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## Nicoll, Don oral history interview

Paul Brunetti

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## **Interview with Don Nicoll by Paul Brunetti**

*Summary Sheet and Transcript*

### **Interviewee**

Nicoll, Don

### **Interviewer**

Brunetti, Paul

### **Date**

July 23, 2002

### **Place**

Lewiston, Maine

### **ID Number**

MOH 356

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### **Biographical Note**

Donald Eugene "Don" Nicoll was born in Boston, Massachusetts, on August 4, 1927, and grew up in the West Roxbury section of the city. He is the son of George and Mary Nicoll. He attended Robert Gould Shaw Junior High School and Boston English High School and graduated from Colby College in Waterville, Maine in 1949, majoring in History with a minor in Government. Don met his future wife, Hilda Farnum, also a Colby student, when they worked in the resort town of Ocean Park, Maine, in the summer of 1944. Nicoll began his graduate work at Pennsylvania State College in 1949, where he received a teaching fellowship in the Department of History. His graduate studies concentrated on American history, specifically the period from the Revolutionary War to the Civil War. His M.A. (1952) thesis was on the Alien and Sedition Acts.

Starting in 1951, Nicoll and his family settled in Buckfield, Maine where he picked apples and taught part time at Stephen's High School, located in Rumford. Nicoll began working as an announcer for WLAM radio in Lewiston, Maine. He became a reporter and then news editor for WLAM and WLAM-TV. In June 1954, Nicoll left WLAM to become Executive Secretary of the Democratic State Committee at the request of Frank M. Coffin, who has just become chairman. Mr. Coffin was elected to the U.S. House of Representatives from Maine's Second Congressional

District in 1956 and Nicoll went to Washington, DC, as his administrative assistant, continuing in that post until December 1960, the end of Congressman Coffin's second term. Mr. Coffin ran for governor in 1960 and was defeated. After the election Senator Edmund S. Muskie asked Nicoll to join his staff as legislative assistant and news secretary. Nicoll served in that position until 1962, when he became administrative assistant. He continued in that post until 1971, when he became personal advisor to Senator Muskie. He left the senate office in mid-1972.

From 1972 until his retirement in 2005 Nicoll worked as a program and policy planner, first as a consultant (1972-73), then as chairman and chief executive officer of the New England Land Grant Universities Joint Operations Committee (1973-1975), then as coordinator of planning and vice president for planning and public affairs for the Maine Medical Center (1975-1986), then as a consultant (1986-2005). His clients were primarily in the non-profit sector and included, universities, libraries, education associations, health care organizations and social service agencies. He also worked as a volunteer, heading a variety of public policy projects, including the Maine Task Force on Government Reorganization, the Maine State Compensation Commission, the Maine (Mental Health) Systems Assessment Commission, the Maine Consortium for Health Professions Education, the Southern Maine Community Television Consortium, the Maine Special Commission on Government Reorganization (co-chair), the Board of Visitors of the University of Southern Maine's Edmund S. Muskie School of Public Service, the Maine-Aomori Sister-State Advisory Council and the Governor's Allagash Wilderness Waterway Working Group.

From 1998-2005, Don Nicoll was the Director of the Edmund S. Muskie Oral History Project at Bates College.

### **Scope and Content Note**

Interview includes discussions of: family background; Depression era Boston; travel to Boston and Nova Scotia; early lack of interest in politics; Boston socio-economically and geographically; Boston politics; deferment from the Army; Colby College; Colby teachers and their politics; growth of interest in politics; graduate work at Penn State; return to Buckfield, Maine; job at WLAM; Lewiston French; news sources in 1940s and 1950s Lewiston; politics of local media personalities; radio programming; community relations with radio stations; and Lewiston politics.

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## **Transcript**

**Paul Brunetti:** It's July 23rd, 2002, a little after 11:00 at Muskie Archives, and this is Paul Brunetti interviewing Don Nicoll. Can you start by stating and spelling your name?

**Don Nicoll:** My full name is Donald, D-O-N-A-L-D, E. for Eugene, Nicoll, N-I-C-O-L-L.

**PB:** Great, and when and where were you born?

**DN:** I was born on the 4th day of August, 1927 in Boston, Massachusetts.

**PB:** And what were your parents' names?

**DN:** My father's name was George, G-E-O-R-G-E, D as in Densham, D-E-N-S-H-A-M, Nicoll, N-I-C-O-L-L. My mother's name was Mary, M-A-R-Y, Margaret, M-A-R-G-A-R-E-T, Strang, S-T-R-A-N-G, Nicoll.

**PB:** And what did they do for work?

**DN:** My father did several things in the course of his career. He worked as a carpenter as a young man. His father was a painter and varnisher, who had worked as a painter in housing projects and large building projects, and then was a varnisher at the Pullman yards in Hyde Park, Massachusetts. And my father became a carpenter, later worked for the Great Atlantic and Pacific Tea Company, which, today we know more as the now defunct A&P. And then in the middle of the Depression he lost his job there because of some changes, and then sold insurance for a while, worked as a cashier in a restaurant. And finally, well then during the war he worked as a shipwright in the Navy yard after a stint as a carpenter in the Washington, D.C. area, and finally worked as maintenance and building and security supervisor for the Children's Hospital Medical Center in Boston. My mother was a homemaker until I graduated from high school, and then she worked as a part time financial clerk for a large church in the center of Boston.

**PB:** Great. Now, your father lost a job during the Depression?

**DN:** Yes.

**PB:** How was that on the family?

**DN:** Well, it was tough. I was, let's see, this would have been about 1936-37 and I was about ten years old, and I was conscious of the fact that the family was tight for money. But a lot of people were tight for money, so you didn't feel isolated, and because I had friends, and he was able to find work to piece things together for a couple of years as a night cashier in a restaurant. And then he went off to the Washington, D.C. area, we were living in West Roxbury at the time, in Boston, and he went off, oh, for probably close to a year working in the Washington, D.C. area, and then he came back and worked for the Navy just before and during the war. And I guess I, it was not a terrible impact, although finances were tight.

**PB:** Now, you grew up in the Boston area, right?

**DN:** Yeah.

**PB:** Red Sox fan?

**DN:** Yeah.

**PB:** And, now your father went to D.C., what, '37, '38?

**DN:** It was about '38, I'm trying to remember the exact timing of that. It would have been '38,

'39. He was around in '39, in the summer of '39. It may be that he went in '40. I think he went to the Washington, D.C. area in 1940, and then came back in it would have been early '41.

**PB:** Did you go visit him in the D.C. area?

**DN:** No, no, he went and came back. We didn't have money to travel.

**PB:** Did he bring back any stories of the D.C. area?

**DN:** No, at that time he was working mostly in Alexandria and Arlington, Virginia as I learned, and building these extensive Garden Apartments, many of which are still there, and all I heard about was the work that he was doing. And he had very limited interest in politics, and my mother, none at all. In fact my one big recollection of the politics during the 1930s was being in Nova Scotia in . . . . My mother was a native of Nova Scotia and my father's father and mother came from Nova Scotia. And every year from the time I was a year old until the summer of 1939, I was taken off to Nova Scotia to visit with relatives for the whole summer.

And we were in Nova Scotia, it would have been 1936, 1937, when the liberals won their first election in I don't know how many years. And my mother's father was a rabid liberal. And I can remember being taken around the countryside on the night of the election, when it became apparent that the liberals had won. And somebody had a truck and we were riding around in the truck stopping at every Tory's home to hoot and holler, until finally the Royal Canadian Mounted Police officer came along and suggested that we cool it and go home. But my mother had such a strong reaction against her father's political involvement that she would pay no attention to it. And my father never had a terribly strong interest in politics, or he was much more relaxed about it. And that in turn was affected, particularly in my mother's case, by the fact that we lived in Boston. She was a Protestant, and most, politics was dominantly Democratic and dominated by, in those days the Irish Catholics, and that was just a terrible thing.

**PB:** Just like in Lewiston (*unintelligible phrase*). Now did your grandfather's interest in politics at all spark anything in you at the time?

**DN:** No, because it was a completely different world, and I would see him in the summer and I don't remember much talk about politics or political issues. Just that one vivid image of the end of the campaign.

**PB:** Fun image to have anyway. Now what was Boston like in the thirties?

**DN:** We lived in West Roxbury, which jokingly was referred to as the home of the lace curtain Irish in contrast to South Boston which was the home of the shanty Irish. And West Roxbury was a suburban community that was largely populated by school teachers, policemen, firemen, middle class people, and very comfortable kind of setting. If you looked at it then, it would appear much as the areas of Lewiston, the older sections of Lewiston, residential sections, around the core city. And Boston itself was a mix of very wealthy urban homes in the Beacon

Hill, Commonwealth Avenue area of the city, the slum sections and lower income sections in East Boston, in the South End, South Boston, and parts of Roxbury, and then working class areas, Dorchester and Hyde Park, Roslindale, etcetera. Transportation was mostly public transportation still. There were trains, commuter trains in different parts of the city, and the elevated and subway system and the trolley lines were the dominant form of transportation. And my father and mother didn't have a car until after I went to college, it was about 1947 as I recall when they got their first car. So, I grew up with the normal form of transportation, other than walking, being taking the trolley car and the elevated and the subway cars.

And it was a, quite diverse community, and I was very fortunate in, both in elementary and secondary school and junior high, and then in high school because as I've often observed the kids who were in public school in those days, in the elementary grades, benefited from the fact that women were discriminated against, because very bright women had two major career options: nursing or teaching. So you had very smart, very able women teachers in the primary grades. And the second benefit of growing up at that time was the Depression, when I got to high school, I went to Boston English High School which was in the center of the city in the South End, and it was an all boy's school. The faculty was all male; many of them had master's degrees and a few had Ph.D.s, and they were very bright fellows who couldn't get a job, because of the Depression, other than teaching. So discrimination and economic hard times worked to my advantage in my education.

The other great advantage in my education was both growing up as a minority, and that being a Protestant in that environment was a good thing, as I learned what it was like to be part of a small group in a broader society. And when I got to high school, the population of English High School was drawn from all over the city and more diverse, much more diverse than West Roxbury. We had as high a proportion of African American kids as you'd find in any school in Boston. Not very large, because the population had not ballooned at that point, the migration from the South really hadn't hit Boston. But there were a number of African American kids, we had two or three East Indian fellows, we had people from the Chinatown section, we had students from East Boston and the North End, mostly Italians or Middle Eastern kids, etcetera. But it was a good diverse, it was diverse socially and ethnically. It was also diverse economically, because we had some wealthy kids and some, and a lot of us, who had very little, and a number that had much less than I had.

**PB:** And was there discrimination among the groups?

**DN:** No, I don't remember any great tension between the groups, and it's a curious thing but when you're in a situation where there are very few members of a group that tends to be discriminated against, in this case black kids, they were so unique as to be exotic. And as a consequence they tended to get treated on the basis of how they performed academically or athletically. And I remember one African American fellow who was not terribly bright, and he was kind of klutzy, and a lot of fun poked at him. But that was no different than an Anglo Saxon or Irish kid who had the same problems. And there were other black kids in our classes who were very bright and they were respected for their academic performance, or in the case of one

or two athletes, for their athletic performance. And I don't remember a lot of tension between, on the basis of ethnic divisions. There was a large Jewish population, a large Irish Catholic, large Italian Catholic, but in this very large school in the middle of the, one of the big slum areas of the city, the kids tended to be treated as individuals.

**PB:** Now, I had a question about Mayor Curley, the mayor at the time. And I was reading one of your previous interviews and you talk a little bit about him. Can you expand on Mayor Curley?

**DN:** Yeah, Mayor Curley was one of the early successful Irish politicians in Boston. His predecessor, I'm not sure whether it was direct predecessor or several before him, was John Fitzgerald, grandfather to President Kennedy. And I think John Fitzgerald, otherwise known as Honeyfitz, was the, probably the Irish Catholic candidate or politician who made the major breakthrough. Up until the time of Honeyfitz, the city was dominated by the old line Protestants, and that had gone back to colonial times. Curley was a bit of a rogue, and did very well financially. He was clever, he was debonair. I remember, for example, as an indicator, the Kennedy family and the Fitzgeralds lived in Brookline, and if I remember the pictures of the house where John F. Kennedy was born, it was a two or three story frame, I think it was a two story frame building, and I think it may have had two apartments in it, or two flats.

When I was growing up, James Michael Curley, about the same period, had built himself a massive brick mansion in Jamaica Plain, right across from Jamaica Pond, which was one of the posh areas at the time. So he'd obviously feathered his nest pretty well by then. He later got into trouble when he was in Congress and was convicted of a crime, left the Congress, and then came back and was elected again. And I can remember people saying, "Yeah, Michael Curley's a crook, but he's at least smart and he robs from the rich and he gives to the poor, so he's okay." That was about, about the attitude.

**PB:** All the while he had a big house in Jamaica Plains?

**DN:** Oh yeah.

**PB:** Now what was he convicted of, do you recall?

**DN:** I forget. I think it was some kind of financial shenanigans, he was either getting payments under the table or bribes.

**PB:** Did it involve skimming money off the top of public funds?

**DN:** I don't remember, I think it was, I don't think, it wasn't connected with public funds, I don't think it was public funds. I think it was people paying him off.

**PB:** Did your parents have criticisms of him?



**DN:** They would mutter about James Michael Curley from time to time, yeah.

**PB:** What were your perceptions of the community's reaction to him?

**DN:** Pretty generally what I said, that the people, the Republicans and the Protestants particularly, and I suspect Jewish families as well, regarded him as a scoundrel from the Irish Catholic community. And that was one of the divisions that you ran into, but curiously enough it was not a major split in the community.

**PB:** So where did you go to college after?

**DN:** After, when I graduated from high school at the, it was June of 1945, and I was, I wanted to go to college. At that time I thought I wanted to become a minister, and I did not want to live at home. I wanted to, I was an only child, I had no brothers or sisters, and I wanted to get off on my own. And the colleges that were recommended to me included Bates, Colby and Bowdoin I recall. Maine appealed to me, and somehow I fastened on Colby and applied and was accepted. And in early August of 1945 I turned eighteen, registered for the draft, and was called up for pre induction physical and flunked it, as I expected I would because I had some serious childhood illnesses. I'd had ruptured appendix and peritonitis at one point, and left with very heavy abdominal scarring, and also had a series of mastoidectomies which left me with chronic otitis media, ear infection, middle ear infection, and I can still remember going through the whole extensive physical, getting to the end, and the off-, I think it was a sergeant who was in the final desk looking through my papers and looking up at me and picking up the rejected stamp and stamping the induction documents. So by mid-August I was free to go to college and not think about going in the service, and I went off to Colby in September.

**PB:** And what.....you kind of jumped ahead of where I was going, which is good I guess. What were your feelings on not being drafted and going into the war, which was-?

**DN:** Well the war was over, the war had ended, around August 12th I think was the peace treaty or the end of the war. It wasn't really a peace treaty; it was the surrender of Japan. And we knew that the war was over by about the 8th of August. And I didn't feel, I guess I, I didn't feel anything, in a sense, about that. I had never expected to be able to serve because of those physical problems, and so, and the war was over so there wasn't a sense of not doing your duty. And I went off to Colby, and that fall there were a few veterans who came, and then in the spring semester, in February, January, February of '46, there was a great rush of veterans at Colby, and that was the next big gain I got in my education. I'd had, as I've indicated, what I thought were major benefits in elementary and secondary school, and the G.I. Bill was the next thing from which I benefited, not because I was on the G.I. Bill, but because there were so many veterans who were older, more experienced, had a very different perspective than those of us who had just got out of high school, and transformed the college and the way faculty members interacted with students.

**PB:** Great. What was the political scene like at Colby between '45 and -?

**DN:** It was, I would say probably a majority of the students were Democrats because so many of them were veterans. And many of those veterans came from working class families, many of them had absolutely no thought of going on to college until they had the G.I. benefit. I had at one point three roommates, and none of the three would have gone to college if it were not for the war service and the G.I. Bill. And most of them were Democrats and very supportive of President Truman and President Roosevelt before that. And the faculty, the faculty in history, and I majored in history and government and it was all one department at the time, for the most part was I would say liberal Democratic. The head of the department and my advisor, Paul Fullam, was a very vigorous Democrat, although he had enrolled as a Republican in 19-, let's see, '48, yeah, he was an enrolled Republican probably in 1942, no, '48 he was an enrolled Republican, that's it. Because Margaret Chase Smith, who was a member of the House, was running against Ralph Owen Brewster in 1948 for the Senate nomination in Maine, and Professor Fullam knew that in September there would be no real choice between the Republican and the Democrat. And he wanted to sure, if possible, that Ralph Brewster was defeated and that Margaret Chase Smith was the Republican candidate, and so he enrolled as a Republican to vote in the primary.

**PB:** Do you know how long he kept that enrollment?

**DN:** It was for several years. By 1954 he had changed back to a Democrat when he ran for the Senate against Margaret Chase Smith.

**PB:** It's funny how things work, isn't it. Now, how was Paul Fullam as a professor?

**DN:** I always said that Paul did not have students, he had disciples. He was a, he was a bright, charismatic, sort of old shoe lecturer, challenged the students, and was very good at getting students to develop their talents in terms of intellectual discipline and writing. And a great advantage to me, and it was because of my studies in his classes, as well as changing views on religion, that I decided not to become a minister, but to aim for teaching history, and I majored in history and government.

**PB:** And was it, was it Paul Fullam that fostered your interest in politics and government as well as history?

**DN:** In part, in large part. I had, I think I had a latent interest in it, which went along with my interest in history and government, and as a, I suspect that much of my interest in ministry earlier was really an interest in public service. And I have to credit my folks, who were very active in their church, because they cared about the community, it was an attitude toward community. And Paul was the final stimulus in that arena. But other very excellent teachers through that period, one was a funny little man named Ossip Flechtheim who was a refugee from Germany. He looked like a penguin, literally, and was the butt of a lot of jokes from students, but he was a brilliant scholar and very fine teacher. And Carl Gustav Anton was another refugee from Germany for different reasons, and Norman Palmer, who had been at Colby and came back was

a, he was European and English history. But I was most influenced by Fullam and focused on American history and government.

**PB:** What did you do after graduation from Colby?

**DN:** Well I, encouraged by Professor Fullam, I applied for a fellowship at Penn State and got it. It was a one year, non-renewable fellowship while studying for your master's, and they paid a thousand dollars stipend and covered all the fees and tuition, and in return I had to teach two sections of American, freshman American history each semester. And as it turned out, I taught American history from the colonial period through, up to the Civil War, and I taught it in four sections. And much of my study was in pre-Civil War American history, so I knew more about pre-Civil War American history than I did the rest of the, I knew very little about, in fact, about American history from roughly 1865 to about 1932.

**PB:** That's not bad I guess. How did you get back to Maine?

**DN:** Well, long story. Hilda and I were married a week after we graduated, and she worked as a librarian at Penn State while I was doing my graduate work, and she became pregnant in the summer of 1949, no, the summer of '50, and was expecting in February of 1951. And she was not going to be able to work, my fellowship was up, I did not have any opportunities for further graduate study at Penn State and no money to go on at another institution. So we debated. I finished my, at the end of the summer of '50 I had completed my resident requirements, all the courses, and had started on my thesis. So we went first to New Jersey where I was able to do further research on my graduate thesis in both New York and in Philadelphia, and some in Boston, and I worked there, and her folks were there and we used their place as a base and rented space in other places.

And then in 1951, in the spring of '51 they bought a house in Buckfield to which they planned to retire, and it was located there because it was reasonably close to Rumford where my mother-in-law's sister lived, and there were some family ties and also obligations taking, sharing the care of her mother, another sign of the times. You did not have the Medicaid and other assistance, and Social Security hadn't fully kicked in for her mother, so the sisters had to share the care of her. And they were planning to retire to this house in Buckfield, and would not be doing so for another twelve years. So they said, we've got this house, we're not going to be there in the winter, if you would like to go there and live, please do. So Hilda and I moved to Buckfield with our son, and there I had to decide what I was going to do because I had not paid attention to the fact, as an undergraduate or a graduate student, that American history majors were a glut on the market. From 1939 on, there were no opportunities really for study overseas, so anyone who was studying history tended to study American history and not European or Asian history. And I had, I didn't yet have my master's, I had completed the work but not the thesis, and so, and I had no teacher certificate because I hadn't been an education major. So what was I going to do?

Well, first thing I did was to pick apples in Buckfield, and then I, and I raked leaves for some people and did other odd jobs, and then decided that I needed to go find work in the city, and

came to Lewiston one day having decided, Hilda and I talked about it, and decided that I should do something that would be interesting and consistent with my education. So I said, okay, I'll either go looking for a job at the newspaper, or radio station. And I walked up and down Lisbon Street debating with myself, which place should I go to first, and finally walking by the entrance to WLAM, decided to go up the stairs to WLAM and see if they had any openings. And lo and behold, when I poked my head in there, they happened to be looking for a part time announcer on the weekends, and part time copywriter for advertising. And the station manager, a fellow named Elden Shute, Denny Shute, S-H-U-T-E, Denny auditioned me and decided that they could take a chance on me.

So I worked from noon until midnight on Saturday announcing, and that included announcing the news broadcast at twelve thirty, and doing the station breaks for the Saturday afternoon opera and a couple of other programs, then doing the six o'clock news, and then a program called Dansons la Gigue which was a collection of jigs and reels put together by one of the salesmen, Emilio Ouellette. And Emilio did the opening announcement and the closing announcement, and he did the French language commercials. And as disc jockey, my responsibility was to change the records according to the script he gave me, and to make the English language announcements. And that was my beginning in radio.

**PB:** And in Lewiston, right?

**DN:** And in Lewiston. And I soon learned that my high school French was not up to the pronunciation of Lewiston French names. One very funny incident on Jigs and Reels, there was a commercial for a beauty salon, I'm not sure whether it's still in existence or not. It was owned by a man named B-I-R-O-N.

**PB:** Biron in Lewiston terms, right?

**DN:** And I played the record, stopped it, turned on the switch, and said in my best style I thought, "Ladies, for the best in hair care, go to Biron's (*Bee-rohn*) Beauty Salon." And I noticed a little, very quickly I noticed a little light on the telephone blinking, the signal that somebody was calling me. And as soon as the announcement was over and I had the next record on and the microphone off, I picked up the phone and it was Romeo Sansoucy who was the salesman for that account. He said, Don, that's Biron's, goddammit. At that point I started paying attention to the correct pronunciation of names in Lewiston, including such puzzlers as G-A-U-T-H-I-E-R, which could be '*Go-teeay, Gothier, Gotheeay, Gochie, Goochie, or Gauchie*, depending on which family you were dealing with.

**PB:** Oh dear, it's the truth.

**DN:** Ultimately I started doing, I was doing some newscasts, which meant mostly reading from wire service copy, and then I moved into the newsroom as a reporter, and ultimately was editor for radio and television, the station set up a UHF station in 1953. And at that time WLAM, which was owned by a man named Frank Hoy, spent a lot of money on reporting. You'd never

find that today in the radio stations around here. The staff included at its peak part time Parker Hoy, who was the owner's son and news editor until I took over, me, a full time, Ralph Skinner who reported on Auburn and Androscoggin county news, and Dick Gove who was a sports announcer. And we covered not only Lewiston City Hall and the general area, I went up to Augusta at least once a week for coverage of governor's press conference and major stories around the legislature dealing with Lewiston. So it was an investment that you just don't see made today.

**PB:** Can you talk about Frank Hoy?

**DN:** Yeah, Frank was kind of an old curmudgeon when I knew him. He had been business manager for the *Lewiston Sun-Journal*, and in the late thirties, early forties, sometime in that '40 or '45 period, had urged the Costello family to put in a radio station to compete with Faust Couture's WCOU, and -

*End of Side A*

*Side B*

**DN:** - where they would carry pieces about, this would be in the *Journal*, were pieces about the ball games, and they would describe the fellows sitting around listening to the telephone report on the ball game. They would not admit that they were listening to a radio broadcast of the ball game. But Frank and another fellow, and I think it was Judd Higgins, yes, it was, Judd, a fellow named Judd Higgins, went into partnership and set up WLAM, and it was called in those days Maine's Voice of Progress, and it was a very active community station. Frank was very stern. Underneath it all I think he was probably a very warm human being, but he certainly was tough on his son and tough on people who worked for him. Although he did delegate, and Denny Shute, who was later a state legislator, was a, was given pretty nearly complete authority to run the station, and they hired some very good people as announcers and salespeople, traffic managers, and the like. And then Frank decided that television was coming in, and it was obvious he could not compete with the Hildredths who built Channel 8, or with the Rines family, Rines-Thompson family in Portland who had Channel 6, and some of the others. So he built a UHF station in Portland and then a UHF station here in Lewiston, which was up on, the transmitter and the studios were up on Applesass Hill. And those lasted for maybe two, two and a half years, and then just couldn't compete because of the big stations.

**PB:** Now, can you talk about the relationship between Frank Hoy and the Costello family?

**DN:** All I know is that they had a break on the whole issue of radio versus the newspaper, and Frank left and cashed out of it, whatever investment or benefits he had from the paper. We had perfectly cordial relationships with the reporters and editors at the paper, but Frank certainly had a, I suspect, a very difficult relationship with the Costello family. He, I don't remember any discussions with him on politics or station policy and coverage. He was a Republican. He was as I recall, yeah, he was a member of the United Baptist Church, and he was a teetotaler, and he, but the, editorially, I don't think, we never ran editorials. Parker was a Republican who managed

Burt Cross' 1954 gubernatorial campaign, and then later, it was very funny because I was in a sense, well I wasn't managing the Muskie campaign but I was managing a party office in that campaign when he worked for Burt Cross. Later Parker switched enrollment, became a Democrat, and was elected to the [Maine] house of representatives as a Democrat.

**PB:** Did you have continuing relations with Parker after that?

**DN:** Yeah, yeah. Friendly relations with Mr. Hoy, but distant, because he just wasn't somebody who got close to folks, and good relationship with Parker and his wife Caroline. They ultimately moved to Kennebunk and bought a station in Biddeford, WIBE. And the radio station here was sold, I think to Storer Broadcasting, but, well it was fairly typical of Frank Hoy I guess, when it came time to sell the station, it was sold without reference to the staff at the station, and I know that a couple of the, at least a couple of the employees were quite bitter because they had wanted to buy the station when the Hoyes decided to give it up, and the opportunity was never even given to them. And I think Frank just felt that was his business and he wasn't going to get involved in negotiations with staff.

**PB:** Now what were the relations between Frank Hoy, Faust Couture, the COU?

**DN:** It was a fairly, I'd say it was distant, not, the audiences tended to be different. Faust Couture was obviously aiming at the Franco American audience, and ran several programs that were aimed for that community in a cultural and political way that the few programs WLAM ran were not. That is, the programs, the only programs I can remember that were really aimed at the Francophone population were Jigs and Reels, and a program that Sonia Forgue put on for, essentially for women but had a fair amount of French content. And there may have been from time to time a church related program. On WCOU, Louis-Philippe Gagne, who was the editor of *L'œil* and *Le Messager*, he was the editor and he also wrote *L'œil*, had a program, political commentary program on WCOU, in French, aimed at the interest of the Franco American community. So that was very different from anything WLAM put on. WLAM was much more conventional, straightforward news, sort of pillar of the community.

**PB:** More English?

**DN:** More English, oh yeah, definitely more English. And even the French programs were (*unintelligible word*). Looking back on it I wonder why they didn't run all of the announcements for that program in French.

**PB:** Mystery to me when you're talking about it, I don't know. Hoy wasn't a French person, was he?

**DN:** No, no he was, he was a Yankee, had not come from a well-to-do family. I believe his father was an alcoholic, and he had a tough time growing up, and had made money the hard way. And so he was not part of the old aristocracy. And his commitments were really dedicated to building a better Lewiston, but in very conventional Anglo terms, if you will.

**PB:** Did he, what were his feelings about the Franco community, did he have any or did he show any?

**DN:** Never showed any. He had, there were two salesmen, yeah, Emilio Ouellette and Romeo Sansoucy, and Emilio's son George Ouellette who later, who was an announcer and later moved to Old Orchard and was the executive director of the chamber of commerce there. And the Forgue sisters, Sonia and Pauline, I think, was her sister's name. And Sonia had at least one, maybe a couple of radio programs, and later married George Ouellette. But they were mainstays in the station for economic reasons for the station, and I never remember any kind of animosity or putting down of those employees. And I never remember any of the sort of standard jokes one might find in a discriminatory situation. But I think Frank was, it was more benign neglect, when it came to the Franco community, than anything.

**PB:** What about LAM and COU, what were their political beliefs? I know COU had, Louis-Philippe Gagne was a mayor right before you came to town. What were their political -?

**DN:** I think the big difference is that Louis-Philippe Gagne and the *Messenger* and COU tended to support the interest of the working class Franco Americans. They, and they would be more closely identified with, even though sometimes embarrassed by Ernest Malenfant, who was a very skillful politician but, and very bright, but a bit of a buffoon in the eyes of the public. But they would support him, folks like Paul Couture who was the business agent for the laborer's union and a member of the city council, and Albert Cote. They were not very happy with Louis Jalbert because they didn't trust Louis and felt he was a crook.

And Frank Hoy was, probably the real division was, and the political difference was, Frank was a very traditional, good government Republican in the old fashioned sense of that. The establishment, pushing for integrity, pushing for fiscal responsibility, and he was allied with the people who created the finance board. And I don't know how much you know about the history of the city and the city council and the finance board, but Frank was on the side of the finance board and Louis-Philippe Gagne was on the side of the city council.

**PB:** So kind of like vinegar, or oil and water.

**DN:** Yeah. And a good illustration of the kinds of divisions you saw that sometimes shaded across the ethnic lines was the references that Malenfant used to make to the "Clifford Clique". And the "Clifford Clique" was John, Judge John Clifford and his ally in the end, Al Lessard, and the Eddie Beauchamps of this world, and Armand Sansoucy who was Romeo's brother. They were the up and coming business -

**PB:** Was Emile Jacques in there, too?

**DN:** Emile Jacques? Emile came later, and Emile sort of floated. Yeah, Bill Jacques was very, I was interested because I interviewed Bill a couple years ago, and when I knew him he

was aspiring to get out of the working class group and he didn't want to be identified with the Paul Coutures and the Ernest Malenfants, but he didn't get the respect he was looking for from the Eddie Beauchamps and the Al Lessards and Tommy Antoine and some others. But when I interviewed him, it was obvious that he'd been very successful over time in building his business, and he'd become quite conservative and every bit as stodgy as that earlier group. Very nice guy, but he was not the Bill Jacques I knew.

**PB:** That's a great point to end. Thank you very much.

*End of Interview*