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Oral History Number: 036-017
Interviewee: Daniel Kemmis
Interviewer: Claire Rhein
Date of Interview: March 22, 1989
Project: Daniel Kemmis Interviews Oral History Collection

Claire Rhein: Today is the 22nd of March. So I had talked to you some time ago about kind of going back to your beginning in Montana and your families beginning. It's always of interest not only to me, but it's important to see where Montanans come from and how long they've been here. We are 100 years old now as a state, and we begin to at the time, to perhaps look at why we are here and why we stayed. So let's move back enough in your family to bring them to Montana and where they come from.

Daniel Kemmis: Well, of my two families that came to Montana, my father's came first and they came in the 1880s, I think, probably in '84. I don't have that pinned down exactly, but I think it was before '89 anyway. My great-grandfather was Thompson Kemmis and my great-grandmother was Jane, and they came from as far as I can make out most directly from Iowa. They had been around a great deal.

CR: Were they homesteading?

DK: Yes, they homesteaded in the lower Yellowstone and homesteaded in the valley about a mile west of what is now Sidney.

CR: When I asked about homesteading, have they homesteaded before or was this their second or third time?

DK: I suspect that it was, but I don't know that for sure. I can tell you what I know off the top of my head of their itinerary. They had gone to Oregon at one time and I suspected that they had tried homesteading there. So as I understand it, and this is part of it, I take it to be a fairly frequent pattern with Montanans of people having been driven west and thinking Oregon was the place and finally Oregon to be wrong in either one of two ways. It was already too settled or that it was too wet or both. I have always entertained the notion that part of what happened of natural selection, to the extent that early Montanans were Oregon rejects, that they were people who liked dry weather.

CR: Well, my god they got it. I think that's a point well-taken and that people forget that this part of the country is that of Oregon rejects in a way or kind of a back wash. They went away and then came back.

DK: Yes, right.

CR: And you got as far as Sidney which is pretty far to get in Montana.

DK: That's right. It's about as far as you can get going east.

CR: That was your grandfather?

DK: Great-grandfather.

CR: And so you've are a double generation—?

DK: Yes, my children are 5th generation Montanans.

Then on my mother's side, we are a generation closer and her family also came from the Midwest in Indiana. They were the prototypical honyockers. They came out in about 1917 maybe '16, and they came on the train and unloaded at Sidney. They went across and into the Dakotas and homesteaded in western North Dakota; although, that story is one that I still don't quite understand. Well, on one hand they homesteaded and then there was almost an element of indentured labor that went on there for some time. There was a wealthier British rancher family there that in some sense assisted my mother's family, but in some sense bound them to labor for a long period of years.

CR: Well, I have never heard of a situation like that before, and that's a very interesting story.

DK: I sense that it may not be that uncommon, and that I speak probably more strongly than the case actually justifies. I mean, I'm exaggerating indentured, but I think there was some element of bound labor that evolved and in return for whateve, whether it was a grub steak or whatever. It meant at least the boys were expected and obligated to work for this kind of feudal family for several years.

CR: This would have been your mother's brother, right?

DK: Yes, that's right.

CR: Well, that is unusual in my experience of finding out how people came to Montana. That would be very interesting to follow up with.

DK: I suspect that it is not that uncommon. It may even explain why it is that the Scheidler's, mother's family, managed to survive the bust of the honyocker era because they barely survived by the skin of their teeth. It may be that this connection to this other family have something to do with their ability to survive I don't know. The rest of what allowed them to survive was just plain, old Dutch stubbornness.

CR: All right, that brings up an interesting point. What is Kemmis?

DK: Kemmis is Welsh.

CR: Welsh. And Scheidler is German, right?

DK: Yes.

CR: Or is it Swiss?

DK: No, I think that it's German. German and Scotch-Irish is my combination.

CR: Oh, what a combination. I married one of those combinations.

DK: The Kemmis' is all that I really know about the lineage is Welsh. That's pretty clear that it's Welsh.

CR: Is it clear and pure in a sense?

DK: Now that I don't know. This is one of those situations where on the Kemmis side, we have a very strong paternal record that goes back actually quite deep into Wales. We have the record all the way back in the 17th century in Wales. But it is all paternal. That means on the fathers and sons. Where the mothers are, we don't know much about. Not uncommon.

CR: Oh really?

DK: Yes, we just don't know much. It's not uncommon for that time.

CR: It's not uncommon for that time, but for you too—

DK: Trying to understand it.

CR: So your parents met when your mother was in Dakota and somehow got to Sidney.

DK: I think Sidney was always one of the main shopping areas, but my father's father also homesteaded in the lower Yellowstone. Lower yet, so he was a little closer to Dakota and my father met my mother because he was working on a thrashing crew so the thrashing machine and crew went to her father's place and that is how they met.

CR: Was this by any chance your grandfather's...one of the things that he did—run thrashing crews?

DK: I don't know. It's possible but I don't know. I think not, but it's possible. My grandfather was a farmer, a valley farmer, and he was one of the people that helped bring irrigation to the

lower Yellowstone valley. His brother Walter Kemmis was a state legislator. He was the politician in the family. That's of course part of where I come from was the influence of that great uncle within the family and his being held up as a kind of hero of mine, I suppose. I am sure that helped influence me in the direction of politics.

CR: I suppose one of the reasons that I wanted to get back into where Dan Kemmis came was to find out really what his people did and what they thought. I was reading the article about Willy, Albert and your mother's background and what it was that she wanted for you and your brother. Do you have any sisters?

DK: No, I had two sisters and one of them has died, but I still have a sister.

CR: Then there were four of you?

DK: No, five.

CR: Well, I met one of your brothers, and is he still working with the BLM?

DK: Yes, that's my older brother.

CR: Well then you were a family of five in Sidney or just out of Sidney?

DK: Actually where I grew up...I was born in Fairview, Montana, but at that time my family was living in North Dakota near Cartwright. So I spent, I suppose, my first four years there and then we moved to a farm near Richey, Montana and so it was...I went to grade school in Richey.

CR: You were born in Montana?

DK: I was born in Montana.

CR: Went to Dakota.

DK: Right.

CR: Back to Montana.

DK: Yes. See my family had always been going back and forth across the line there. Both families of them always had. There is a lot of that which goes on there.

CR: I think it goes on back across our northern border too.

DK: That's probably true.

CR: Just happens to be the generation that you are, whether you are a Canadian or an American. But you are a Montanan then, Dan, if you were born here.

DK: Yes, that's right. Thank goodness for that.

CR: Yes, I just wanted to be very sure. Okay, now I'm going to have to look at a map and find some of these places. I suppose I take it they are all still active.

DK: Well, more or less. Cartwright there isn't much there. Richey is still there.

CR: When you look at the Yellowstone country...I did a quick survey one time of population, and the population of the first two decades of the century is oddly enough just about what it is now. However, there in Billings now.

DK: I don't doubt that now.

CR: That's beside the point.

Okay, you are sure enough from Montana, and you had a great uncle Walter, who was a state legislator.

DK: Right, and he was also a Methodist minister in Sidney. He was in the state legislature on and off for a long period of time. Beginning in about 1912, he served as a Republican who was a Bull Moose Republican. Then gradually over the years became more and more of a Chamber of Commerce Republican and continued to serve in the state legislature, I guess, on and off until the 1950s for a long, long time.

CR: Oh, that's really quite long and was around at least to influence you.

DK: Well, not directly.

CR: But you still had an overlap of a few years.

DK: Yes, just a few years. I have no recollection of him as a person, but as a presence in the family he was very strong.

CR: And as a minister.

DK: Yes, there again I don't know that. I heard him preach but I'm sure in indirect ways he must have become part of my life.

CR: Was he educated as a minister, or was this a thing that he found himself involved in later?

DK: I suspect there was probably a little of both. I mean he didn't go to seminary, but in what sense he may have been ordained, I'm not sure.

CR: I'm curious to about the county then. This was a period of creating the counties.

DK: He and actually his father Thompson were both involved in the creation of Richland County. In fact I think Walter may have been the one that named it Richland County, but yes, it was originally Dawson County. I think that, when Walter was first in the legislature, he represented Dawson County which included what are now at least both Richland and Dawson.

CR: Thinking of him in the legislature back and forth made me think if there was some county jostling going on.

DK: Oh yes, there was.

CR: Very active thing. Recently I understand, it was developed by the newspapers of the county—

DK: Oh, I wouldn't doubt that there is a lot to be gained by a newspaper in having a county.

CR: You bet especially when they start printing up all the necessary forms. Well, you went to school there in—

DK: I went to grade school in Richey, and we moved to Sidney when I was in 7th grade. So I went to junior school and senior high school in Sidney.

CR: In a big city.

DK: It sure was for me. It was very intimidating to move to a big city. It was intimidating enough for me to go into Richey, let alone Sidney.

CR: From the farm. How far out did you live, Dan?

DK: About 12 miles.

CR: Oh, that is a fair amount.

DK: Yes, it was, and those were 12 hard miles as you might imagine.

CR: Especially in certain times of year.

DK: Oh yes, we would generally...my mother and the children would move into town during the winter time because we couldn't commute. We'd commute between the spring and fall but we couldn't in the winter.

CR: That was just for grade school?

DK: That's right.

CR: And your father stayed?

DK: Yes he did.

CR: That would have been hard.

DK: I suppose, and I imagine there were probably compensations. Maybe since I've grown up and gone through marriage a little bit myself, I would imagine maybe both members of the spousal unit decided that maybe it was kind of nice to be alone once and a while.

CR: But your mother had the complete responsibility of the children?

DK: She had the complete responsibility of the children and at that time she didn't have the farm responsibilities whereas Dad had all of that but at least he could do things his own way.

CR: Oh, all right, I suppose so!

DK: (laughs)

CR: I am sure from your point of view. Well, there was a definite change in your life as a young man. Then when you moved into the city in Sidney you were a family moving to Sidney I take it?

DK: That's a tough period especially for my father. What it meant was...what we did, we didn't sell the farm. We put it in the soil bank which is a federal program that would pay us to take it out of production. So we finally took them up on that and moved into Sidney. So my father then, who had never been anything but a farmer and never lived anywhere but a farm, finally had to live in town and work in town. My experience with that was that it was really a kind of breaking experience for him. Although he wore it well and nobly, there is great sadness in it.

CR: For your father?

DK: And for me to see it happen.

CR: How old was your father then?

DK: Let's see. We would have moved about '58 or '59 so he would have been in his late 50s. He would have been 57 or something like that. Not ready to retire but having to give up his whole life.

CR: Let me backtrack just a minute and place you in the order in your family.

DK: Alright, I'm fourth of the five.

CR: Were you fairly close in age?

DK: I'll just give you the spread. My oldest sister was born in '33, my older brother was born in '35, then the middle child, Sharon, was born in about '38. I was born in '45 so I was an afterthought. I was 7 years after the last one and then the afterthought continued with my younger brother who was born a year and a half after me.

CR: That gave you someone to grow up with.

DK: That's right, it did. Exactly. That meant that there was this sort of older unit and then there was Dave and me.

CR: I think it's interesting that you felt your father's sadness perhaps. Were you aware of it at the time?

DK: Oh yes.

CR: Oh you were? Did you feel especially close to him?

DK: No.

CR: I think we better—

DK: I was very close to my father and was always very fond of him and a strange relationship, I suppose, that most of it was unspoken. He was a very quiet man. I loved him very much.

CR: Interesting you mentioned that he was a quiet man. Basically, you are too.

DK: Not surprisingly. I mean, we are a quiet family. I mean, I realized that when I get around Jean's family. It's much more urban and its ethnicity was very different from ours and Catholic. By comparison to all that we were very quiet, but so were most of our neighbors.

CR: I was just going to ask. Was that an urban thing or a country thing? Or was it a Kemmis thing or were there...the farmers in the area where you were certainly not all Welsh because the number of Welsh that came in were relatively few to the German and Scandinavians.

DK: Yes, Scandinavians probably more than anything else in our neighborhood. There was quite a mixture but mostly Protestant, mostly northern European of various kinds.

CR: So you weren't a noisy family when you were kids?

DK: Well, I'm sure that the kids were noisy, but sitting around the table it wouldn't be everyone talking at once.

CR: How is your table?

DK: I think our table is much livelier. That is partly because both parts of my family...I mean both of my marriages have been to women that came from much more voluble families. Elaine, of course, her ancestry was French and Italian essentially, and Jean's is Irish and German but actually both parts of that are Catholic. Everything is Catholic. So my kids have inherited a lot of that.

CR: Are they in two religions too?

DK: Well, religion is a whole other story here, Claire.

CR: You don't want to touch that one?

DK: It's not that I don't want to touch, it but we have to realize if we touch it we have a long ways to go.

CR: Okay.

DK: But usually a Catholic mother takes her children to church with her.

DK: No, we actually...both sets of kids have actually had contact with the Catholic Church and Dava is going through confirmation now and Johna is going to Catholic school. The younger kids don't have that experience.

CR: Are they Catholic?

DK: Jean and Elaine? Yes. French and Italian.

CR: Okay, now that we have you in your place in the family fourth of five and the older of two in a sense...Your brother at the BLM, would he be?

DK: He is the older brother. He is the one that was born in '35 and is ten years older.

CR: Okay, I kind of interrupted you. You were talking about what a crushing thing for your father and that you were aware of it and felt it at the time when you moved into town. What did he find to do?

DK: He became the janitor for the Methodist Church which I assume was in part or kind of the church taking care of its people kind of thing. He might not even get that if it wasn't for the goodness of the church. We were very active in that church eventually.

CR: This would have been, well—

DK: Late '50s. '58 about. He then also worked at the livestock sales ring so at least one day a week he worked there out in the pens opening gates and so on.

CR: Which I'm sure he found to be—

DK: It had something to do with cows and—

CR: Something to do with cows and the people I'm sure—

DK: He was probably more interested in the cows than he was in the people.

CR: Okay, and your mother of course was pretty stable as a mother?

DK: Well, but she went to work as soon as we went into Sidney and became what they called a "chamber maid"—the cleaning lady at the hospital. She was there all the way through junior high and high school.

CR: Gee whiz, Dan, at this point you almost have to say that your father had come into town and worked for what was really no training required, and your mother was caught in a situation in which many women were at that time, meaning they had to do menial things. Then you end up at Harvard. Now there is a long step between that.

DK: I can tell you what I know about that. It has to have something to do with the influence of Walter Kemmis and my having latched onto politics early as something that I was intensely interested in. So I can remember when I was in seventh grade and I was supposed to write an autobiography, and so I wrote about...one of the things I was supposed to write about was who were my heroes. I'm sure there were three of them, but I can only be sure of two and they were Walter Kemmis and Mike Mansfield. Then I think the third was John Kennedy.

CR: Walter Kemmis, Mike Mansfield and probably John Kennedy—wasn't he everyone's hero back then?

DK: Yes, this would have been about...he was in the Senate but he had run for vice president and everybody knew that he was positioning himself. If I were so interested, I would have known that. So those were, I think, my heroes.

CR: How have you stood up to those heroes?

DK: Walter I have learned a lot about and I have learned there were certain features of his politics that I suspect wouldn't have been my politics, but then also, as I've matured and I hope became more interested in what I think the civic side of politics, then I can understand how someone like Walter, a pioneer, rose up with his community and gives himself to his community. He is a civic leader regardless of his politics. He is a civic leader and I've come to appreciate him in a lot of ways, and of course, that he was at the legislature and I was there. It has built a kinship between us. Someday I'm going to try and spend a lot of time trying to find out more about what he did while he was there and, at least, a lot of that will be the permanent record.

CR: I suspect the permanent record would tell you.

DK: When I was Speaker of the House and had my own office, I decided that I would take Walter back for one last session. I had grown up sort of looking up at the wall at this beautifully framed picture of Walter in a beautiful walnut frame and oval frame.

CR: Which is where now?

DK: In my living room. He, Walter, is silhouetted against a vaguely George Washington silhouette thing in the background, so there is this incredibly imposing figure that is presented there. I think even the silhouette of the father of the country kind of thing has a great deal of power to it. Anyway, that is the picture that I grew up with and was never really without it. That really was Walter to me. When I was Speaker, I took that and hung it in the Speaker's office, so I let Walter go back for one more session. So my relationship with Walter has sustained itself and has even deepened over the years.

Mike Mansfield, I guess I would say the same. I've learned some things about Mansfield that I may not be that fond of, but overall I think he is a great figure. There are many ways in which I still occasionally check myself and say, "You have to think how Mansfield would have went." So there is no loss of respect there, and the fact that I have been allowed to teach in the Mansfield Center has been a fulfillment for me in a way. Kennedy, of course, is even more complex.

CR: I was going to say that in a way in a sense we could almost skip Kennedy at this point because we have two strong Montanans, and that is where we are. So let's leave Kennedy for another day. I'm intrigued with how you keep your own position somehow in relationship to Walter, who you've never really known but he really has been this strong influence.

[End of Side A]

[Side B]

DK: My father probably influenced the content of my politics more than anything else. I mentioned that Walter was a Republican, and I mean well, all the Kemmis' were Republicans. Really all of them continued to be Republicans except for my father. My father became...Really as far as I know, the first time he voted was 1932, and he would have been 30 years old. I may be wrong about that, and it seems to me I remember him saying that. He voted then for the first time after having been through not only three years of the Depression, but as you know the agricultural depression that preceded it. He was sort of born politically as an FDR [Franklin D. Roosevelt] Democrat, and was from that point forward nothing every but an FDR Farmers Union Democrat. That was a lot of conversion that went on. When you have a convert, you very often have someone who is stronger and so I just grew up that is what politics was. The first political memory that I have was listening to Harry Truman on the radio and watching my father's respect for Truman. Then I knew very well who my father supported in '52 and '56, and I knew his attitude as a farmer about Ezra Taft Benson and Eisenhower and so on. So my Democratic leanings came directly from my father and clearly my father because my mother didn't express any of that. In fact my mother would never tell us how she voted. I can remember my parents had to go to some strange place that we would never go to otherwise to vote. When they would come back, they would ask each other how they voted, and my father would always tell us and my mother would refuse to tell us.

CR: That's interesting, isn't it? It wasn't anything political; she was just rather private about it.

DK: She thought that it was her right to keep that a secret, which of course, only led to the suspicion that she was voting Republican.

CR: Yes it would have a tendency to do that, wouldn't it? Interesting to that your father waited until he was 30 to vote.

DK: Like I said, I don't know that for sure.

CR: Are your parents living, Dan?

DK: My mother is, but not my father. My father died 17 or 18 years ago now.

CR: Well, I'm sorry he missed out on all the things you've done.

DK: So am I. I'm very sorry.

CR: And your mother lives in Sidney.

DK: Sidney, yes.

CR: Are any other members of your family still there?

DK: You know, there are darn few, and it's amazing to think of how many Kemmis' there were in that whole neighborhood, even when I was a kid and even when I was in high school and now just gradually they are all gone. Aside from my mother and some of Walter's grandchildren, they are all gone.

CR: The other side of your mother's family, are they still in Dakota or are they—?

DK: There is still a few of them around, but again most of them are gone too.

CR: Would she consider moving out here with you?

DK: That is home to her. The fact that life is a little harder there than if she was closer to some of her kids being at home is the most important thing for her, and I really think she is right about that.

CR: Is your family all in Montana, your brothers and sisters?

DK: No, my older brother Ernie is in Billings. He's the one you've mentioned that works for BLM. Of course I'll just mention briefly his having chosen to work in land management is just an extension of the rural background that he didn't want to get away from the land. He spends his time in offices and works with computers and such so the land connection has weakened a lot. My older sister Sharon teaches—well she's an elementary school librarian—but she taught for a number of years in Aurora, Colorado. My younger brother Dave has been in and out of Montana many times, but now works and has for twelve years in New Hampshire, so he has really returned to the east where the Kemmis' at least were and has really settled down as a New Englander.

CR: Interesting in New Hampshire too, since it's east but not pure east. And you are the only political person in the family?

DK: Yes, I think in a way I've hogged all that because I was so intense about it that maybe nobody else could get close to it. You know what I mean?

CR: Well no, but when did it start?

DK: It started before seventh grade. I was just so intense about politics that there were two kinds of reading that I most loved, and both of them were biographies. One was the biography of the Yankees—Lou Gehrig, Joe DiMaggio and Mickey Mantle and all the rest of them—and the other was political biographies. I started reading biographies in, oh I don't know, it must

have been third of fourth grade. It just never stopped, and then I started reading news magazines.

CR: Your parents provided this sort of thing?

DK: School provided it. It was mostly what I could get at the school, but I was in high school and I made on my own subscribed to *Time* magazine. I would read the whole magazine every week so I just became more and more intense about it.

So to get back to your question about going to Harvard, it was really those political biographies that did it because I studied all of the presidents and I knew where they had gone to college. I knew that more of them had gone to Harvard than any place else and especially the Roosevelts had gone there.

CR: Roosevelt.

DK: Yes. Both Roosevelts had gone there. Kennedy had gone there and so on. So somewhere I let it be known that I was thinking about going to Harvard, and it was when I still lived on the farm and so it had to have been in fifth or sixth grade. My older sister Mary Lou was doing dishes with me, and we got to having one of those kind of conversations that you can only have while you are doing dishes. I felt free enough to tell her I made up my mind to go to Harvard, and I still remember her response which was utter incruelity since none of us had ever gone to college at all and neither of my parents had gone to high school, and I was going to Harvard. She, on the one hand, let me know how credible it was, and on the other, she let me know it wouldn't hurt to dream. I kept dreaming.

CR: How did you get there?

DK: Well, just plain raw determination frankly. When I got to Sidney...I told you I was intimidated by the place, and I have, of course, been a good student in grade school and knew I was a good student. When I got to be a student, I thought I would be swamped by people who were already part of the system. Somehow I made up my mind that I was going to get to the top of the heap in some sense in this big and intimidating place, and there were things I did when I made my mind up. One, I would watch how people did on the honor roll—the upperclassmen—and when I first got there, the junior and high schools were together. That made a lot of a difference to me because I immediately began reading the honor roll, and I picked out these students that were juniors and seniors who were doing very well and saw how many points they were getting on the honor roll. This is really kind of embarrassing to talk about—this sort of youthful ambition—but I would watch how many points they got. I would make up my mind that I was going to do that. So that was one part of it. The other thing was that one of those people that I heard when I was in seventh grade, he had become a National Merit Finalist. Somehow I made up my mind that I was going to do that. So I decided that when I was in seventh grade that I would be a national merit finalist, and what in the heck, if you are

going to be a finalist, you may as well be a national merit scholar so I reformed my ambition to be a national merit scholar.

CR: Let me just stop you for a minute, and ask you have you ever heard of this national merit in Richey?

DK: No.

CR: This is something you heard of when you got to Sidney, and you, I guess, investigated this very quietly on your own and didn't go around asking questions. You found out about this thing, and you were a little devious weren't you? Even then!

DK: Why do you say devious?

CR: Well, because even finding this thing out even then is not a thing that most people are even aware of.

DK: You're right to pick up. I mean it was very private just between me and myself. Nobody else knew.

CR: I don't think devious was a bad thing to do, but I mean you were doing this when nobody was leading you. Nobody took you by the hand and said, "This is how you do this," or "This is how you could do this," or "This is how you could do this if you tried."

DK: No, not at all. It was absolutely between me and myself. So anyway, I had the dream of going to Harvard and the determination of being a National Merits Scholar and a very good student. That was how I led the next several years of my life along with educating myself politically and in other ways too. I think I did a decent job of both being educated—I had a good education at Sidney High School—and educating myself.

CR: You were buying *Time* magazine yourself. This is a thing you did. Okay, you were working and everybody in the family worked.

DK: Yes, we worked at the church along with my father. So every...particularly every Saturday we were there cleaning the whole church and getting it ready for service on Sunday.

CR: Well, then you were church-oriented in more ways than one.

DK: Oh yes, I was very active in the Methodist Youth Fellowship. I was president of it, essentially, all the way through high school. I worked hard at it and worked hard to build up the organization and worked hard at making it something that was interesting enough that people would want to come to. So that was leadership training of a particular kind.

CR: Also social. Besides it's somehow rather gave you an interest into the society of life.

DK: Yes, that's right it did. Of course my social skills were my weakest skills as you can imagine. There were a lot of reasons for that, particularly the isolation of the farm and the fact that both of my families just were not strong on social skills, so that was always a little weak. I think you are right. The participation in the youth group almost forced me to be social. It's kind of funny. It forced me to be social almost from a political perspective because for my organization to be strong for my perspective, it would have been primarily spiritual or something like that. But you cannot get a lot of people to come if you don't make it socially attractive.

CR: It also means that it gave you a place to belong in town.

DK: I think that's right. So high school was an interesting experience. I did that and became very politically active in the student body and so on. I was president of both the junior and senior class and went to Boys State and all of that. I was in debate, but always it was Harvard. That was drawing me, and I actually learned fairly early that if I got the National Merit Scholarship, that it wasn't going to be enough to go to Harvard, so the ambition changed a little bit. I finally had to say that I'm going to win the National Merit Scholarship, and I'm going to in favor of a larger scholarship which was the only way I could get to Harvard. So I maintained the National Merit ambition and actually I did that... I became a National Merit Scholar but it wasn't big enough so I—

CR: Did you turn the scholarship down?

DK: There wasn't any other way I could get to Harvard. It's funny to me now to look back, because in a sense, I've never been as ambitious since then. I mean, I've never been as single-minded about anything as I was about that. Sometimes I kick myself about that and feel like I should be that single-minded again, but I don't know it's getting late for that.

CR: You were at Harvard at a very interesting time, and you were definitely active politically there.

DK: Well, yes but in a very different way than I would have anticipated then going in, but of course that was the story of the '60s. There is a lot of funny things about this. I may have told you this before, but in my senior year I went through a whole lot of gyrations, I suppose, in many different ways. One of them had to do with a spiritual development or kind of taking lead of my spiritual roots and saying farewell to them for a while. Related to that was kind of an intellectual development that led me quite briefly very far to the right. I became an Ein Rabbit enthusiast as many high school students did and so that particularly strong brand of atheistic individualism both led me out of the church and out of the Democratic Party. When I went to Harvard, I actually joined the young Republicans, but they were very boring. Anyway my flirtation with atheistic individualism was very short lived, and also the year that Goldwater was running.

CR: Dan, what kind of a culture shock was Harvard to a kid from Sidney, Montana, who said Sidney was overwhelming.

DK: There you go, Claire, now you are on to me. Well it was. I don't know how I survived it because it was such a vast culture shock. In some ways I am sure I didn't do it particularly well. I mean there again my lack of social skill was evident, and now I've acquired a certain amount of social skills in Sidney terms but not in Cambridge's terms, right? Here I am thrown in with these people, half of whom are preppies, and I had no concept of their world and no concept of where they came from. Another large percentage are Jewish, and most of them Jewish intellectuals. Their culture is one that I have no familiarity with whatsoever, and the only connection I had was with other political junkies. That is of course where I find most of my connection is with other government majors.

CR: Where did you live there?

DK: Well, first year there all freshman are segregated so all of us lived at or near the yard. I did that and formed some very important attachments in my freshman year. Then the upper-classmen sophomores on choose a house. I chose Winthrop House which was the government house. There were a number of reasons I chose Winthrop house. One of those reasons was Barney Frank. Barney was the assistant tutor at Winthrop house at that time. I had some contact with him in a freshman course, and he was a very valuable and well known Democratic person on campus. He has now been for many years a congressmen from Massachusetts and is one of the outstanding liberal Congressman now so—

CR: And Massachusetts is well known for that now, right?

DK: That's right.

I went to Harvard in order to pursue my political leaning and went there to learn politics. Of course I ended up learning politics in a way that I never dreamed I was going to, and one way was learning the politics of the Vietnam War—very different kind of politics. Then secondly I learned politics from Gandhi, and so the politics that I learned at Harvard, some of it was sort of what I expected and that it was a classical education. I really appreciate the classical part of the education. I'm almost desperately glad to have had that because so much of that now seems so important to me, to make sense of what I now understand politics to be. If I didn't know Aristotle, Plato, and all them a little bit, I don't know how I would make sense of it. I'm deeply grateful for the classical education that Harvard gave me. Harvard is one of my homes, and it will always be one of my homes. I am glad that the little boy decided to go there. I appreciate his determination. Then there were the other parts of it that I didn't expect. The war and the education I got there, and then there was the fact and for reasons that I still don't understand and when I started to do my honors work on Gandhi—Gandhi and Martin Luther King but especially Gandhi. The political influence that I never would have expected, and he never has

exceeded my expectations. So anyway record here that I sit here becoming teary eyed over Harvard. It's probably good for me to realize how important it really is to me.

CR: Very good, very good. That would particularly interest a lot of people who find you rather cold, which is sort of a strange posture for a politician.

DK: Yes, I've been dealing with that so I have to get around to talking about this campaign at some point, but anyway education is everywhere and I've been learning a lot. One of the things I've been learning is that people do think me cold, and I think mostly it's a shell in order to not let the people know the vulnerability within.

CR: It's probably one of the reasons to why I wanted to hear you talk about your background because it could be a family thing where you came from.

DK: There is no doubt about that, and all of that was reserved. There is just certain things that you don't talk about.

CR: I must say that the people I've known that have went to Harvard or other Ivy League schools are not as emotional about it as you. I would have almost thought that you found it such a culture shock getting in classes with graduates of or students who had come from the private schools in the area and there are so many of them. I know even graduate students who had gone to Harvard from here who found a completely different world.

DK: Well, those people from the cradle have been prepared for Harvard. That's what preppy means is I've gone to a preparatory school and what it was preparing me for was Harvard. Most of them not only went to prep school, but they went to prep school that was Harvard prep schools. They could have gone to Yale prep schools and got the same type of preparations. You are being prepared for the Ivy League and therefore you are prepared for Harvard.

CR: It's a very different cultural background and a very different economic background. This is something I'm sure where they couldn't believe where you came from, and you found it as equally hard to believe where they came from.

DK: Of course, there is the great thing that Harvard, as part of its liberal tradition, had during the 1950s, had democratized itself, in the sense of making a commitment to both a geographical and a socioeconomic distribution, so I wasn't alone. I wasn't alone but I was the only Montanan in the class of '68.

CR: Were you really?

DK: Yes, of course there were other farm boys there.

CR: Dakotas or someplace like that? The only Montanan in your class. I think you certainly represented Montana well. I'm sure you would have, but as you said, it was fun to be in school anywhere and even difficult here on this campus in the '60s as you know. It was a revolution of sorts.

DK: Yes it was.

CR: Is it over?

DK: Oh no, I don't think so. I think it was much too strong for it to have died all together. I know it hasn't died in me and there are many, many ways where it is very much alive. A lot of my generation particular to the political active parts.

CR: Are you as liberal now, Dan, as you were when you left Harvard?

DK: No, the relationship to liberalism, of course, is that of an interesting topic in and of itself. I learned liberalism, I suppose, from my father and from Farmer's Union background and all of that. But I really learned liberalism at Harvard, and it was taught to me in a way that it should be taught. I became, in many way, a true liberal while I was at Harvard. That's changed a lot, especially here in the last few years. I've made quite a journey from liberalism in the last few years, and most of the work that I've done the last few years at Northern Lights is in a sense an exploration of that. Most of the teaching I do now has to do with the kind of re-examination of liberalism. My relationship to liberalism has changed, and I don't think it has settled down. I don't think that I can say now where I will be ten years from now. I think in a sense I'm probably a part of a much larger re-examination of what is going on, and it's fun to be a part of it.

CR: Okay then that answers the question I was going to ask. Where is liberalism now? Is it being re-examined? So you are moving with and you are not alone?

DK: Oh, not by any means. It's happening everywhere, and no, I think it's a very good thing. One of the ways in which it's good for me, at least and a lot of other people too, is it has made us think harder about what politics and what it really means. I'm not sure if I can explain that in any particular detail now, but there is a sense in which liberalism really hasn't been political. There is a sense in which liberalism has been an attempt to side-step politics and to solve problems to ways that really aren't strictly political. So part of the re-examination has to do with a discovery that makes real fundamental sense.

CR: A problem solving sense.

DK: Yes, a problem solving sense in which there is a recognition of what politics is really about in that people are different and that their diversity has to be accommodated. It can't just be accommodated in sort of the highly procedural way that liberalism has tried to accommodate it. The liberal approach is that everybody gets to think and feel and do whatever they want.

Well, there is a sense in which everybody goes off in their own direction, and it's always been about and in a classical sense is that people can't go off in their own direction. They are held together in some sense. So what politics is, in a sense, they are held together almost against their will, accommodating each other not simply by tolerating each other because there is more to it than toleration. Whatever more to it there is than politics.

CR: Maybe that's a good place to stop.

DK: Okay.

[End of Interview]