

Maureen and Mike

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**Oral History Number: 307-001, 002**  
**Interviewee: Donna Metcalf**  
**Interviewer: Dale Johnson**  
**Date of Interview: November 12, 1993**

Dale Johnson: This is Dale Johnson interviewing Donna Metcalf November 12, 1993. Okay, Donna, maybe relate some of the biographical material on Lee Metcalf.

Donna Metcalf: The stories as I remember them. His mother was the daughter of Bob Smith of, I call it Corvallis, but because it's on that side of the river, and he had married one of the Wood girls, Woods. And I have to look that up, I think it's W-o-o-d-s. [It is Wood.] The Woods were a large family that had emigrated from the Middle West to the Bitterroot and had a farm up what may still be called Wood's Lane. [Wood Lane.] I'm not sure, these are all things I could check out if I had, if I had been thinking about it for a little while perhaps. But Grandpa Woods had a house that I used to be able to see. We used to drive by it on the first crest up on the east side. There were lots of children, and it was customary for many years for everybody to go back to that household on Sunday for a great big family dinner. His grandmother was Mary Woods, married to Bob Smith. Bob Smith raised, I think Percherons, draft horses that were used, his mother had told me, in the Fort Benton parade. Now I don't know how long that lasted because I don't know, I would have to check. Mary Woods died when the children were very young and Bob Smith raised them himself and Rhoda had a brother and two sisters. She was told a lot of stories about how they grew up and how he would put them all in a carriage and take them to Stevensville to things like 4th of July celebrations and pretty much as I remember the stories they had tried to have some relatives in the home to help raise the children but that it didn't work out, and he recognized it and just raised the children himself. He, Bob Smith, did quite a few civic things and it seems to me that I've found in the Stevensville newspaper—which I remembered being called the "*Northwest [Tribune]*," is that right? He had donated money to help build the Methodist church and where he had given the money to something they called the Stevensville Training School, and I believe that maybe the Stevensville Training School thrived until public schools were established. Anyway they were a family that valued schools and sometimes when we talk about Lee's interests in politics I remember that Grandpa Smith always got the *St. Louis Post Dispatch*, is that right? I'll have to look that up, there must be one that has "Democrat" in the name. I wonder if that [is correct], we will have to see. I think I have that in the recordings that I've have made with Rhoda. Didn't make as many of those as I would have liked to, but time eats away at you, doesn't it?

Anyway, Bob Smith was quite an impressive person, it seemed to me. And so was Grandpa Woods; they were both different sorts of people. Both, I think, contributed genes to Lee Metcalf. Grandpa Woods was a great farmer. And he was also pretty generous with all these youngsters. I can remember one story which may be the sort of thing you want or not. Rhoda was raising her own family. Grandpa Woods was still farming, and he came by one day with a share, her mother's share I guess it would be, of a gift he was giving everybody. And then he, so he gave her a check for five hundred dollars. When they had their little conversation about all

of that he said, "Now Rhody, would you like to buy some squash?" And Rhody bought some squash for about 25 cents. He was in that sense, all business. Rhoda's aunt was Aunt Lula [Lula Belle Wood Brooks] and Corvallis an eatery if you remember stories about that [Brooks Hotel]. Almost always when we went to the Bitterroot we would stop to see Aunt Lula. She had a good relationship with most of her family. She was a wonderful, wonderful storyteller. I think about it, although I am not terribly knowledgeable about it, as kind of in the tradition of a southern storyteller, telling all the stories about the family and passing them on. She had a remarkable memory for everything that happened in the Bitterroot, and we'd be driving along with her and she said, she would say that's where the old barn was, burned down in 1927 or something like that.

I think that the Stevensville schools must have been fairly excellent and people ask me, well, when did he become interested in politics? When I first met him I didn't really recognize that he was interested in politics. Maybe that was because I was interested in something else. But I had a sense that there were good—and strikes me as being unusual but maybe it wasn't—teachers teaching sociology and American history in high school. He really became captured by ideas of the Constitution and all that when he was very young. So far as I know he liked his teachers. He had in his high school years, as I suppose everyone in that generation had, built himself a crystal set. He could—I suppose there were not all that many broadcasts, broadcasting stations, that existed in the Middle West, particularly had long ranges. He would listen to things like political speeches and conventions, things like that. Seemed to have absorbed a lot of enthusiasm for American government when he was really in high school. Now, you had some questions about—

DJ: What now, he graduated from Stevensville High School, is that right?

DM: Yes.

DJ: What, do you know what influenced him to go to Stanford?

DM: Well in those days farm families that could afford it, you know, would finish up all their work up in the fall and go down to California. So he knew a lot about the Los Angeles area and the schools. I really—and I think that his family was down there by then, maybe had left the Bitterroot at least temporarily, and were living in the Los Angeles area. He went for a year at Missoula and then decided to go to Stanford, but I think that's when he skipped a year and didn't go to school at all, but found a job working for the Los Angeles school system in their gardening department, which was completely for the whole city, one separate gardening department. And they would get in trucks with all their tools and materials and drive around to the different schools, and you know of course there was lots of room in those days, so the schools all had beautiful gardens that he would go back and check up on every once in a while. He became—of course since they lived like farmers, although his father worked in the little Stevensville bank—they still lived that American tradition of living on the land. So of course, his mother, I think, ran whatever farms they had—ranches with help, hired help. Also with the help

of Lee, who was expected to do certain chores and the way he raised his allowance or pin money [was] by milking the cows and delivering them. His mother helped him. She worked the cream, I supposed she pasteurized the milk too. I don't really remember how, but I'm sure they were pretty precious even in those days about to work the horses and things like that. So she took—after the milk came in from the barn—she took care of it and bottled it. But he was supposed to load it up, either on his bicycle basket or in a farm truck, little farm truck, and deliver it. He, with the money that came in from that, was his spending money. Now am I clear off the track of what you asked me?

DJ: I asked what made him, influenced him to go to Stanford.

DM: Oh, I don't know whether I really know otherwise.

DJ: What did he major in at Stanford?

DM: History and economics, as I remember.

DJ: And then, completing Stanford, did he go into law?

DM: Law school—and he hadn't given up Montana enough not to go back to Montana and go to school. He had in mind living in Montana I think.

DJ: Then when he graduated from law school, which was in what year?

DM: I think 1936.

DJ: And then he went, what did he do then?

DM: When he graduated from law school he went up to Stevensville and opened an office across from the bank, upstairs across from the bank. I can't remember the names of the street, but I can find out. He ran for the state legislature as soon as he was out of school. He was elected—so I should have, I have those all written down someplace but I don't remember them myself very well. [He was elected in 1936 and served in the 1937 session.]

DJ: So he was in, he served one term in the legislature, or two?

DM: No, just one term. And then Nick Rotering was in Harrison Freebourn [Montana attorney general] attorney's office, and Nick died. [Metcalf replaced M. Kerr Beadle, who had died.] Lee was offered the job, or else asked for it and was just given the job, I really don't know which.

DJ: So then he moved to Helena.

DM: Yeah. In 1938, that was a steady enough job that we could afford to get married. 1938 we got married.

DJ: Here in Helena?

DM: No, over in Wallace [Idaho].

DJ: Oh, over in your hometown?

DM: Yeah.

DJ: And then he stayed with that job until he went into the military?

DM: Stayed with that job until Harrison Freebourn decided to run for the Senate, and I think maybe that is mentioned in that material. [Freebourn never ran for the Senate. He was charged with graft by a special committee of the Montana House of Representatives for allegedly taking protection money to allow people to install slot machines in the state. Metcalf served as one of his defense attorneys in impeachment hearings before the House. Freebourn later served as an associate justice of the Montana Supreme Court from 1949-54.] He must have been running against [Burton K.] Wheeler then, I'm not sure. I'd have to go—I oddly enough do not have any of those books that are so wonderful that the University of Montana put out, the chronology of public jobs in Montana.

DJ: That can be obtained.

DML: And so he went back, instead of going back to Stevensville, he went up to Hamilton, and practiced law for a while. Along came December 7, 1941, and I can remember that he was in Helena on some kind of an errand, and our friends, two families of friends had come down to our place, and we were living on Metcalf property in Stevensville. They came down and we all went [to cut] Christmas trees, and when we came back we all learned through the radio messages about Pearl Harbor. He, we didn't have any children, and we know that he would be drafted soon, so he volunteered and in a few months, seems to me like it was a few months, he was on his way to the army. I'm thinking that it was probably first, Camp Pendleton, and down to Fort Ord, and he was put into the destroyer because at that time they were thinking about, maybe they were just accepting people's ideas about a new instrument of war, the destroyer, that had and they also had in mind North Africa. It would have been a pretty good vehicle over there. But before they ever got everything developed in the states, North Africa had been swept by, who chased [Field Marshal Erwin] Rommel, I can't remember.

DJ: [Field Marshal Bernard] Montgomery.

DM: Montgomery. And they began to make other kinds of assignments. So Lee, who had been sent to Camp Hood, terrible, terrible torn up turf, vehicles running all over the place, clouds of

dust all over the place, went to, was sorted out to begin training for military government. And was sent up to a place I can't remember the name of it, near Battle Creek, Michigan, an old... What kinds of units were trained for policing staff?

DJ: I don't know actual, there were military government units. I don't remember exactly when they came in to being, but there were military police units.

DM: And in addition to people like himself who had military training, they poured into that all kinds of mayors from around the country. It eventually got to be very motley kind of crew with a wide range of issues and values and understandings. Now Dale, what should I talk about?

DJ: I recall him saying after the war he served in Germany, something to do with the courts and the trial, I suppose the German military people, I don't know.

DM: It might be in, well he conducted the first three local elections in postwar Germany, and also I think he set up the first civil courts in Aachen. He had, while he was waiting to be assigned, those kind of assignments he had been in several units as they moved across, through the forest and across Germany, through Normandy. He wasn't there on D-day but he was there several days after D-day, he landed at the beaches there. I'd have to go back through his letters and records, refresh my memories of that.

DJ: And then he got out of the military, was discharged.

DM: Yes, but not very soon. It seemed to me, he was really in the military for four years. And two of them were spent here, almost two of them, and he was overseas for two years without returning. And when his father became ill and was dying, his mother asked for his, asked if he could be sent home, and he was, and then he was discharged after that. He was not discharged in Germany, he was discharged someplace in the states and I suppose someplace in the Los Angeles area, because that's where his folks were. And then what did we do, then we went back to the Bitterroot—and you know I can't remember. Oh, I do remember, wait a minute. He opened an office in Hamilton, but he filed for the court, and I would have to go back and see what day did he file for the court, but we didn't, there was no place to live of course. We owned a lot in Hamilton from before the war. He had a very close, dear friend who was Tom Judge, the father of the Tom Judge who became governor. Even before the war Tom Judge was exploring and had built a few test concrete houses, looked a little bit like, you know, Arizona or New Mexico the kind of made homes. There are two of them in Missoula, I don't know whether I could find them anymore, but I had seen them in recent years. And our plan was that he would build one of those for us on our lot, which was on Desta Street in Hamilton. We had the lot, but Tom during the war had gone in to construction. I don't know whether you would call it military construction but certainly federal construction of all kinds, and was still doing that when we came back and wasn't available for any kind of home building. Lee knew his way around the Bitterroot pretty well, and he found that we could buy two bunkhouses from the Harper Lumber Company up near Darby. If we could bring them down to our lot we could have

a house, out of two bunkhouses. He knew where to find the person who had a flatbed truck big enough to haul the bunkhouses and they were brought down to our lot and I found a carpenter-type, builder-type person named, I remember his name was Mr. Hansen, and he poured foundation. We had the two bunkhouses, end to end, and we built a house that I just loved. Of course I didn't believe that he would ever get elected to the court, I didn't tell him that, we didn't have any discussions about things like that but he became very involved in remodeling the bunkhouse, and this was sort of difficult because you couldn't get lots of materials at all. An attorney in Hamilton who was a friend of Lee's, Jim Taylor, he knew about the abandoned maybe CCC [Civilian Conservation Corp] camps and he knew that there were some plumbing fixtures that were up there, lots of them had been destroyed because of destructive people, but there were some. So we found a toilet and a basin from the CCC camp and bought it. Maybe we didn't even buy it, maybe we just took it, because they're abandoned, I don't know if we bought it or not. We acquired it, let's say that [laughs]. The bunkhouses weren't large enough to have a bathroom in them so we had a little, kind of a closet for the toilet and we were able to find a tin shower, metal shower stall and the shower stall and the basin went right into the bedroom, which I liked very much, oddly enough. Got right out of the shower and into bed, it was kind of a nice arrangement. What to tell about, well we don't want to talk too much about the bunkhouses except so Lee found there was a cabinetmaker we knew down in Stevensville so we worked on a huge cabinet that would take a sink and be the divider between the living area part of the bunkhouse and the kitchen area. And he did a beautiful job, but that didn't get put in till we were almost ready to leave, and the same was true of a wardrobe that had to be built in to the bedroom, but everything that happened for the bunkhouse made me more happy about it all the time. We didn't have any heat in it for a long, long time cause we couldn't find any kind of furnace But there was a plumber in Stevensville who was a contemporary with Lee, now I'm not remembering his name, but they both had gone to school in the days when one of the biggest functions on the university campus was the high school track meet. And both—Thornton was his name, and his nickname was Dink—both Lee and Dink were runners at the track meet, and one of the stories is that when they drew lots, Lee for a race, Lee drew the inside track, but he knew that Dink was a better runner than he was, so he went to Dink and traded his, traded slots with him. This kind of established a good friendship so...

[End of Tape 1, Side A]

[Tape 1, Side B]

DM: A gas floor furnace for the bunkhouse, and installed it. So by the time when Lee had won his campaign—I had come to terms with something that I had never thought about before, I didn't ever believe—I didn't know if you moved to Helena you had to send your, sell your house in Hamilton so you could buy a house in Helena. Those kind of realities I had never had to deal with, and you can't imagine how hurt and shocked I was to know that he was lucky enough to win this spot on the Supreme Court, I had to give up my bunkhouse. We came to Helena.

DJ: What year was that?

DM: It would be 1946 that he served, he probably was running in 1945. The term was '46, a six-year term those days, through '52.

DJ: And you came to Helena and then you bought this house?

DM: No, we bought, let me see, there was an automobile accident, and we came to Helena and rented the top, the third floor, the attic area made into an apartment of sorts, in a house on Madison Avenue. Then we had a—there wasn't, as we went back and forth between Stevensville and Helena probably in January—there was an auto accident that caused me to have to lay up in Missoula for a while with a damaged foot, and I think a broken arm. And so he came over and looked for—he knew I couldn't make it up to the third floor of the apartment he had rented. The process of selling the bunkhouses had gone far enough so we could buy a house and Blanche Judge helped him look for a house, and they bought this house I think half a block away from here. A very small, good enough for us and our style and our abilities house, and he and Tom built a greenhouse onto the garage, and the house had a whole extra lot for a garden on the corner, and he had a big garden. And I found a nice, wonderful, wonderful Austrian cabinet maker in Helena who redid the kitchen for me in a very nice way, who built a built-in, kind of a—there was no dining room in the house. We just had a big living room and kitchen and two bedrooms, and the cabinet maker built cabinets for the kind of thing you would keep in the dining cabinet, a very nice, walnut-finished cabinet. Turned it into kind of a nice house. While he was on the court this house came on the market. The people that owned it really didn't want it at all, and I'd been in it and I can't remember why. And in those days you kind of knew your neighbors more than you do now and I knew them and the next part of the house I thought very attractive, cherry wood, maybe not cherry wood, but finished to look like cherry wood panel parlor, and a rather big oak panel dining room. A roomy kitchen, as roomy a kitchen that I had ever lived with and I haven't lived with very roomy kitchens. He could walk to the capitol and I could come down. He came down and helped me hang the wallpaper and do a few things to help me make this place a little more livable. And very, very slowly over the years [we] just kept it. It was never—it was my project, it wasn't—we could never [have] anticipated living in it. But when he ran for Congress, again, we had [the question of] what to do about the house that we owned. We knew that nobody would take care of the extra city lot of garden, or take care of the greenhouse and so again it had to be sold, and I didn't really regret selling that

because it was kind of a small house for any kind of living really. But it had been an interesting house. It had a full basement and we had moved one of Lee's mother's big oak tables down into the basement and there had been some interesting—I don't remember who all the campaigns conducted down there. Everything in those days, you hand-folded the letters, stuffed them and stamped them in those days, and in that place in those days nobody thought of demanding that nobody smoked, so the basement would fill up with smoke when people were stuffing envelopes and those kinds of things. Now you better turn that off and ask me what you want to—

DM: Is this on or off?

DJ: It's on.

DM: When Lee was in the attorney general's office, I remember that he was assigned—those would be the very interesting things to research if they are still in anybody's archives—the kinds of assignments that he had there, took him out to help labor groups and mining suits. If I remember correctly he had to go up to Great Falls and represent the state—and that must have been, he must have not been too sympathetic with his job then—but he represented the state when some welfare people, who were angry there was food in storage for serving welfare people, but it wasn't being distributed, broke into the store and just distributed it themselves and to the people that they knew needed it distributed. Those kind of cases had caused him to have a lot of pretty sympathetic relationships around the state. I can remember that a girl in Helena had experienced having somebody come in and use her telephone for hundreds of dollars worth of long distance calls and the telephone company was going to sue her for it, and Lee negotiated with the telephone company that they couldn't do that. Well there, she was his friend for life. There were lots of instances that, I suppose by nature it would be interesting if other people thought so, he was an advocate, very much so for people who needed advocates. Not formally, but just by nature. When he was in the legislature, he was acquainted with everybody. Being in the legislature meant knowing all the people from different parts of the state, so when he ran for statewide office, he had pretty good connections all around. He knew who to look up, and who to be in touch with. I, pretty much he always maintained that kind of relationship. People write about the Democratic Party not being a very pulled together party, but he stressed the party, he didn't campaign, and in those days the party campaigned together, which is kind of unheard of now. I suppose that's partially destroyed by TV but it's also destroyed by ego. In those days if you were, if you'd been elected by the people to be a Democratic candidate, you would have Lee's support and you could run with Lee. That ran all through his career. It [was] even exploited in, I think the [Hank] Hibbard [U.S. Senate] campaign [against Metcalf in 1972] when Lee had run with, remember, South Dakota guy that ran for president.

DJ: Oh, McGovern.

DM: McGovern. In that campaign the Republicans published lots and lots of pictures of a person who was one half Lee Metcalf and one half McGovern. But Lee ran with McGovern at the state level, and I can't remember but I think maybe McGovern won in Montana.

DJ: He may have. [George McGovern won less than 38 percent of the vote in Montana. The only state he won was Massachusetts.]

DM: Maybe not so much because of Lee's loyalty as because people were outraged by that kind of campaign. Well let me see, what you were asking about the first.

DJ: What made him decide to run for the Congress, first I guess, before?

DM: Well that's interesting, I think that there were pretty strong personality conflicts on the court, and number two, maybe he had always meant to run for Congress, and Mansfield was going to run for the Senate, so he had an opportunity to run without offending the Democrats that were there, and so it was a lucky time for him. I don't know when I knew that he never intended to stay in court. And I suppose, I hope this isn't cynical, that the court was what he could run for when he came home. But I think that he belonged to a whole generation of people who became public figures who came home from World War II knowing what issues they cared about in American government and what issues they would like to push in American government. There were, until the Reagan years, there were a lot of them in Congress who really went, knowing not that they were going to try to stay forever, but that they were going to try and accomplish certain things for American government.

DJ: We can start, we can talk about campaigning in the '40s, '50s.

DM: Well particularly, yeah probably particularly in the '40s and early '50s there really wasn't any money in campaigning, but there was much tighter organization it seemed to me of party campaigns, and if you were a candidate you traveled with the other candidates. Meetings would be set up in advance for you, and you would move through different parts of different counties on a schedule that had been arranged. The local people would try to turn out a crowd for you, and you would get to maybe a borrowed high school auditorium and people would pretty much give the same speech every night. Of course you've probably heard me tell this story about senator [James] Murray who was always very well prepared by his staff with a card, a paper for each community designed to appeal to the populace of the community, but Senator Murray would keep all of them, and every time he stood up his speech got longer because he hadn't abandoned the speeches from other places. And he really, I can remember once when he got on late at night went on for an hour and a half. So sometimes the campaigns were pretty painful. But there was a sense that the party meant something, and the people that were chosen to run for the party should hang together and work together. That doesn't appear anywhere nowadays it seems to me. I don't know whether it's anything, part of it is the mechanics of what we surround ourselves with, but to me there was sort of a value—I've never

analyzed it—of having everybody stand up and appear before the people with the rest of the candidates.

DJ: Did they have good crowds at the meetings?

DM: Not particularly, no. Not unless there was something very—I can remember down in Bozeman used to get a pretty good crowd, and used one of the school auditoriums. But most places it was probably, you know sometimes you would get the sense that it was the candidates and their family and their relatives [laughs], but when you brought all of the candidate together and they all had to bring all of their relatives to listen together you got a pretty good crowd.

DJ: How long did the campaigns last in those days? Were they shorter than they are now?

DM: I haven't thought about that, maybe I could recall if I did think about it, but I don't think so. No, it seems to me that campaigning would begin pretty much after a primary and would go on through and there were quite a few years when the Democrats in this part of the state ended up at an East Helena rally and we would all form a parade of cars and horns and balloons and signs and drive down to East Helena and have the last rally down there, and come back making more noise. I don't know how all-inclusive that would be, but it would certainly be for all Lewis and Clark County candidates, and whatever top of the ticket was here. Supreme Court candidates had just the same kind of trouble that they have now. They don't belong to a party and don't have meetings pulled together for them so they were always on the fringe. In some counties, the people would agree to introduce them, but they were the last to be introduced. Other times they wouldn't really get introduced at all, they would just shake hands out on the fringe of the crowd.

DJ: How did you travel across the state in those days, by car?

DM: Usually by car. One of the last Senate campaigns, I say one of the last, it may not have been the last, may have been the first. I have to find out. We hired a plane for places like Rosebud, and Sidney, and beyond Sidney what are some of those communities, Scobey, go up to Scobey. And I'd have to look it up now, went one place where they turned out the whole high school, and the high school band was playing as his plane came in over the rockiest runway I'd ever seen [laughs]. It went bump, bump, bump, bump, bump to a stop and then the high school band started to play as we stepped out. And Gordon was with us, Gordon Bennett. You know how the president goes on, he gets out of the plane [laughs]. But usually we went by car. Sometimes we'd go into a place like Miles City and then somebody who knew the area would put us in their car and take us around to different places and they would have had some Custer County meetings set up in outlying places. The other day I looked up and there were two communities that had Russian names in Montana, and I think they had Russian populations also. One was Plevna, way down remote, remote in southeastern Montana. And another is Kremlin, on the highway and somehow, I don't know how I had this conviction, but it seems to me that something happened at Plevna to make me know that there were Russian people. I

would have to go look that up again and see if my memory is correct. And then of course lots of the places we went to aren't called communities anymore in a sense. That's reflected also in problems about financing high schools. There was a period where they just closed down lots of post offices. Don't have a sense of those communities anymore.

DJ: What did, when he went into the Congress in 1952, he was elected to Congress, what were the issues he was interested, was he interested in for example, in public power at that time, or was that a later interest he developed?

DM: Well see, I don't know, I think he was interested in it, but I don't remember except for Francis' [Bardanouve] program that he worked on it very much but he had been, he wouldn't be popular nowadays. He would have to change his stand nowadays, because he was on some Missouri Valley things, and was interested in the way the TV ad was set up, and he had helped, I think, on the Hungry Horse Dam and whatever, I suppose, park. I don't think he was an initiator on the dam in Libby. The big fight that came after his death was on the re-regulating dam but he had always been aware that the re-regulating dam was in the plan, and I know that at least one time when we were there some of the community leaders had taken him to see where the re-regulating dam should be put. One of the first things he got into was conservation, which really rose out of the fact that Fyord (?) was sponsoring legislation to give, to convert federal leases into private ownership on all of the BLM-Forest Service projects. And the way I remember is that almost every day, he stood up and gave about a one-minute speech about conservation, management of federal lands, things of that sort. I'd have to go back to the congressional records and look at it, but he was very persistent early on about all kinds of conservation issues. It seems to me that he hadn't been there very long when he was given an award by the five leading conservation organizations, Izaak Walton, I'd have to say Sierra Club. There are pictures of that, you probably have some, or not?

DJ: I think they'd be part of the collection.

DM: That I think was all put in the fact that he was fighting this plan to let ranchers assume ownership of the leases that they were given on federal lands. So that was one. Then came the Murray-Metcalf legislation for federal aid to education. Federal aid to education was already on the agenda of a lot of Democrats but it was very, very unpopular in Montana. But he kept pushing it, and Mike Shields has written a little bit of what he remembers of this discussion with Vic [Reinemer, a staff member for both Metcalf and Murray] about how did we get involved in this, and apparently federal aid to education really wasn't going anyplace until the Russians put up Sputnik. And then people started listening to the fact that we really didn't have good science schools, and good math schools, to compete with the kind of science and math that the Russians put out. And one of the things I do remember in my life is Russian science and engineering of that sort was very respected in the corporate world in the United States. The mining company my father worked for in Idaho had hired two outstanding Russian engineers for work in northern Idaho. They would come and work for a short time, they wouldn't stay long, but they would do some kind of overseeing kind of work and so to assure that we would

have better science and math education in the United States, there was a response. And Murray was a leader in that, and Lee picked up on the House side with it. Then labor legislation, there were a lot of attempts to do a better job on—what was the—there were some very mean-spirited labor legislation on the books back in those days.

[End of Tape 1, Side B]

[Tape 2, Side A]

DJ: Okay, Taft-Hartley. [The Labor Management Relations Act of 1947.]

DM: Yes, there was a lot of attempts to change Taft-Hartley to a more sympathetic flavor... relations, sort of things. Now, he worked on that, I think. I can't remember too much of it. I knew it was very successful. I had to deal with a lot of southerners, but that was one of his interests. Then once he got started on conservation and environment, there was a threat of that all through his congressional career I think.

DJ: He had quite an interest in Indian affairs, too.

DM: Yes, I think there was only one time when some Indians had some kind of a complaint about him, very near the time that he died, and it started some kind of a, a little bit of a war up in Great Falls because there were Indians that defended his record and some that didn't. I don't know. I think the ones that didn't were just people who were taught that nobody was being fair to Indians, so of course he wasn't. But I think that he had good relationships with the Indians. Did I tell you about my trip up to—during a week that the United States called Archaeology Week, I think, both some—Forth Benton, no, maybe Loma. In Loma area, BLM and the refuge people over at Stevensville had special celebrations. The one at Stevensville, they called me and asked me if I would come, so I went. The one at Stevensville was to put up some signs that would tell the people who visited the refuge that this had been Indian country, that it had been Salish country, and that some of the Indians' sweat lodges had been located right there on that property. And I remember that Lee and his mother used to tell me about that when we would go down there before it was ever made into a refuge. It was just farm country. At that ceremony—I did go to the ceremony—and at the ceremony, some of the Salish from up in Polson—I say Polson, but I really mean Dixon and Saint Ignatius country—came. One of them came up to me and said that he had been one of the Indians that had come to the dedication, the ceremony at which the name was changed to the Lee Metcalf Refuge, and that they had danced and prayed and sang at that ceremony. And that he still had the letter that I wrote to him after that. So he and I had sort of a relationship, and I've been with him at meetings up at Browning, and at meetings at, I think Fort Belknap, and at meetings at Northern Cheyenne. I forget the name of the community there. I can't remember whether I've been to Crow meetings with him or not, but he's been to Crow meetings because I have pictures of him. He was always treated as a friend, and they really got a kick out of him. They tried to get him to dance up at—I don't know whether it was Fort Belknap—there are two: there is Rocky Boy and Fort Belknap. I don't know which it was, and he couldn't dance. He didn't have any sense of rhythm at all. They pushed him out on the floor, you know, and they'd go in this circle, so he tried to do it, and then everybody in the crowd just got hysterical watching him. He knew that he couldn't do it, but they insisted that he do it anyway. He was not sure that that was working out very well. As nearly as I could tell, he had good relationships with all of them. He and [Blackfeet chief] Earl Old Person talked to each other a lot. Down on the Northern Cheyenne, he and I were seated out to be a part of one of their ceremonies where they smoke the cedar and

pray and everything. What he did for them specifically would have to show up in the records because I don't really remember anything. Great fights. He was very outraged that when money was provided for Indian buildings, up for instance, at Browning—we went up after they had been built for about a year or something. You could just see that it was the most shabby, cheating kind of construction that anybody had ever thrown together. It was just outrageous, and I don't know what he did about it, but I'm sure he raised as much Cain as he could. I think that the Bureau of Indian Affairs has been one of the worst agencies that anybody could ever have, and very difficult to deal with. They didn't know the reservations at all. They just sat back in Washington and had a rulebook that they went by. One of the things that—I don't know whether he dealt with this successfully or not either, but there's lots of coal down on the Northern Cheyenne Reservation. They insisted that the specifications for billing down there called for gas, and they wouldn't change it. You know, Indians have just been treated so outrageously. Now I see that because—I've belonged to organizations that have been pressing for that high school down there at Lame Deer for a long time. I see that all the schools that were supposed to be receiving those high school kids are now complaining because Nancy [Keenan, Montana Superintendent of Public Instruction] has said they're going to have a high school. But believe me, they need their high school, and they deserve it. I suspect that—I don't know, but I suspect that the complaining communities, such as Colstrip, were getting fees for handling them, the young people. I think that he always had a pretty good relationship with them, but there were some things he could never achieve with the Indians, and one of them was that he thought that military schools—you know, there was free schooling under assignment from congressmen and senators for the Navy, Army, Air Force, and either the Marines or Merchant Marines, both maybe. He wanted Indian kids to take those appointments and go, but they wouldn't. Absolutely would not go. I guess that would be isolating them too much. I don't think he ever had an Indian youngster in any of the academies all the time that he was there, and he worked on it all the time. One of the things is, was getting them better educated than their high school situations and things. The other is to teach them not to drink, and I don't know how you go about that because I think that's been exploited by the local communities around them. As soon as they would get their checks, then the auto companies began selling cars like crazy.

DJ: A few minutes ago we were talking about conservation and you mentioned a wildlife refuge. Was that one of his early interests, was migratory birds?

DM: Oh yes! I forget that. Yes, he was on the commission for a long time, and I think that one of the loveliest commendations that has ever been made was a letter that they presented when he went off of that commission. But he was on it for a long time. He just worked very hard to buy up as much wetlands as possible throughout the United States. I suppose that the farm family that owned most of the land—it's a well-known family up in the Stevensville area—and I suppose maybe they thought about it or communicated with him about what could be done. I have no way of knowing that he initiated it, but he saw right away that it was situated right for a good refuge. Of course, it wasn't the Lee Metcalf Refuge. I think it was just Stevensville Refuge. Until, when he died, some of the people—I think a gal who lived up in Corvallis,

actually, said let's call it the Lee Metcalf [National Wildlife] Refuge. They worked on it, and I think the Fish and Wildlife national commission worked with them to get it done. They sent somebody up from Denver, I know. We had a nice ceremony, and there was a really good turnout of his friends at that ceremony.

DJ: Let's see, what were some of his other interests?

DM: Well, he was on the First Base committee in the House of Representatives for a while. That may have been partly an outgrowth of his concern about federal aid and education. It certainly linked up with it quite a bit. That is where a lot of people think he became pretty well acquainted with (unintelligible)

DJ: (Unintelligible) do that another time.

DM: The irascible nuclear subman was—

DJ: Oh, Admiral [Hyman] Rickover.

DM: Rickover, yes. They had a relationship, and somebody put his letter about Lee in the memorial. Now you have some of the memorials over at the library.

DJ: Yes.

DM: It was pretty nice, and it surprised a lot of us, because what was their relationship? I knew that there was one because he had been given one of these jackets all embroidered with—I don't remember what it was, S.S. Sailfisher, something like that. I might be able to remember it. Rickover was about this high, and Lee about that high. The jacket didn't fit Lee, so I wore it for a long time.

DJ: The other thing in the way that relates, came up in every campaign—the more recent ones anyways in the '60s and '70s—was gun control. Mike Mansfield was always in favor of gun control.

DM: Was he? I didn't know that.

DJ: At least after the Vietnam era. And they were always hitting Lee on gun control but he was not in favor of gun control. Was he a hunter at all?

DM: No, it had nothing to do with that. It had to do with the fact that he was in so many other fights that he could not carry that fight. And he didn't think he would ever win it, and he didn't think that it was worth giving time and money to if he wanted to do the other things he was trying to do in Congress. I think that he just didn't want to be in a fight with all the—. The people that have talked to me about having talked to him about it, they would say, you know,

“You’re doing everything right except this. Why aren’t you right on this?” Then he would say, “Do you want me to be in Congress or don’t you?” He really regarded them as terribly powerful because the big money that they put into campaigns and he would be aware of that. He knew to research that sort of a thing. I don’t think that he was at all sympathetic with them because whenever we’ve talked he didn’t sound sympathetic, but that he just wasn’t going to be in a fight with them. They used that both ways. If they were in a community of hunters and they wanted to diminish him, they would say that he was for gun control. They wouldn’t publish it or anything, but they just passed this around. Then other places—I don’t know how else to explain it. I think it was purely a political convenience not to be in a fight with them. I think that he felt that the time had to come. The time has come now. I think he measured it and said it was something he couldn’t handle.

DJ: All of his elections were fairly close, weren’t they?

DM: Yes. Some people point to the fact, they say, “Well, he wasn’t all that great. We’re almost beating him.” But I think it’s worth considering that he was pretty good at calculating how far he could go on the things that he believed in without getting defeated. If he could win by one vote, he was satisfied. He didn’t want great majorities to enhance his ego or anything like that.

DJ: Now, one of the other issues that he was interested in was wilderness and creation of wilderness areas.

DM: Yes, and you’d have to get that from the things that a lot of people have written about that. You know, I was for it, and I knew he was for it, but I wasn’t on hand for all the details that had to be worked out. But I mean, [conservationist and UM forestry professor] Arnold] Bolle has written about him, and Burk-

DJ: Dale Burk.

DM: Dale Burk. The guy who used to be the editor at *The Missoulian*, [Burk was state editor and a columnist] who has retired and gone up to the Flathead. There have been pretty good—[Idaho U.S. Sen. Frank] Church has written about him and his work. So there are pretty good evaluations. I was just delighted with the fact that he listened to Brandy Senior [Guy M. Brandborg, supervisor of the Bitterroot National Forest from 1935-1955 and later a conservation activist. May also refer to his son, Stewart Brandborg, executive director of the Wilderness Society from 1964-77, and a noted environmental activist.], and decided to have a survey made about clearcutting in Montana. That, I suppose, is well documented. He helped choose people who were credible and approached it scientifically. The report just really shook the Washington area. They didn’t have near enough printed. When he received it, he immediately had it printed, and I don’t know whether that had more prints made or not, but that was just cleaned out almost immediately, it was so sensational. I was really delighted with that because I thought it was a great step forward, and a very much needed one.

DJ: Well, still controversial, too.

DM: Yes.

DJ: After all these years. (Pauses)

DM: In the international oceanography measures that were undertaken in the last part of his career, he thought of it as being so important that he assigned [administrative assistant Merrill “Brit” Englund] Brit to pursue that in research and in meetings and Brit went to the international meetings, and reported back to him. I suppose those reports are—

DJ: Public documents?

DM: Yes. Brit was assigned almost exclusively to that for a year in the later years of both of their careers. I don’t know how that has developed since. I really don’t. Of course he felt that there were two things that he was concerned about in corporate America. One was that you can never know who owned companies and their stocks from any of the reports that would be brought out. The other was that there was a lot of apparent collusion with the people who were serving them as certified public accountants. When he died, that’s what [executive secretary] Vic [Reinemer] and a person by the name of Win Turner were working on. They had a special committee just for that sort of research. Now, nobody in the committees under which it was assigned wanted to pursue that at that time. I’ve noticed that [Sen. John] Glenn of Ohio has been picking up on it recently and I don’t whether he’s gone back. Certainly, Vic was a good researcher and had laid a good groundwork in that. So did Win. I don’t know what happened. I suppose there are committee reports, and I don’t know whether Glenn is going back and basing his work on that or whether he has just initiated something new entirely.

DJ: Turning a little bit from that, Lee was, I guess you’d say a voracious reader. He read an awful lot.

DM: Yes, I think so. Yes. He thought he owned the Stevensville Public Library because maybe he was the only person who showed up to use it lots of times, I don’t know. If that sounds strange, I must stress to you that the Stevensville Public Library had lots of wonderful stuff in it because, you see, lots of the people that came to the Bitterroot came enticed by that—what was the name of the company? Bitterroot something. Where everybody was going to make a million dollars on an orchard.

DJ: The orchard.

DM: Yes. So people, from pretty stable well-educated families came into the Bitterroot and brought their libraries. When they had to abandon these farm projects that they undertook, these orchard projects, lots of those books would go into the Stevensville Public Library. So he really didn’t need to go to Chicago and study the great books. He had a lot of the—certainly I

was really shook by the things that I didn't know or hadn't read, and he couldn't believe that I had gone to school and not read them. Yes, he enjoyed that, but when he got older, he suffered a lot from the arthritis in his knees and his damaged knees, they were pretty damaged. Instead of taking sleeping pills and things like that, he did read a lot of mysteries in bed at night. I learned to sleep with the light on all night. In fact, it became kind of a conditioned reflex. If the power went off, there was a candle in the bed stand near him so that he could light a candle and have a light at least. That was just an idiosyncrasy that he cultivated I guess. It was kind of a fun thing. One was so used to having the light on all night that you had to have a light. I think that he learned to read very, very young as a pastime, and that he was allowed a lot of liberties with the Stevensville library.

[End of Tape 2, Side A]

[Tape 2, Side B]

DM: And another thing that I envied was that he could just naturally read very fast, which I could not do at all, so if he picked up a letter from somebody and wanted to know what was in it, he could just gather it in in just a few minutes. I think that ability served him well in congress. He could read those voluminous reports and find out what he wanted in them.

DJ: Well, turning to a little different of an item now, what is a congressman's wife's life like?

DM: Well, I think I was just sort of not Eve (?), so I just did what other people did, but you don't have to do that anymore. I regret that I didn't have more of a sense of independence. But number one, in those days lots of wives had to do everything that wasn't done up at a congressional office. I know at least one family where that was the pact. He would be the senator and she would do everything else, and I mean everything else. She chose where they would live. She signed the contracts for where they would live. She took of all of the household bills, the mechanics, the car. He didn't have to think about any of that ever. Well, I wasn't that abandoned by Lee, but pretty much one had to- when I didn't like the house that we were living in, I had to go contract for another house to be stripped out and restored. I did all of that. I learned to stack bricks and I could haul second hand yellow pine across the city at five o'clock in the morning so that I wouldn't be in the way of traffic later on. I bought the metal pieces we were going to install at the junkyards, and I had to take care of the car and I did a very poor job about that. I think I got taken lots of times but I didn't know how else to deal with it. Democratic wives had a big national women's democratic club. I participated a lot, in a lot of that work. All of us had what we called the congressional club, which was more social. Although there was a period when my contemporaries tried very hard to move it into an active concern for public affairs in Washington. It was just too hard to do. I think that one thing that congressional wives had to face was that most of them went home and campaigned with their husbands when campaign time came. It meant that you couldn't ever have a sustained operation with something else. Now the wives won't come home the first... Mrs. Baucus (unintelligible) wouldn't come home. And the second Mrs. Baucus won't come home. But it would never occur to me to not go where Lee asked me to go. If he didn't ask me that was alright, but usually he wanted me to go with him. Anything I was doing in Washington had to be dropped right there. Now I regret that I just didn't say, "Well, I have to have more of a life that's my own." And I regret that I didn't go on to get a master's degree or a doctorate or anything in college. It never, even so.... And I did think about that, but again, I didn't know enough to go to say to some school, "Now, I'd like a course that I can pursue on my own, and can you give me some direction? Because I can work on it certain months, but other months I just won't be here so I can't belong to a class that I have to meet a deadline on it or anything." I think that anybody that I would have approached at any of the universities in the area would have been sympathetic to it, but you see, I had to initiate it and I didn't. I do sincerely regret that about my life. I don't know what would have happened if I... I don't know if I could have worked that out. I think that Lee would have been supportive. He was always very supportive of things like that that I tried to do. I was the first leader of the congressional wives for Friendship House, which

was kind of a community house for social needs only on Capitol Hill. Capitol Hill in those days was just a very close little ring about eight blocks in any direction. Now it goes for many, many blocks. Outside of that ring, there was lots of need, and the congressional circle raised money for this house with sales and fundraisers of different kinds. I participated in that a lot. I participated in the Congressional Club and in the Women's National Democratic Club, and then we had something called the Democratic Wives Forum where we really got together and talked about issues among ourselves. I would say that probably the Wives Forum attracted most of the liberal wives and we didn't get into debates about civil rights and things like that. There were a lot of other things that we could be concerned about that our husbands were doing. Now what else did wives do? I don't know. I worked on zoning, on holding the lines against buying up the residential part of the hill for corporate purposes. You had to work on that all the time. The files on that were really thick and it was just a matter of being vigilant and going before the board of exceptions and saying no exception. Now there's a very good community group that does handle that, but in the early days it was mostly a few volunteers of us that didn't want the... Once we had redone our houses and they had a residential section, we didn't want it taken over for offices. It is still pretty much taken over for offices but they have to be very low-key and quiet- not obtrusive in their presentation of themselves. I don't know what else. Wives had to know how to drive around the city. At one time I thought I was very good. I'm not any more. I did know the city pretty well once. Wives were almost always the chauffeurs for their husbands unless their husbands were rich enough to have regular chauffeurs. I do remember that I was on a committee, an all-girl committee for the Kennedy inauguration and there was a big snow storm the night before. The streets just filled up with cars, nobody was moving, so I ran my battery down. Lee was so disgusted that I didn't know any better than to let my battery run down. He just gave me a kind of a real lecture on that. Then in a few days he came to me and he said, well he apologized because he was talking to some senators who had chauffeurs and their chauffeurs had let their batteries run down. (Laughs) What else did wives do?

DJ: Did many of them live on Capitol Hill? Many of the congressional families?

DM: No, because let me see... We had just been through the era when the suburbs were very popular and there had been a lot of not far out development, you know maybe beyond the zoo out in Chevy Chase and Bethesda and places like that. That's where people lived pretty much and in some parts of Alexandria. When that was happening, Capitol Hill had just been abandoned to black families and very low income white families. Houses were as they had been built. The house that I did over on Capitol Hill was built in the 1880s and it didn't have a furnace. It didn't have a bathroom, it didn't have closets, and when you started re-doing it, you had to re-do it and do those things that people expected out of a home. You needed storage and you needed heat. The house that I did over had fireplaces, gas fireplaces, but no furnace.

DJ: One of the other things that was Lee's interests was gardening. You mentioned that he had... Did he pick this up from having been raised on a farm and from his experiences in Stanford?

DM: Kind of both. He used to tell me. You know, I was very enchanted by horseback riding because I had been raised over in a mining community where there wasn't anything like that, but as far as he was concerned, a horse was something to work on the farm. He considered it work to get on a horse or to be on the plow behind a horse. He had done that kind of gardening at his home, but when he became very enchanted by flower gardening I think, was when he worked for the Los Angeles Public School system. He never dropped that, he always loved that. We didn't ever work anything out very well because we could go places on weekends, but we had to leave it. There wasn't anybody to hire to take care of it for us. So we would go plow up a garden and plant it and hope that it'd be alright the next time we saw it. Sometimes it would be more than a week because he would have to be someplace away for a weekend. Or if we had to go camping, so they were always pretty weedy sort of places. We had fun, and he had lots of nice successes with that kind of stuff. He didn't ever quit, he didn't ever give up on that. He had lots of house plants around, and lots of plants in his office. They weren't necessarily loved by anybody but Lee I think. (Laughs)

DJ: The guy in his office, (unintelligible).

DM: But they had them anyway. (Unintelligible) was a pretty good garden.

DJ: Well, he did used to bring in produce I remember from out at Nanjemoy I think.

DM: Yes. I can't believe what wonderful tomatoes grow in that country. We had great tomatoes. I don't remember, sometimes we had eggplant and peppers. I can't remember all of them... Beans, I guess.

DJ: Did he have any other; I guess you'd call them hobbies other than gardening and reading?

DM: Well, yes he collected stamps. One of the grumbles was that his mother had loaned his stamp collection to one of his cousins and it never came back. So yeah, he collected stamps even while he was in congress. One of the things that was sort of strange about him was that when he was a youngster, his parents must have bought him subscriptions to magazines like *Boy's Companion* would that be one. He would clip coupons and things to send away for things. Maybe that's the way he got his crystal set going. He still did that while he was in congress. He sent for mail order shoes and they were just very sturdy but awful looking. Once I know he sent for kind of a fancy clock that was a reproduction of an old clock. When it came, it was all just junk, and probably paid to send it back. But you see, because it was sent back by a senator, there was no question about getting the money back to him right away and in a hurry. You looked at that, and you knew, and he knew that other people were being exploited by that kind of a thing. Probably other people couldn't get their money back. I can't remember some of the other things. He was always... He read ads. Now, I never read ads in the paper. I say never! You can't avoid reading them sometimes but I don't... I think that he read the ads just as regularly as he read the rest of the paper. At least, he looked at them and saw them. I didn't read any stories about Cuisinarts when they first came out, but he must have seen one in a newspaper

someplace so he ordered a Cuisinart for me. Cuisinarts made all kinds of wonderful, rich foods which we really were trying not to eat in those days. (Laughs) It was interesting; I didn't know anything about a Cuisinart until it came, but he had read about it. He was also interested in puzzles, and people would give him for Christmas all kinds of puzzles. They were stashed away in corners all over the place, all kinds. He had all of those, you know, almost every boy had a set of puzzles. Do you remember then? All different kinds. He always had those, and he could enjoy them. You know, if he were here today he would look at them all and play with them a little bit and enjoy them. He was given lots of puzzles by his staff and people who knew him. Another thing I thought he was terribly good at, and it annoyed him to no end that I wasn't, he knew all the knots that the Boy Scouts had ever taught anybody. He knew how to use them. You have this one where you just wrap the thread or the rope- couldn't be a rope, but string, around your hand and gave a jerk at the right place and it cut itself. You know about doing that? You've done it with the Boy Scouts. Well, no matter how many times he taught me how to do that, I would still forget it. I really admired him because he knew what knot would work on what place. He and I had kind of, almost a pact. He could read instructions and understand exactly what had to be done, but he would always drop the screw through the slot in the floor or something like that. He would read and tell me what to do and I would do the mechanics of putting the Christmas toys together before Christmas and things like that. We used to laugh that on his military exams, he would always be put down for mechanical ability. Yeah, he knew exactly what it was supposed to do and how it was to do it, but when he had to pick up all the nuts and bolts and everything, they just escaped him. It was kind of fun, that part of it. He recognized that that was hard for him to do.

[End of Interview]