that report. And that's how, that's how they felt about zoning. And it's taken many, many years and the zoning has been a large, a large bone of contention. And we still do not have adequate zoning. But we have better zoning most of the time.

JM: By zoning is this for schools or what you mean by?

CB: Well, what are you saying? Are you saying were schools part of some of the problems?

Well, let's go back again. When we first came here Berwick Academy was, it's always been a private school. However, the town paid tuition for all of its high school students to be educated at Berwick Academy. Um, and it had been a very fine school scholastically but shortly before we came and after we came for a while the caliber of the education there was really very, very poor. And so, there were a lot of people that felt something should be done. It was a private board of directors, trustees, and so on. And that, I was in the midst of that, and that caused quite a bit of trouble. Because we were trying to see that the caliber of education and the, the quality of teaching could be improved. Well, shortly after that Berwick Academy went completely private. And South Berwick had to build its own high school. And that was the very first time I gather that any school, any town in Maine had had

to just start from scratch and not have something. You know, maybe they'd have to add on or build a larger one, but we had to start from scratch. And that made quite a bit of unhappiness. Um, so that lasted for I don't think more than four years when a school SAD 35 was born. School Administrative District, SAD. And that was when they came into being in Maine. And that, that now is Elliott and South Berwick. And the junior high school is in South Berwick and it is an enlarged South Berwick high school building. In other words, it's been added on, and that's what happened to the South Berwick high school building. And Amy was the head of that building committee for the South Berwick High School. And she is, she's just a really, really top-notch educator. And she had a lot of problems. And it's a good building. Again, it's very easy for contractors and architects and so on to hope that the quality is adequate but not be completely overseen so that it has to be good and Amy was the kind that nobody was going to put anything over and so it's an excellent building.

JM: Well it sounds like both you and Amy we are the kind of women who just kind of get in there and really take part in the process of change. And I'm just wondering how that's been for you in town, like with people calling you troublemaker and that kind of thing. I'm just wondering, have you ever felt that people held it against you? Has it been hard being a woman? Seems like there are a lot of men involved but you and Amy kind of stick out as women. Were there other women involved or were you—

CB: Yeah, there were a lot of women. Um, and quite a few of them are not here anymore. Because this was a long time ago. And it didn't take too long before people realized that, yes, we did right to get the town manager form of government. It didn't take too long for people to realize, yes, we did need to upgrade the quality of education. Um and so people have been very forgiving of Amy and, and all the rest of us. They really, they really have. Um and let me say right now that South Berwick is a town that is an unusually fine town. There are, I know, I love Maine. I would never want to have to go back and live in the South

unless I had to. This is my home and there's just nothing that that would suit me half as well as living right here where I am at home. Um, but in the long run, the caliber of people in South Berwick is anything but average. It is, is the people. For example when we had the town manager form of government we had to have ads in the in the Dover paper and so we had a letter that was that was written that said, you know, we who have been born and raised in South Berwick feel that so-and-so and so-and-so has been wrong and used very strong language about it and but we are for the town manager form of government. That took a great deal of courage. And we newcomers, like Amy and, and several of the rest of us, were just overwhelmed with the idea that these people were willing to go out on a limb. And it's this type of person that is basically what South Berwick has, has been built on.

JM: Do you feel that a lot of those people are women?

CB: Yeah. I am a feminist, Ah, but again, I have to say that I'm very fortunate in that I didn't need, I didn't need to have, you know the Revolution in order to be able to be myself. Um, and I think our kids have paid a price. Because their life between Maury and me hasn't been that easy. There was controversy. But had I not expressed myself and not felt that I needed to do what I felt I needed to do. I would have been completely smothered and maybe that would have been better. I just don't know. For example, when you get older you begin asking yourself you know now what have I been doing? And what have I been working for? And then you look back and you think there is one thing I do want. You come to later though. You look back and you think, well, was that right? I know it was right to have the town manager form of government. There've been other things and I say myself you know you weren't so damn right about all those things. There's just one thing that I'm sure though that I'm really happy about and that is that we now have a library. And we did not have a library. And I was very, with a team of us, women, got the library 20 years ago. It's almost 21 years now. There was a library up at Berwick Academy and people were

allowed to go up. It's up on the top of a hill. Do you know where it is? It's way up on the top of a hill. So that set, separates it to begin with. And they did allow people to come certain hours of the week. But, it was a school library and it was attuned to the things that, that high school kids need. And so, we decided that it just didn't make sense that South Berwick didn't have a real library. And so, it worked out that we, that we, the you know you know the Mobil gas station, right across from that is the library.

JM: Next to the Sarah Orne Jewett house?

CB: Yes, yes. And that had the library Sarah Orne Jewett lived in for several years as she was growing up. Um, and you know that's wonderful to have that as part of the library. But basically that building belonged to the SPNEA [Society for the Preservation of New England Antiquities] and at that point, the people who were taking care of it were quite elderly and one of them was renting out rooms and things like that. And then she could do it no longer and it came to the point where nobody knew what was going to happen to it. And so, we had been working to try to get a library. So, I sat down and wrote to the SPNEA and said to them, you know, what are you going to do with this building? Um, and gee, you know, would you be interested at all. And the idea that you know that if we were able to work with you of having it become a library. And figuring that all we had to lose was a little time and a postage stamp. And they wrote back and said, yes, they would like to talk to us. And so, it eventuated into the fact that they let us use it as a library. And then after, well we've owned it, what, 1984 I think something like that. Then, and of course, they tell you exactly what you can do with the building and what you can't do with it. Um, and you have to have the funds to do whatever is necessary. And eventually, um, it came to the point that they no longer could afford to keep that— [audio cuts out at 31:51 and returns at 32:03] — and, and the library building is fine. But it isn't a gem. And so, we didn't have any money. But we decided that we certainly would see what we could do. And so, we organized, a

well, by the library, um, organization. And that took a lot of time and a lot of doing. And we, for example, Mrs. Vincent Astor gave us 500 bucks 'cause she has Maine connections. And, you know, we wrote to everybody we could think of and we also, grants. And then, well, for example, one of the first letters we got was a letter from Florida with, it was almost, well just almost infantile writing. And it was addressed just to you know the library, South Berwick, Maine. A man who sent \$2. And he wanted us to know that that he would like to give that. And he had heard about it on National Public Radio. The National Public Radio is John Rudolph who lives in South Berwick now. And he had put it on and it got a lot of publicity that way. And eventually, we raised enough money to buy the building. And now, it, well, Amy is the head of JEM. And JEM is Jewett East Memorial Committee. Jewett East Memorial Committee, J-E-M. And she's the head of that and there are seven members of that. As I say, we celebrated the 20th year of the library last September. And we've only owned the building though since I think it's 1980s, [198]4, [19]86, something like that. And now we hope to put an addition on.

JM: That's great.

CB: And the library is, as far as I'm concerned, the thing that's the most important that we've been able to accomplish.

JM: And how do you feel about um, well the reason I'm asking you so many questions about women is because when um, two of the people from Salt Magazine came into town they went into Flynn's for lunch. And they were just asking people questions about South Berwick. And one of the things that came up, and I'm sure was meant as a joke, but it was said that South Berwick is a man's town. And I was just wondering how you felt about that.

CB: That's news to me. [telephone rings] Excuse me a minute.

JM: Sure, go right ahead.

CB: New to me. Were they able to elaborate? I guess they probably couldn't ask too much. I mean they were just listening.

JM: Right. Well they said they were asking about what South Berwick was like and, and that was just one comment that came up. I'm not sure of the context because I wasn't there but. I was just wondering—

CB: Well that's very interesting. Um, we have had a member, a woman on the town council. And she was good. Um, maybe it is man's town but to me I don't see it that way. I really don't see it— It's not a woman's town either. I mean really.

JM: Why do you feel that? Why is it not—

CB: Well, I just mean I can't, I can't feel that that, that women are the ones that are running the town. But I don't think, I just think that it's a joint effort at this point. And that women do help a great deal. And a lot of them I think are keeping their men headed in the right direction. You know what I mean? And I feel very strongly for example at this point and again I'm digressing. I really feel badly about the fact that, I'm a Democrat so I wouldn't vote for her anyway. But I mean, it's terrible that people have to vote in order to be loyal to women would have to vote for Linda Bean. I mean please don't, but you know, I if I were a Republican I would feel really very sad that I couldn't vote for a woman. I just feel that women can make a tremendous difference. And I think a tremendous difference has to be made now. I am dreadfully upset. I don't know Perot and I don't, I'm not that happy with Clinton and I certainly can't stand Bush. But, and Amy and I are, you know. I mean I guess, I guess you might say we're frothing at the mouth. Excuse me. But I just feel very, very strongly that we on this country are at a tremendously important and very dangerous point so far as what the future is. And our priorities are all wet and I'm just am really upset about Tom Andrews for example. At this point I think he's a wonderful guy. But I just hope he doesn't have to, it said in the Portland paper that, you know, he's starting to feud with, with

Linda. And I know, I know you're gonna have to feud with Linda, but I just, I just wish that that he could just lie low on Linda. Cause he is, he's super. He's, he's courageous. And he's for the right things and he doesn't mind saying so even if they're unpopular.

JM: What do you think the priority should be if you were going to vote for someone? What would you look for in them?

CB: Well, of course, to begin with I'm, I'm so liberal I'm a radical. And I guess I would look for you know, how they felt about the important things which are basically at this point we, now, there are hungry people, there are people who have no place to sleep, and there are people that have no way of taking care of ill health. The health care situation is, I mean that is something that, it's got, it's got to be changed. And there's so many things like that but basically health care and, and putting the emphasis upon the tax money that's going to help people and not going to munitions and thing. And I read that that the Pentagon wants to, to build a hell of a lot of a new building.

JM: How do you feel like, how do you feel that the future of Maine is, is riding on this election?

CB: Well you know I, I kind of feel, I feel very strongly, and again, I feel qualified to speak. Because I am NOT a Maniac. I know that, I'm not a Mainer. And, and I am not a South Berwickian because I didn't start here. And I feel very highly qualified and I tell people this. I really do feel that Maine is different. And I feel that Maine is basically very sound. And I cannot believe that Mainers are gonna be so stupid that they'll vote for the kind of thing that Linda Bean is. And, and the kind of things that she stands for and so on. All right let's get to choice.

JM: Right.

CB: I'm really, really, um, I, I was an escort at the Feminist Health Center in Portsmouth for a couple of years. And then they found a place which is right next to the police department in Greenland so they don't need escorts anymore. And I, I should be ashamed to, but I miss

it. I miss being an escort there. Because I mean, and they got to know me, they'd call out, hi Carolyn, you better watch out for euthanasia. And you know, but, but really the, the choice business. I cannot understand how men, I just can't understand how a man can feel that he has a right to tell a woman. But I can't understand women. Why are we so stupid? And look at all the women that are that are going to those abortion clinics and how can we do that?

JM: Right.

CB: Okay, I've gotten off the subject.

JM: I, I'm actually very interested in that. So, you were an escort for women for were—

CB: —going to have an abortion.

JM: What kinds of things did you run into? What kind of conflicts or struggles did you run into there?

CB: Well, not any, any real physical struggles except for example, most of the people that were coming were young. Um, not, you know, not 15. Not very often. But I don't know whether you know where it was but it's right on a corner almost right in the middle of downtown. And there's this, it's on, the house is on the street itself. I mean, maybe they're a couple of feet between the house and—

JM: —Portsmouth.

CB: Yeah. And so a car would drive up and there would be a young woman in there and she would have to get out and she would have to walk. If she was on the other side of the street you would have to walk across the street. Or if it were this side she'd have to walk up. And so, we would just go and walk with her. Um, if we had a chance, but the, the pickets, you know, would just scream and yell and shout. And so, we often had to go across the street and you know just, just give her a hand and so on. Um, and the things that they would say. You know you try to put yourself in being 18 or 19 again and you'd be scared to death. You

really would be. And, and then you're going in there and what's gonna happen to you? But they're very, very loving people that work in those clinics, very loving. Um, okay.

JM: That's, that sounds like a very emotional time to be with that woman right beforehand. Did you ever speak to one of those women?

CB: Well no, you see all we did, we had, we stood outdoors. We stayed outdoors. But inside there were. Definitely. We, you know, they would go in and we would take them to the door, the side door and they would go in and they would be welcomed. And, and I just have the greatest respect and admiration for the people that work there. Uh, they, they realized how these people felt and they would talk to them and so on and prepare them for what would be happening. Uh, and they would also many times if they saw that a person was really not that sure, they would encourage them, look, you know, if you'd rather not do it today, come back. Uh, and, and you know go home. They, they were just very understanding. So, you didn't feel badly as an escort about forcing somebody to do something that maybe they weren't that sure they wanted to do. Because of what was happening around them.

JM: Now a lot of women don't have as strong a feeling of self. You said that you always felt like you had to be true to yourself and that's why you've spoken up about just about how you feel about issues or whatever. I'm just wondering, was your, who do you feel kind of led you in that direction or was that just always a part of your personality? Was it your mother or a teacher?

CB: Well, I had a wonderful mother. And my mother had a lot of problems. And I still, I regret every day I think about it that my mother never told me. And I never asked my mother. I was so stupid that I never gave her, said to her, look mom, you know, what happened? And I should have. But she was just wonderful, and of course she, my, my mother and father were from Maryland. And my father went down when Sweet Briar was just beginning. And he had charge of the buildings and the grounds down there. And my mother and father had

been married almost 10 years with no children. And they've moved down there and I came along and so my middle name was Virginia. But at any rate, my mother of course had never dealt with black people. And she became just completely enamored of her friends, her black friends. Of course, I had a, you don't, you don't use the word anymore, I had a black mammy. I mean I'm that old. And then, um, she had a daughter who was a nurse for me. And I grew up with, with black children. But mother, you know, mother never had that Southern feeling of you know, they're servants. Um, and they're different. And I was never, for example, you know in the old days what happened is yeah, you play, if you're a little white child, you played with black kids until maybe they were eight years old. And then no more. My mother wasn't like that. You know, if they were your friend, they were your friend. And, and so, I was at a great advantage being brought up there but not being brought up as an, you know what an FFV is, first family of Virginia. And, and I was, I was just so fortunate that I wasn't brought up that way. So that that's one of the things, that's what started me off basically is, is the civil rights struggle. Um, and, um, and I was in Washington when, to listen to Martin Luther King when he gave his "I Have a Dream Speech". And as far as I'm concerned there is nothing that's happened in my life other than things that have to do with my family that has touched the depth of that experience. Um, and so, yes, I mean that's, that's something that I've been very, very, very deeply involved with. But that didn't have a lot to do with South Berwick. Because, practically no black people here.

JM: Do you feel like there's been another group in South Berwick that has been marginalized in the way that black people were in the South? Have you found a struggle like that here?

CB: Well, I think there probably was with, with French people. They call 'em Canucks. Um, and South Berwick before we came here, is any of you a Catholic? Yeah, well the point is that before we came here, and I'm gonna speak very frankly, there was a real division between

Catholics and Protestants. And the main reason had to do with that most of the Catholics that were here then were French.

SR: Is that French-Canadian?

CB: Hmm?

JM: French-Canadian?

CB: Yes, yes, French-Canadian. And they were dreadfully treated. They were looked down on.

They lived, they lived down at The Point. And that's where they lived and you paid no—

And one of the, one, nowadays we have wonderful priests here. Just wonderful. But in the

days when we first came here, Father [William] Lem was there. And Father Lem was the

kind of priest who, who could not accept the fact, I guess, that there was anything, well I, I

guess, I don't know what to say. In other words, you just, you just disregarded anything,

anything that wasn't Catholic. That's all. For example, my husband was born and brought

up a Catholic. And, um, but he didn't go to church as much as he should. So when he

asked me to marry him and I said sure. And he said well we'll be married by a priest. And I

said yes, we'll be married by a priest, provided, at that time you had to promise that your

children would be brought up Catholic, provided this one good Catholic parent and that isn't

gonna be me. Because I, you know, I was brought up Presbyterian and my grandparents

were Quakers and so on. And I said it isn't right to have Catholic children unless they've got

one good Catholic parent. [phone ringing] Doctor tomorrow morning and they're checking.

Um, so, where was I?

JM: We're talking about French and about the priest and how you felt about it.

CB: Yeah, um, so anyhow, he tried to go back and at that point he'd been away so long that he

couldn't. But Father Lem, when Maury, and then Maury's mother came to, oh, and she was

a wonderful lady, just a, she was in her late 80s I guess. And French, but very well-

educated and a writer and so on. And she came to live with us because Maury was the only

one that could take care of her. She came when we lived in Montclair and then she moved up here for a while. And she died very suddenly. And Maury had a letter from Father Lem, not at all kind. Because of, you know he hadn't continued and so forth and so on. Very unkind to him right after his mother died and thought, you know. The type of religion has nothing to do with that, that's just cruel. Um, and that's the kind of thing that had a great deal to do with the feelings that there were among people in South Berwick. Because Father Lem had been here a long time. Since then, people don't even pay any attention. You know, you never think about what somebody's religion is. I don't mean that you don't care. I don't mean that that religion isn't important. Of course, it is. But the point is that nobody, nobody ever thinks about well gee, you know, you're different from me because you don't go the same church. And the whole town has just changed tremendously. And French people were just terribly, terribly mistreated.

JM: And did you ever speak up about that or how did you feel?

CB: Well, I did what I could. But there really there really weren't too many places where that would be possible. Except for the fact that now, for example, the Catholic, the Baptist, and the Federated [First Parish Federated Church], which is the one that we go to, and another Baptist church, they have meetings together all the time. They have luncheons and they have the women's groups together. Um, and the, the priest and the various ministers in town, not all of them but most of them, meet together once a month. Which is, you can see, it's just, it's just made a tremendous difference. No, I don't think I had much to do with that. It's just, it's just worked out that well. It's just worked out beautifully.

JM: That's great.

CB: That's the way it should be.

JM: Um-hmm. Definitely.

CB: But at any rate, so, to go back to civil rights, it's, you know, I've marched and, and that's been on my mind a lot of times when maybe South Berwick wasn't.

JM: And where did you march?

CB: Portsmouth, um, Portland, Washington. I went to Washington several times. Um, Boston. I guess, New York. I guess that's about all.

JM: With any particular organization?

CB: Hmm?

JM: With any particular organization? Or just with a group of people?

CB: No, a group of people. Um, not, not with any, no, but of course I belong to the NAACP [National Association for the Advancement of Colored People]. I belonged to that for many years. No, it's just that you, in a small town there aren't that many people. For example, my background made it that way. Because I, you know, I am basically a Southerner. I'm not a Southern thinker but I am basically was born there and that's that. And so, therefore it's very very much upper in the in the upper part of my mind. But there aren't that many people in South Berwick that it would make that much difference to. So, but there were several people and so, for example, when I went to the march on Washington, I had had met two gals from Portsmouth. And they knew a couple of Unitarian ministers and we were going to drive down so we drove down together. Um, and again, I do want to tell you because you don't realize how important it was then. But on that march, the people that the, the white people. And there were just so many of us that that made the greatest impression and that were the most numerous were Catholics and Unitarians. The Catholics, and the sisters, you know of course the Catholic sisters were all dressed. I mean in those days. And it was it was just beautiful. Just, you know, just prayed. Yeah. And that's been true all the way through.

JM: So, you're Unitarian? Or—

CB: No, I was—

JM: You said that—

CB: No, I'm not a Unitarian. I don't know what I am at this point. I, I am a Congregationalist. Um, because that's the church that I go to. We have a very fine young, not young to you, minister now who is, is the whole town as being, for example, he goes into Flynn's news and sits there and has coffee almost every day. He's part of the, what do you call it, the ambulance. You know the volunteer emergency rescue squad. He's been here 20-some years. This was his first, first church and he's still here. He has a daughter who is graduating from Colby next year. He has a son who graduated from Colby this year. Um, and then he has a younger child. And he is simply superb. He's just knitting the whole town together. That, it has, it's just a wonderful thing. Everyone knows Jim Christensen. And they respect Jim Christensen. And Jim Christensen stands for what he believes in. Um, but he loves everybody.

JM: That's great.

CB: Yeah.

JM: That's great. And you had mentioned that that you weren't sure that we want to use you in the story and you knew other people's names or. I mean we're trying to do a story on women in South Berwick.

CB: Yes.

JM: And I'm not sure if we're gonna focus on one person or not or— It seems like it might be a good thing to talk to a lot of different women.

CB: Yes, I would like, I made a little list. Can I get it?

SR: Please, please do. That would be great.

CB: So, the first person I think and I you certainly should see her is Gloria they call her Roberge. R-O-B-E-R-G-E.

JM: R-O-B-E-R-G-E.

CB: Gloria. She is the basic person in Flynn's market. Flynn's Market and Flynn's News are two institutions in South Berwick. And her father was Ray Flynn. Now, can you shut it off a minute?

JM: Yep. [stops audio]

CB: —and cards to everybody that's in them, in the hospital. She knows where everybody is, she, I think she gives money to people that need it all the time. Gloria Flynn is, course she's not Gloria she's Gloria Roberge now. But she is just, she knows this town. I used to go to see her mother. Her mother was very ill for several years. And I used to see her mother before she died. And she was a lovely lady. Um, and Gloria is just, she just knows South Berwick. And she's done so much, for example the library. And that was 20 years ago. She was one of the very first ones that wanted to help and they gave, they give things from, from the store. When we have special events and that kind of thing. And, and, and she talks about it. And they put up some—they just do everything that's really good. So please see Gloria. Okay. And her phone number, I've got their home phone numbers but she's— [audio cut out?] her son, I think, is the top man now.

JM: Okay.

CB: And his name is Dennis. Roberge. And he's not Gloria. He went, he got his, his bachelor's, I think in business. I think at Boston College but I'm not sure. And he's a nice guy. But he's, he's not Gloria. And she still is the basis of the business there. Um, 9751 is her home.

JM: And the—I'm not familiar with it. Is it 384?

CB: Is what?

JM: 384?

SR: The prefix.

CB: 384. Yeah, all this is three eight four unless I tell you differently. Okay. And her husband is an interesting guy. I hope maybe you'll meet him. Albert and I fight all the time because he is, he is, is very, very conservative. And for example, the other, we just had town meeting. And, uh, I don't hear very well, as you know, so I don't hear a lot of the conversation. Um, but anyhow there were several instances in which they were trying to cut out things that they shouldn't have cut out with especially having to do with administration. He was sitting farther back and I was sitting up front so that I could hear. So, I hadn't seen him. I saw him at church. We had, you know, there's a Spring Hill which is a place that that has a lake and so on and it's on they have all kinds of special events there. The man there had died and the memorial service was Tuesday night and Gloria and, and Junior were there. And Junior came up to me, Albert came up to me, and said, hmm, he said, well it's too bad you aren't as tight with your money for the town as you are yourself. Because I go in there all the time and you know I don't like to waste. I really hate to waste. And you know I take back things that, you know, things that, they have a daughter who makes things herself so you, you buy that. And you, you're giving your husband something homemade not out of a can, but you didn't have to make it. And their daughter does that and so I take back the empties and things like that. But anyhow, he said, so you were awful [unclear]. In other words, he saw me putting my hand up when it, when I wanted the opposite of what he wanted. Um, and we—, like I say, but he is a super, super guy. And, and I hope you'll meet him because he's— Okay. Elaine England.

JM: Elaine England.

CB: Yeah. 2735. Now Elaine England has been in town for a lot, I think Gloria was born here, I'm not sure and I think Elaine maybe was too. She was the main, what was her name? I'm not sure at this point. But at any rate, she is, she is a really interesting person and very,

very willing to elaborate. I think you'll like her. She's, she's nutty. And you know, it's just fun to be with her. And she's very honest about what she thinks.

JM: That's good.

CB: Okay. Marie Donahue. D-O-N-A-H-U-E. 4891. Marie Donohue taught at Dover High School for many years and she taught at Berwick Academy. English. She writes. She has had articles in Downey's several times. She's a fine writer. She is retired now. She is, I think, was born in South Berwick. A very fine—a highly educated person and one who is very, very typical of the best of South Berwick. Now she knows Gladys Hasty Carroll. I don't know whether you're interested in Gladys Hasty Carroll or not, but you know who she is. Gladys Hasty Carroll is their famous authoress. She is, Marie will tell you about her. Um, and put this off a minute please. [audio turned off]

[end of transcript]