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## Cote, Paul A. oral history interview

Mike Richard

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## **Interview with Paul A. Cote by Mike Richard**

*Summary Sheet and Transcript*

### **Interviewee**

Cote, Paul A.

### **Interviewer**

Richard, Mike

### **Date**

August 10, 1999

### **Place**

Lewiston, Maine

### **ID Number**

MOH 135

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### **Biographical Note**

Paul A. Cote was born in Lewiston, Maine on January 13, 1930. He attended St. Patrick's parochial schools and Lewiston High School, Colby College and Boston University Law School. He belonged to the Young Republicans, and became a municipal court judge under Governor John H. Reed, 1960-1965. He was Chair of the school board in 1962, nominated by Georges Rancourt, and Chair of the failed Charter Commission in 1970. He died October 12, 2003.

### **Scope and Content Note**

Interview includes discussions of: reflections on the Great Depression; WWII; 1941; worked as Margaret Chase Smith's campaign coordinator in Androscoggin County for her last term; Margaret Chase Smith/Paul Fullam controversy; president of Young Republicans; Louis Jalbert and September elections; 1960 Kennedy's visit to Lewiston; Frank Coffin; 1960 Election as an anomaly in Maine politics, with 94% of those eligible voting in Lewiston; Ed Beauchamp; Adrian Cote vs. Armand Dufresne for 1940 Androscoggin County judge of probate; question of state regulation of milk prices in mid-50s; Irish/French relations; Adrian Cote's association with Sumner Sewall; 1970 Charter revision attempt failed; Finance board/Mayor tensions; and Ed Robinson.

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## Transcript

**Paul Cote:** Paul Cote again, I was born in 1930, and, having been raised in Lewiston, I recall the Depression, but only the after effects of it. I used to hear an awful lot of talk from elderly people such as my parents and my aunts and uncles and people that we'd either visit or would be visiting us. And there were no- there was no question that there were a lot of hard times in the twin cities of Lewiston-Auburn. It never really impacted on me in that I, you know, my father had a job, and he was well providing us with what I considered to be a good life. But then again, I had two older sisters, and we were all very happy and plodding along. And I remember the mid '30s for instance, my father rented a place in the summer time down at Old Orchard, and we were there until 1941 when the Second World War broke out. And we, in those days we stayed in what was referred to as the Beaumont area. In other words there was a Beaumont Hotel and many single-family homes or camps around it. I can't really say they were homes, but they were camps, summer camps, and people would rent them by the summer.

And I know that a lot of Lewiston-Auburn people that were our neighbors at the time from all ethnic backgrounds, Jewish, French, English speaking or Protestants. I know that, for instance, our next door neighbor were the Scotts, and Mr. Scott went on to become a minister at the Baptist church here in Lewiston. And I knew his younger brother Bill quite well, and he went on to run a business, or part of a business called Lewiston Lumber Company- not Lewiston, Pineland Lumber Company. And on the other side of the street there was a Dr. [Bertrand or Romeo] Beliveau, and he was doctor in the twin cities, French ethnic background. And we used to play around with his children and all of the children that I'm mentioning. And of course I was five years old then, five to eleven.

I remember there were some bad stories about what the Germans were doing to the Jewish people. I remember that quite vividly because we lived near the Berman family, and the Berman family, June Berman ended up being a classmate of mine at Lewiston High School. And we, in those days, 1940, '41, I remember that Old Orchard Beach was pretty secure. In other words, they were afraid of German boats, submarines, coming in. And of course we were just kids, and it was quite awesome for us to be talking about submarines and people being slaughtered like we found out eventually they were slaughtered over in Germany, whether they were ethnic Jews or otherwise. There were a lot of people that were just brutally killed over there. And of course we accepted that as a matter of fact. It isn't like today. In those days there was radio, no television, communications was rather poor, not like it is today where everybody knows what happens as soon as it happens. And people in those days were more personable. In other words, a fight was something, at least to me, was rare, and it, people were rather nice people. Or at least you could express yourself quite easily and everybody would pay attention to it. It's not like what exists today in today's world.

I know that I, a lot of the boys and girls that I went to school with at St. Patrick's School were

having a hard time financially, that I know. And it was not unusual for some of the families to uproot and go elsewhere where they could find a better job, or a paying job. I think I said before that fourteen that sixteen dollars a week was supposedly a good job in those days, and, you know, doesn't pay very much. That doesn't put much bread on the table, pay rent and things of that nature. And in those days you didn't see the handouts that were given like are being given today by the state and federal government. It seems as if you almost have to slip through the cracks today not to be provided for. But in those days nobody seemed to be provided for. That was the beginning of, those days in hindsight were the beginning of Social Security, and there was no guarantee about anybody going to a hospital that bills would be paid and things of that nature. I know that I used to go and, there was a gentleman that ran a store down there, and I used to go and charge things. And he used to have a piece of cardboard that he'd write down, the family would be charging five cents and ten cent items, or buying things. And then father would square away with him usually on a weekend when dad came up, or came down, one or the other.

And that was the, that was an unusual time because dad bought a plane I believe in, a Taylor Cub plane, and he used to fly it out at Mayo's Airport, which was around Taylor Pond. And in those days owning a plane was quite a thing. And my sister, as a matter of fact, Adrian, soloed when she was sixteen, and that was not, that was quite a feat for her to do that. But in 1941, apparently they restricted airplanes locally to flying only on a one-mile radius from the airport and father eventually got rid of the plane because it lost all of its intrigue. I remember being with people, young pilots who went off to WWII and were killed while abroad. And they were some of the finest people I knew.

In those days, politics was different than it is today. It was, you had to, a politician had to get himself or herself known, and a female politician was a rare kind of person. And I remember when Margaret Chase Smith's husband died and she went on to serve in the Congress, and that was quite a thing. I knew Congressman Smith. I had the pleasure of being a campaign, I don't know if you say a campaign manager, but I was in charge of Androscoggin County when she ran for the Senate. And that was the last term that she served in the U.S. Senate. And she would not shy away from anything; she was quite a lady. She, if she went to meet somebody she'd take me with her, and I would listen to the conversation. And let me tell you, she wasn't, she wasn't a shy lady. She would be swinging away with the best of them, talking about all sorts of issues. And in those days she was in the Senate Armed Services, and she had an awful lot of impact, a lot of wallop. And if you drove with her, you went with her in her car, and her car I believe was a Chevrolet or a Ford, very low type of vehicle, and that's what she drove. Or else, if she drove with you, she didn't want you driving a high priced car; that was her standard. Very classy lady, I had a lot of recollections with Senator Smith.

And I know for instance that when she ran for office from the Congress, from the House to the Senate, her style was to capture as many people as she could to sign her nomination petitions. And that's what she centered her campaign on. If she could get as many people to sign those nomination petitions, she would then go out and solicit them to work in her behalf to help get her elected for the U.S. Senate. It was very important to her. So whoever signed those petitions, she used. And as a matter of fact, being a female, she used to her advantage. I remember in Kennebec County she had an awful lot of ladies from all over the county signing these petitions

and circulating them. And if anything, she always had, if you only needed a thousand signatures, she'd come up with ten thousand. And that was her campaign; that's what she based it on. And she was very successful and very effective doing so.

My only regret about that had to do with, I don't know if I mentioned it or not, it was Paul Fullam.

**MR:** I don't think so, no.

**PC:** Okay, Paul Fullam, I went, eventually, or when I was still, when I got out of high school, I went to Colby College, and Paul Fullam was my advisor. And Paul Fullam was a history teacher, history professor at Colby, and it was not unusual if, he was a perfectly charming, easygoing gentleman. He introduced me to Burl Ives for instance, one whole session during his class he played nothing but Burl Ives music. And he then, at another time, would take that and use the songs to tell you the history of the country. And he was extremely intriguing, very intriguing. He would send his exams on to some friend of his down at Harvard and they would cross, the Harvard people would send theirs to him, and he would correct the papers, and they swapped back and forth.

Paul Fullam had a remarkable talent for Margaret Chase Smith. He thought an awful lot of her, but he, of, if you could say, well, was he a Republican or a Democrat, it really didn't matter to him because he didn't put much emphasis on it one way or the other. And what had happened was, in one of her elections, and in those days I knew her and had met her, but I wasn't a practicing attorney yet, so I wasn't where I was ten years later after I'd graduated from law school and was practicing law in the twin cities.

What I remember was that, I believe it was the night before the election, what, Senator Smith went on television and what she did was extremely harmful to Paul Fullam because he was induced to run against her as a Democrat. And the night before the election, maybe it was two nights before the election, and I had graduated from Colby in '52, and it could be that it was in the fall of '53. Anyway, on television she said, "My opposition, if you want to know, is not really certain that he should be running because he signed my nomination petition. And if he signed my nomination petition, why is he now running against me? Where is his credibility? Is he for himself or for me?" Okay? And what I was, what I'm saying is that her emphasis and her organization had to do with signing that nomination petition, so two nights before the election she broadcast this on television statewide, and it really impacted greatly on him. It's my, I heard that six weeks later he had a heart attack and he died, okay? And I, in that regard I, he was sort of swept up in this emotionalism of, he did think an awful lot of her and he did sign her nomination petition. I never got back to speak with him about any of that, but I know that six weeks later he had a heart attack and very shortly thereafter he died. And I just felt very badly about that whole situation.

He was the kind of a person that Democrats were asking him to take place and come and run against Senator Smith, and he sort of got suckered into running for it, and then he got wiped out because of it. And it's too bad; it was one of those tragedies that you hear happening during a campaign that destroys people, and I was sorry to see that Margaret Chase Smith did what she

did to him. But that's only an aside because he was my advisor at Colby, and I had a great and high opinion of him, and he never should have gotten involved in running that, his own campaign as far as I was concerned, a really talented gentleman.

But, when I got out of the law school in '55- I went to BU Law School, and in those days we had a law school in Maine but not like it is today. You had to go out of state almost to get, to be, if you wanted to come back and practice law. And the politics in those days was that if you wanted to get an appointment, you had to be, you had to hustle, you had to do some work in the party. And I found that in the Lewiston area we had a real hard core group of young people in their twenties and thirties who became very active in the Republican Party, and they did an awful lot of campaigning in behalf of candidates. I was president of the Lewiston-Auburn group at one time, and whether we were presidents or whether we were directors of the organization didn't make much difference. We all participated, and a lot of young people and their spouses worked for candidates. I remember Jim Reed, for instance, was running for the House of Representatives. He went on to become not elected, but got appointed to be superior court judge and went on to become a real great justice.

**MR:** Now, sorry to interrupt, but this group that you were involved in, was this the Young Republicans Club?

**PC:** Yes, it was.

**MR:** It was, okay.

**PC:** Yeah. Keep in mind that there was, there were two groups: there were the Young Republicans, and then there were the Republicans. All of the groups I refer to as Young Republicans were also members of their Republican organizations. It was not unusual for a Young Republican, for instance, to turn around and to become elected as a state representative, meaning, I'm sorry, be elected as a member of the party's state committees. In those days every county would get one male and one female to be a state committee member, and I think that was true in the Democratic Party as well. And then those thirty-two people, yeah, thirty-two people, would meet usually in Augusta or Bangor or Portland, and they were the ones that directed who, they were the ones that elected the chairman of the Republican Party or the Democratic Party. And they were the ones that set the policy and would set the so-called issues and what the issues of the party was going to be, and they were the ones that sponsored the state conventions.

In those days they were very actively involved in a lot of work. I don't see that happening today like it used to happen then. For instance, it was, Maine in those days used to have an election in September, and that's, the saying that goes, 'as Maine goes so goes the nation' had reference to the fact that in those days, now I'm talking really about the '30s and the '40s, had Republicans running the state government and being elected. They had house, majority of the house and senate, and they were also being elected as governors. And that's, 'as Maine goes so goes the nation' had reference that if you got, if you could get a candidate elected in Maine as a Republican, then most likely the rest of the nation could do the same. And it wasn't unusual if Maine went Republican that the rest of the nation did follow. That is not something that started to happen when Mr. Muskie came along, however. That started to change the saying.

For some odd reason Louis Jalbert, who was a very active Lewiston legislator, and I knew Louis very well and I had a great deal of respect for him. I liked him, he was a easy going guy to talk to, and he had more angles going than anybody I ever, I ever knew in politics. He was a very clever guy. And Louis, for some strange reason, got to be the moving force that did away with that September election, and why he did that, knowing that his party was marching and advancing forward, I have no idea. I just have no idea. But when I look at it today and you look at Iowa and New Hampshire, they were around in those days, too, but Maine was still the place that would get all of the national attention. So why they did away with that, and why was it Louis Jalbert, I have no idea. To me it took away from what was really, you know, good publicity for the state of Maine.

**MR:** So, but you mentioned you were president of the Lewiston-Auburn Young Republicans Club? That was right in the late '50s, right after you got out of high sc- law school, I'm sorry, when you returned to Maine?

**PC:** Yes it was, yes. Yes, I was, oh yes, I was national committeeman. I went to the national convention, went to two of them as a matter of fact, meaning the Young Republican National Convention.

**MR:** Oh, it was a separate system, okay.

**PC:** Yes. And then when, I think, I think it was the 19-, I think in 1958 that I became state chairman of the Young Republicans until 1960. And that was the time that Burt Cross had been elected governor.

**MR:** Oh, actually, I think it was, Muskie defeated Cross in '54, so, was it Clauson, Clinton Clauson?

**PC:** No, it wasn't, yes, Clinton Clauson, I'm sorry, it was Clinton Clauson, Democrat, in 1958. And in those days a gentleman by the name of John Reed had been elected and got himself appointed as president of the senate, and he was a Republican. And I knew John Reed from way up north, and all of a sudden when Clinton Clauson died, John Reed became the governor of the state of Maine. And I, at that time I was state chairman of the Republican Party, and I strongly supported him. I remember going to Augusta and having many conversations with John Reed about how he had to consolidate his position because he had to get himself elected to that position as governor. And in those days I believe there was a gentleman who was also a state senator by the name of [William S.] Silsby, and his son was Herb Silsby, and Herb and I were pretty good friends. But I got on the bad side of the Silsbys because I endorsed John Reed to be the next candidate to run as governor because he was governor. And our friendship got destroyed in that process. However, John Reed got elected, and that's an interesting story.

In 1960, I'm trying to think who the candidate was. . . . I think. . . . I think, yes, the candidate in 1960 was Frank Coffin. Frank Coffin was an extremely bright, talented fellow from Lewiston. He had been state chairman of the Democratic Party, and he was one of Sen. Muskie's, in those days Governor Muskie's big supporters. And Frank Coffin had been elected congressman I



believe in 1958- I'm sorry, '58, I think in '56, he served two terms in the house. And rather than run for a third term, he decided to run for governor, and he was running against John Reed. Now this was the big year that Nixon was running as a Republican for president and Kennedy, John Kennedy was running as the first Catholic candidate as a Democrat for president, and of course he went on to become president. Two days before the election, right in this office, if you look across, right out there, two o'clock in the morning, okay, along came John Kennedy. And that, it was after he came and got elected that they changed the name of this park to the Kennedy Park, okay?

I never in all my life saw so many people as I saw that night at two o'clock in the morning when he came up Pine Street and he went right to the head, and then they drove the car right down to the grandstand. There must have been ten or fifteen thousand people here. They were everywhere. They were everywhere, okay? And I had in those days it just happens to be this building. But I came in, and I was standing out here in the hallway, and I watched him come up, and the people that were applauding him. It was unbelievable, it really was, and he gave one of the grand speeches. I mean really, he was terrific, very impressive character. And of course in those days I was a Nixon supporter. And the big issue was, could John Reed survive? Was Nixon going to win over Kennedy, or was Kennedy going to win over Nixon in the state of Maine? And could, if that was true, which coattails would carry the other candidates into congress and into the governorship.

It was one of those very, and I believe, you got to remember now that in those days the candidate for governor was serving a four year term, but, and it was always in the off year from the president, so that if a president was running, Maine was not electing a governor. But because the governor died in office, John Reed served as governor, but at the next election, which happened to be the presidential election, we were now going to be electing a president, a U.S. Senator, our congress people, and the governor of the state of Maine. It was one of those rarities that would only happen in an occasion like 1960. So as I recall, in that election, because I know my entire family was working very hard to see if we could get Nixon elected, knowing full well that Republicans in Lewiston, where Lewiston is extremely strong in the Democratic side, were also mostly Catholics, and that that was running a very deep issue that had never been confronted by anybody before, was could Kennedy take Lewiston. I remember driving people back and forth to the polls, and I think all they were doing was using our vehicles to go and vote for Kennedy. And I believe, it seems to me that on that night, that ninety-four percent of the Lewiston voters came out to vote, okay? That is overwhelming, I mean that's just unbelievable. Everybody was voting, I mean, God. And as a result, came to find out that although. . . .

*(Telephone interruption.)*

**PC:** . . . . sixty. God, that was a fascinating election. I'm trying to think if Muskie was up for election then. I don't believe he was, I think it was Margaret Chase Smith.

**MR:** Yeah, I think he would have been '58 when he was elected to the senate. So yeah, that would have been, would have been a different year.

**PC:** See, that would have been Margaret Chase Smith's year. And I'm telling you, when I, in

those days, of course I was raised with an awful lot of people in Lewiston, and you never know what people are thinking about you or what your position is. But I can remember in those days I started to really attack the regular Republicans; that's where I was. And I still am. I was very friendly with Stan Tupper and that group. I considered Stan to be a moderate, a lot of people would say that Stan Tupper was a leftist and they, and many people drummed him out of the party. He came from a place in Boothbay Harbor where his father was a strong Democrat, and Stan was, turned to become a Republican. And I have had the pleasure of filling in for him and giving speeches in his behalf when he couldn't make it because he was in those days we had three congressmen. We had first, second, and third district, and Stan was in the second district. And I went up and spoke in his behalf and filled in for him because he asked me to, when he couldn't appear. And he was my kind of candidate, I have a great deal of respect for Stan and his position. And we always agreed with each other when we were in the Young Republicans.

And what really happened during that election, I had, in 1960, by the way, it was really in '59. In '59 when Maine had its national, it had its state convention, it was in Portland, and, I'm trying to, no, I guess it was in '58. In '58 it was in Portland, and I had the opportunity to introduce Richard Nixon, who was then vice president under Eisenhower and he had just come back from Bolivia where he had been assaulted. Everybody had thrown apples at him and stuff like that. And I had the pleasure of introducing him to the Republic-, the whole Republican convention. And that's one of those things I look back on now saying, I introduced President Nixon. I chuckle at it today, but in those days it was big stuff.

In 1960 it definitely showed that when Nixon beat Kennedy in the state of Maine and Margaret Chase Smith won strongly, I think she took fifty-five percent of the vote, or fifty-six percent in the state of Maine, and then John Reed edged out Frank Coffin. That then began to establish that maybe the Republicans could retake the State House and reclaim the party as being the party that was going to be in office. And as a result of all of that, Governor Reed appointed me as a municipal court judge in Lewiston. That was my payoff. And I was thirty years of age, which is a very young age to be a municipal court judge, and I think that I had only been in practice five years, but I learned an awful lot in that capacity.

And it was a time, it was a year in which as state chairman of the Young Republicans I had had a big battle with the chairman, then chairman, of the state committee. And I can't think of his name; he was from Rumford. I blasted the hell out of him, as a matter of fact, because what had happened to us as Young Republicans were, that they weren't treating us as Republicans. They were treating us as kids, and I still resent it to this day. That we should not have had just Young Republicans and Republicans, it should have been all the Republican Party.

I go back to the time where there was a gentleman by the name of Ed Beauchamp- he's now deceased. He was a, he came into the Lewiston-Auburn area and started to practice law here, and he came from Massachusetts. A very classy gentleman, his father and brother were both doctors. And under the old system, I think he ran, I, it was probably 1936, he tried to get involved in the Republican politics; he told me this himself later on. Now keep in mind, he tries to, he enrolls as a Republican, and he goes to attend the city committee meeting. And they just about laughed him out of the room because he was ethnically French and he was Catholic. And in those days the Republican Party was very heavily Protestant and non French. And so Eddie,

Eddie Beauchamp, then registered in the Democratic Party. He ran for mayor of Lewiston, and he got elected, okay? And that was the kind of ethnic-religious issues that were available in those days. They were powerful; they were strong issues.

**MR:** Were you yourself ever an object of the prejudice against the Franco-American community (*unintelligible phrase*)?

**PC:** I never felt it, but I, I know that father- the word Cote in English means side, S-I-D-E. And dad, in his, he was also an attorney, and he ran for judge of probate on the Republican ticket, and when he ran for an office he really did a lot of work. And that I know because I used to, my sisters and I used to work with him, and we really enjoyed it. It was, you know, politics is a spectator sport. Everybody loves to get involved in it, and it was a lot of fun.

Dad ran for judge of probate, he ran against a gentleman by the name of Armand Dufresne. Armand Dufresne was then judge of probate and, or, I don't know if he was, I think he was running for the first time and my father was running for the first time. And the big Republican wards in those days were wards one and two over in Auburn. And in those days, now what days would I be talking about? I'd be talking about probably 1940, in those days the towns of Androscoggin County, because judge of probate is a county office, and it still is by the way. Bob Couturier is the present judge, but he runs for office, he's a part time judge, part time practicing attorney. That's what I was doing when I was municipal court judge, I would be a judge in the morning and a practicing attorney in the afternoon. Dad ran for judge of probate against Armand Dufresne, and in all of the, in all of the towns you would see that the candidate, my father wasn't doing as well as the other candidates were. He was winning but he wasn't getting those extra votes.

Now that's not unusual, but when you looked at the cities of Lewiston and Auburn, he would hold his own in Lewiston because he was French, as well as Armand Dufresne. And they were both Catholic boys, one's a Republican, one's a Democrat. Over in Auburn, in wards one and two and somewhat in ward three, in those days the French people mostly decided in four and five, wards four and five. But in wards one and two, which were heavily Republican, he didn't do so well. And that's why, he lost the election by, I think, two hundred and ninety votes. And it was in those two wards that he could have won if he had had a different name, and that's what he always said. He would go around and say, "If my name had been 'Side' instead of Cote," he said, "I probably would have won." And he used to cut that, he was very hurt by that, and he was not a bashful person, let me tell you, okay?

And that's a very strange incident because, dad died in 1966 and my sister Rose Marie Butler got involved in politics after I had been involved in politics, so that she ran for the state senate. And when she ran for the state senate, she ran as a Republican out of Lewiston. And in, she, her entire campaign was in Lewiston, because the state senator came from Lewiston. I don't think there was any town outside of Lewiston, it took all of Lewiston, and she lost by two hundred and ten votes, and it was almost the same issue but not quite. It's just that, the reason I mention it is that in the days that dad ran for a county office, state senator is county office, but now it's restricted according to population. So when my sister Rose ran she was running strictly out of Lewiston, but it was for the state senate, and they both lost by two hundred, two hundred and ten,

two hundred and seventy votes. So we've had our days; we're great losers, I'll tell you. But both dad and Rose Marie almost won elections.

And we could see, and especially in dad's day, that if you weren't, if you were a Catholic and you had, or, and you had a French name, you were like a skunk at a party for Republicans. It was just one of those things. That never bothered me because I had good education, and I, if it's true, and if it's a fact, I'm not that concerned about it. I don't run with prejudices, I run on issues. Our issues as the Young Republicans, and this was true back in those days, and if it was active today, it would probably be the same thing, we were moderates and our issues really fell, if you wanted to call it on one side or the other, it would be on the liberal side. And the people that I'm talking about now, in those days the milk issue was the big issue, whether the state should regulate the price of milk. And Frank Bowie got himself elected, he was a Young Republican, got himself as a legislator from Durham, and he's still a farmer in Durham. I see Frank today; he's still a very rabid Republican. But in those days the milk issue was, although it was, it was his issue, he almost, it's a fascinating story because the Republicans didn't like his issue, didn't like his stand. Republicans were against him. But his issue was a good cause, and it eventually passed as law, and that's the stuff we're living with today.

**MR:** Okay, actually, I'm going to just flip the tape.

*End of Side A*  
*Side B*

**MR:** This is the second side of the second tape of the interview with Paul Cote on August 10th, 1999. And we were talking about the milk issue?

**PC:** Yeah, the milk issue. And the milk issue was, I would say, in the mid '50s, 195-, because I became an attorney in '55. I got involved in politics right away, and I've always, up until the time that I became a municipal court judge I was very actively involved in politics. And I had been when I was at Colby. I was a Young Republican, and I was, ended up getting elected as the first Young Republican chairman at Colby College. And in those days we went around to Bowdoin and Bates. Bates has always been very active in politics one way or another. Doug Hodgkin, for instance, I know Doug very well, and he's a Republican, and he's a good one. He pays attention to his detail and he's, he's been a very good cause for Republicans in Lewiston.

**MR:** Sorry to interrupt, but I don't know if we covered this last time or not, but when did your political interest really start? Was this something around high school, or was it really when you got to Colby that you became interested?

**PC:** No, it was really when I was in grade school, okay? When father was, keep in mind now that in 19-, in, dad became a lawyer in 1935. So he was a deputy sheriff as the result of an election in 1932, so I grew up with this in the family. And I'm the youngest child, but I'm the only son, so I was always with father when he was campaigning, and who was he campaigning for, his sheriff, his high sheriff was Dave Walton. Dave Walton was the person that got my father to change parties. Dave Walton was the person that got- I don't know Jim Longley, Jim, young Jim, old Jim, the father of the son who became governor. And his grandson who became

congressman, the Longley, the old father Longley was a deputy sheriff with my father. They became very good friends and we would socialize, it was not unusual for them to come visit us down in Old Orchard, spend a day or two, or come back many times down to Old Orchard.

Now keep in mind that you've got this melding of Irish people in Lewiston. Here my sisters and I are going to an Irish parochial school; we're ethnically French. We got to know an awful lot, and as a matter of fact, it's true, my sister Rose Marie married John Butler, who is an Irishman. And I'm looking at their five kids, and their five kids, I know that their oldest daughter is married to an Irishman, their oldest son is married to an Irishman, one daughter is married to a Frenchman, another son is married to an Irishman. So you could see the ethnic Irish runs pretty deep in my family. My wife, by the way, is an Auburn girl, and she's a Methodist, okay? So religion doesn't cut too much with me. I never asked my wife to raise our children or to convert to Catholicism because I just don't believe in that kind of thing. Although I know our children were raised as Catholics. I know that my oldest son, who is now a judge by the way, lives in Auburn. He has two sons, he's sort of conservative, I would say he votes Republican, although I'm not sure of that. My number two son, John, married a girl in the Methodist church, but my wife's a Methodist. An interesting thing was that the, they asked, the family of the bride asked if my wife and I wanted to see a Catholic priest become part of the nuptials, and I said, "No, that's of no concern to me."

**MR:** What's your wife's name?

**PC:** Pratt, Joan Pratt.

**MR:** Joan Pratt.

**PC:** She really comes from North Jay, but she moved from North Jay to Freeport, and her parents were both in the shoe business, meaning they made shoes, okay? So they worked up for Bass Shoe, her father did up in Wilton. And then they went to Freeport, and he worked in the Lewiston, matter of fact he worked at Knapp Shoe. And they eventually settled down in Auburn. And I met Joanie when, after I had graduated from high school. I didn't know her; she went to Edward Little. And I met her after I graduated from high school, but she was an EL student when I met her.

But in any event, religion didn't mean that to me and it still doesn't, it doesn't cut much ice with me one way or the other.

I found, however, getting back to the Irish in Lewiston, to me, we were predominantly a very heavy ethnically French community. And to me it seemed as if ninety percent of us were French, but that wasn't really the way it was. I think it was mostly sixty percent French, and probably twenty percent Irish. This community of Lewiston, now Lewiston and Auburn, the Irish came mostly out of the Boston or Massachusetts area to help build our canals. Great stories of the Irish in Lewiston and nasty stories about how they built their churches and were picked on because, by people who were not Catholics. I found that on the political side of it, in the Lewiston area, that they leaned towards the Republican. That's the way I saw the Irish, whereas the French leaned towards the Democrats. It was very unusual for a person like me to be a

Republican, and I knew it. Didn't bother me a bit.

**MR:** Now, talking about your father. How did he get to be- you mentioned the sheriff's influence. How did the sheriff influence him to become a Republican, especially as a Franco-American?

**PC:** There were two people that had a great deal of influence on dad. And one was Helena Rogers of the Rogers family. They were very, our families knew each other very well, and David Walton. Come to find out in looking back in hindsight, Dave Walton was going out with Helena Rogers, okay? That's okay? But you know, little kids don't know what's going on. They both had an influence on dad to get him to be a Republican, and my father had a great deal of admiration for both of them, and he did. He became a Republican, and he had six brothers, and he'd get his brothers and his father and his mother to change from the Democrats to Republicans. And they became life long Republicans, all of his brothers did. At least the ones that stayed in Maine. Now, that isn't true of one brother that stayed in New York and one brother that stayed in Massachusetts and also the brother in Florida. But when they were in Maine, they would work for the Republican Party.

I know that my father, for instance, keep in mind now, because of his connections with planes he became Sumner Sewall's great adviser, and he became his Androscoggin county campaign chairman. Sumner Sewall was a WWI pilot and a hero. He had downed, I think, over five German planes, and you became a national, you know, hero as a pilot if you had over five. And Sumner Sewall was down in Small, down in, oh, I'm thinking of Small Point, but it isn't, well, maybe it is Small Point. He was down on the coast, and he was a very wealthy guy, and he had married a White Russian, when the Russians split into the Red Russians and that, as a result of their revolution, and he was married to a White Russian. And I know they invited our family down and, to have parties with them. It was really great. And dad became a very strong worker for him and would go into the French community and speak French, saying to people what a great guy this was and vote for him. And as a result he helped get him elected.

And as a result of him getting elected I know that Governor Sewall offered my father a superior court judgeship, and my father turned it down because it wasn't paying enough. In those days he had three kids he wanted to educate, and so the governor ended up appointing him as a, as an assistant municipal court judge, whatever they called it then. Clerk of courts I guess in those days. And then he appointed him to be municipal court judge in Lewiston, I think '44 to '52, until I graduated from Colby, and that, in those days that was quite a plum, to be awarded the recognition for putting in your effort for a candidate or for a party. And I know, that's my father up there. If you- that's a great picture because *Newsweek* went around and grabbed certain people, and this says, he was a delegate to the national convention in Frisco.

And as a matter of fact, in those days television wasn't like it is today, but he did all of the reporting for WGAN, WGAN, I'm sorry, what's the Lewiston channel, radio? WLAM, WLAM. And he'd come on I think every noon and at nighttime to tell you what was happening at the national convention. He got to sit next to a gentleman who was running for governor of California who went on to become president of the United States. He loved the guy, okay? Reagan. Sitting right next to him because the California delegation was sitting next to the Maine

delegation. He would talk about him and, he was running, in those days Reagan was running for the governorship and he won it. "Boy," dad said, "He's the greatest thing that ever came down the pike." And my wife, talking about, after, oh, my wife got to be, not a delegate but, what do you call the second ones?

**MR:** Alternate?

**PC:** Alternate, at the National Republican Convention in 1968, and why did she get to do that? It was really in recognition of a lot of things that we had both done for the party. They wanted to, me to be a delegate, and I wouldn't, so as a result they gave her the alternate. And we went to the Republican convention of '68.

**MR:** What was that like?

**PC:** Oh, that was really terrific. That was in Miami, and that was the election. That was the one that, Nixon had come back. He had been buried and gave his farewell, but in Miami he got nominated and won the election in '68. And in those days Rockefeller, who has a summer place up in Maine, was just a, see. I was a Rockefeller supporter and so was my wife. And she got down there, the funny situation is that if the delegates don't show up, the alternates take their place, and she actually voted for Rockefeller, even though this schnook from Maryland got himself to be vice president, Agnew, okay. Funny, funny times. The family, the Rockefeller family and the Astors had a penthouse, they shared the top of a hotel down in Miami, and that, it was just something I'll never forget. Because the first evening we were down there, all of the people that won medal of honors had been invited by Rockefeller to attend, and there were over a hundred and fifteen or twenty of these people, all wearing these Medal of Honor awards, and it was in their honor. And, you know, orchestras were blaring and, great orchestras. That night, it was just unbelievable to attend, be an outsider and attend some of those affairs, it was really terrific.

**MR:** What were, you mentioned that your wife was pretty involved in Republican politics in Lewiston? What were some of the things she did?

**PC:** Yeah, well, Young Republican stuff, okay? Oh, a lot of people from this area were. The Robinson family, Maria, Maria Ducas. Her name in those days was Maria Ducas, and she married Ed Robinson. Ed Robinson was, used to be a state committeeman from Madison to the, to his county delegation. But we all met, my wife and I and Maria and Ed, and pretty soon Ed and Maria married. And today, they're both deceased today, Ed and Maria. But they have two children, one Ann Marie, Ann Robinson, is an attorney up in Augusta and she's with Preti, Flaherty, Pachios, Beliveau. Damn good lawyer, too. She went to Brown University and then the University of Maine. And their son Peter is my godchild, okay, and he went to MIT, and then he went to a school up in Washington, D.C. I don't know where, but he's now an attorney. And both were strong Republicans by the way. Ann is a state committeewoman from Androscoggin County with my sister. And Peter is a very strong Republican out in Washington, D.C.

**MR:** Did you, does your wife share your views on the status of the Republican party in general

and the idea of the Young Republicans?

**PC:** Yeah, I would say, yeah, she's very, my wife is not an outspoken person. If you, if she goes someplace, she isn't going to stand up and speak. But she, she gathers a lot of people around her, same ability that John has. I have a son, John, who went to the University of Maine, and then he went to NYU, and then he taught there for twelve years. He's kind of, they both have that personality that, they're very quiet people, but they're like a piper, you know, all the people gather around. And Joan has that quality, too. And when they say to me, you know, well, your son is a judge, he takes after his father. I say, no, he takes after his mother. I say, you don't know the mother. He didn't get brains from father, I'll tell you, he got them from mother.

And it's true, Joan has always been a dedicated worker. When Rose Marie ran for the state senate, my wife went out and got, literally got I believe three hundred and fifty absentee ballots on her own. If you knew the system and how it works to get an absentee ballot, it's back and forth to the city clerk's office, and it's back and forth to the person that wants to vote, and really, it's an effort, it's a strong effort. And she had a lot of people, and they voted, they liked Joan, they voted for Rose. They didn't know Rose, but it's an effort, it takes a lot of effort. And I think Rose Marie in those days got about six hundred absentee ballots and the great majority came from the work that Joan did in her behalf. Joan is a worker, and she knows how to do it, she knows how to make telephone calls; she knows how to make deliveries.

When I talk to you about Jim Reed running for congress, our Androscoggin Young Republicans went to every house in the city of Lewiston and passed out things, samples, of why they should vote for Jim Reed. We had a very active group of people, and it's too bad, to my thinking, it was always too bad that the Republican Party always shunned the Lewiston contingency because they figured it was an automatic win for the Democrats, and that is not a fact. And I think it's sort of been proven probably by four people that I could point to. Two are the independent candidates, who became governors, and then one was Jim Longley and the other one was our present governor [Governor Angus King], who wined and dined Lewiston and went and got the votes. And the other two candidates are Bill Cohen and Snowe. Both of them came into and established themselves very well in the Lewiston, with the Lewiston people, with the Lewiston voters. So that when you see what they have, what happens, a candidate cannot win a state office or cannot be a governor or a congressman or a senator in this area unless he takes Lewiston, and he's got to take it strong because if they don't take it strong here, they're not going to do it elsewhere either. Now what happens in Lewiston sets a pace, and it sets it here, Saco, and Rumford, and those are the three big areas where Democrats are going to get votes. So if they can't take Lewiston strong, they're just not going to take it.

**MR:** Now who were some of the most active Republicans in Lewiston that, you know, you've worked closely with or that you know of in the area, recently or in the past thirty, forty years even?

**PC:** Well, again, I go back to, Maria Robinson and Ed were both very hard workers. Pat Butler, my sister's, my, he's a godson of mine, too, he was chairman of the city and the county Republican committees. Very good speaker and very influential, very good workers. Again, I'm thinking of, oh dear, I can't, I can't come up with the names because I'm not good on coming up



with names, you know. But there were a lot of, some of our school teachers, for instance, some of Lewiston's school teachers have been very active in both parties I've seen, no question about it. The insurance people, I'm thinking of Whitmore over in Auburn, very active people, very, very good campaigners.

I found that this, this community, the drift has been towards the independents. I find a lot of Republicans and Democrats are leaving their parties and becoming independents; that's what my wife did as a matter of fact. She unplugged, oh, about six months ago she went to city hall, and she's no longer a registered Republican. And I said to her, I said, "Why are you doing that, Joanie." And she says, "Well," she said, "I know that I can register on the day of election," I don't know if they're changing that now or not, whether you have to do it before or you can do it on the day of election. "But," she says, "I just feel that I don't want to be associated with either party right now because they don't represent what I feel."

And the big problems, and I think it's running nationally too, the tax problem that's up in the air right now is a good for instance. Here the Republican Party is saying, "Oh, well let's have seven hundred and thirty billion dollars over ten years of tax cuts." The president is saying, "Well, let's have two hundred and seventy-five billion of tax cuts. And I appreciate, as a person, I think my wife did too, but she said this to me Sunday, she says, I appreciate the position our two U.S. Senators have taken." She says, "they're taking a position somewhere it should be around five hundred billion over ten years, and most likely that's about where it's going to end up." And why is it happening that way? Well, the reason is, the Republicans want to give the impression to voters that they are the ones that will cut taxes, and they're full of baloney, they're just full of baloney. They're saying, well, if there's extra money to go around, the Democrats will find ways of spending it. The truth is that they know all of the ways of how to spend it, okay? So they give an impression, they want to leave an impression that they're the big tax cutters and the Democrats are the big tax spenders. It's a lot of baloney, it's just a lot of baloney. And I think people are fed up with this because anybody can see through this stuff, you know. And that's why Joan is saying, I agree with our U.S. Senators, the two from Maine. And they're both Republicans and they're both, they're both taking the position. I don't know how they've actually voted, but I know where their sentiments are. That is that the seven hundred and thirty is too much and two-fifty isn't enough or whatever, and they're willing to go with the five hundred dollar in between issue. And that's probably where it will end up, too.

A second big issue, and Joan feels very strongly this way, is the issue of abortion. She's very much in favor of right of choice, and so am I. The Republican Party doesn't seem to want to take that position. Mr. Bush says that he is laying back, he isn't going to give you his position, but we know his father was opposed to abortions. And we feel very strongly that that's an independent issue, that each woman should have the decision, the ultimate decision. It shouldn't be influenced. It can be influenced, but it shouldn't require check valves here and there that you have to go by. And even with minors who get pregnant, you shouldn't have to get the parents' consent if a minor wants an abortion. It's just absolutely ridiculous to take the position that you're killing people because they're coming out with medications now that will just stop people from getting pregnant. And this concept of imagination and creating something that is a life in being is, that's twisting, twisting what is really the fact. If people don't want babies, they won't have babies. They'll either use contraception or they will find a way not to. So this idea about

killing a life in being by an abortion, or any other means, to me is ridiculous.

I certainly believe, and so does my wife that after three months or the first trimester, whatever it is, that you've got to be careful about it. But I, I'll never forget the time I said to my wife, when she said, she became pregnant with Julie, and there's six years difference between Julie and Adrian, the youngest of three boys. And she says, "Well, I'm not ready to be pregnant," and I said, "Why don't you consider abortion?" It was as if I had pulled a trigger on her; she did not want to even consider that; that wasn't the issue. But freedom of choice is the issue, that's where she is, and that's where I am. And the Republican Party for some reason dwells on this problem, and it's too bad. I think it helps destroy where the centrists are, where the people are in between are. It's too bad. So finances is a big issue; abortion is a big issue.

Another big issue is prayers in school. Both Joan and I feel that there's got to be a separation of church and state, there's got to be, and you should not take public school, public school time to talk about having a moment of silence. There's got to be a separation of church and state.

Another big issue that my wife and I feel about is education issue. Let's allow some parents to have the decision as to where they send their child, and we feel, my wife and I feel it's going to destroy the, it's going to help destroy our public school education system if we go that route. You can't allow us, it's bad enough the way it is now, but it isn't going to help it if you allow that to happen. And those are key issues. And I see it, it's rampant all over where you go in Lewiston. You talk to people, people are much more educated than we realize, and they're very strongly opinionated.

**MR:** Okay, well not to jerk you around here too much, but one issue I'd like to cover is your interest in the charter revision. I don't know if that was an official charter revision commission is what it was, in '70 or '71 it was?

**PC:** Yeah, it was. I got elected, my partner in those days was John Orestis, okay? I got John to run for the legislature, he's a Democrat now, and he won in, the legislative seat in Lewiston. And then I believe in 1970 he ran and won as mayor of Lewiston. And in 197-, that was in 1970, and I think the mayor in those days was for two years. What are they now, two or four?

**MR:** I think they're two, I'm not sure of though, I'm pretty sure two.

**PC:** And I ran for the charter commission, I had served as, on the school board under the old system. When I mentioned Eddie Beauchamp, by the way, being elected mayor, he was under the older system that was in being. So he was, in those days that was a very powerful job, being mayor. And he was the last one to be elected under that old charter. But the other charter that I functioned under when I was judge, I also served on the school board, and that charter was coming up for renewal. And I got elected as, in those, yeah, if you ran for the charter, you got elected and it was not by Republican or Democrat. It had no party, but I got the most votes. As a matter of fact, that year Bobby Clifford was running for mayor of Lewiston, and I got more votes than Bob Clifford did. Now with Bob Clifford, he had already served one two year term and he was running for another two year term, and I got more votes than he did. Very strange, and I ended up being chairman of the charter commission. And the two issues that I hung in

with, and why the charter got defeated was that I was strongly opposed to seeing the, we had seven aldermen; I wanted to see one or two at large. And the one or two at large is what sunk that charter. And the second issue was, I'm trying to think. It had to do with the, who had the power of appointment for people that were going to be getting positions. And I believe that I was in favor of the council selecting the people to get the jobs, and that's not the way the people felt. And again, it got defeated by about three hundred and fifty votes. It was a good election, but it got defeated. And I'll be damned, when it revived, Bobby Clifford ended up being the chairman of that committee, and my sister Rose Marie got elected to be on that board.

**MR:** And did you also serve on, I think, the finance board around the late '60s?

**PC:** Yes I did, yes I did.

**MR:** Now, under that charter the finance board was quite powerful I understand.

**PC:** Very powerful, most powerful, yes it was. The finance board was made up of five people, again Republicans and Democrats. And they handled all of the, all of the finances had to go through the board of selectmen, the mayor and board of selectmen, and the finance board. That's not how it's done now. I'll tell you one of the greatest things I ever did, though, was learn the process of how to, how government is really run, being on one of these committees for a charter commission. We had experts from all over the state come in and tell us all forms of government. And yes, Phil Isaacson and I were on that finance board, and that was the most powerful board in the city at the time.

**MR:** What were the, what was the relationship of the board with the mayor, who I guess at the time was John Beliveau, at least for part of that time? What were the relations like? Was it tense over who had authority to do certain appointments or certain responsibilities?

**PC:** Well, let me fill in. When I got nominated to the finance board, it wasn't for a full five-year term. It was to complete two years of somebody's appointment. And he, and Beliveau was not the mayor at the time; it was Bill Rocheleau who was mayor. In those days, you're absolutely correct though, there was always a conflict as to who was mayor and how the finance board would function. There's no question that there was arguments galore over those issues. The finance board that I was on I found to be a very easy group of people to get along with. They, although we were concerned about finances, we gave a lot of latitude towards the education people. Keep in mind now that in those days the education board, again, was appointed like the finance board. It wasn't like it is today where they're elected. I'm in favor of seeing them elected. But in those days the money issues, just like they are today, they run very severe.

I remember in those days Mayor Rocheleau was not in favor of sewers being expanded in the city of Lewiston, whereas the finance board was. And we would adopt bond issues that would be in the millions of dollars to develop the city, to see the outskirts of the city grow. But it's true; finances were always a severe issue, always a lot of politics.

**MR:** And, what was Bill Rocheleau like to work with as mayor? Did you get a close working

relationship with him?

**PC:** I had a very good relationship with Bill Rocheleau, yeah. As a matter of fact he appointed my wife Joan to the planning board for Androscoggin County. She was one of those members that represented Lewiston on the regional planning board, okay, and that, in, a very interesting position. And Bill offered me the position of being corporate counsel for the city of Lewiston, and I turned it down. And I asked that he appoint Ed Robinson, and he did. He appointed Ed Robinson. Now, why did I turn it down? I was too busy. I was just very, very busy, very busy. And, not like I am now. Young lawyers trying to make some bucks. But, I got Ed to take the position, and Bill, Bill was an easy guy to be with, to me anyway. I got along very nicely with him. I saw his wife the other night for the first time, Lee, and Lee, we were down to the Italian place here, Davinci's, which is a very, you been down there?

**MR:** Yeah, that's one of my favorite places actually, yeah.

**PC:** Now see, there is a family, right there, the guy that runs that, his father and I served on the board of directors at Northeast Bankshare Association, which is now Fleet. And I'll tell you, he runs a damn good restaurant, okay? That is a, Patry's, what's his name, Patry, what's his name that runs it, Fern, Fern Patry? Well, makes no difference, but I saw Lee and her son and her sister in the restaurant Saturday evening. And Bill, by the way, has been sick. He's had a stroke and he is recovering but he's in bad condition. He's, he can't move on all sides, he's paralyzed, partially paralyzed. It's too bad. Good man, though, I got along good with Bill. And I had a lot of cases in court with him, and he's a tough fighter, let me tell you.

**MR:** And you also mentioned John Orestis?

**PC:** Yeah, John and I were partners.

**MR:** What was he like?

**PC:** He was right nextdoor here.

**MR:** Oh, right, yeah.

**PC:** Yeah, John is a very classy guy, very, very smooth operator. He's very well organized, very well prepared. I don't know how he was in the legislature, but I got along with him very nicely. And what happened was, when he ran for the second time as mayor, he wanted to go out on his own, and that's exactly what he did. I think he left here and he went out and probably associated with Peter Garcia, and then they teamed up with Skelton, Taintor, and Abbott. Peter [M.] Garcia is still practicing law over there. John, by the way, just lost his wife a couple of months ago, she died with cancer. Sad story, sad story, but I got him introduced to a lot of people.

As a matter of fact, the Beliveaus up in Augusta. I knew the Beliveau family because their father was Albert Beliveau up in Rumford. And my father, when he was in the insurance business before he, this is in the late '20s, went up to become, I think, he became in charge of the

Metropolitan Life Insurance office up there. And he knew the Beliveaus, Mr. Beliveau. He was their landlord as a matter of fact. And my sister was born up in, well, she was born in Lewiston but taken to Rumford. And Albert Beliveau, Sr., who is a strong Democrat now, had two sons, Albert, Jr. and Severin. And he sent them down, he sent one of them down to see my father, who was practicing law. He says, "Go down to Lewiston and team up with Cote," you know. So the families were very friendly. And of course they're very firm Democrats.

**MR:** And also, John Beliveau is no relation to that group of Beliveaus, is that correct? I always confuse them, is it, John and Albert are two separate Beliveau families?

**PC:** Yes, yeah. John Beliveau's father was a doctor, okay? And he had an uncle Albert who was a jeweler, okay? And he had no sisters, it was just John. And John, John's father as a matter of fact used to be my doctor, okay? And his, he took care of my father, he was my father's doctor. And John Beliveau became an attorney, and he became a district attorney, and became the mayor of Lewiston and was on the Democratic side with the party and all of that stuff. But in those days, although I was active in the Republican Party, I wasn't as active as I was when I was a Young Republican. In the four years that I became a municipal court judge, what really transpired was that I started to withdraw from politics because you, you couldn't be, there was a conflict there. You couldn't be a politician and be a judge at the same time, the law restricted it. So even though I used to be delegates at the Republican conventions, I would not participate like I did before because it wasn't proper to do so. John Beliveau, though, was a good mayor. My dealings with him usually have been on the other side, as an attorney, attorney to attorney. And now he's a judge. As a matter of fact my son and he practice as judges together. They're in the same court. There are four judges, and they have. . . .

*End of Side B*

*End of Interview*