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Cox, Peter oral history interview

Mike Richard

Interview with Peter Cox by Mike Richard

Summary Sheet and Transcript

Interviewee
Cox, Peter

Interviewer
Richard, Mike

Date
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Place
Georgetown, Maine

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Biographical Note

Peter Winston Cox was born August 13, 1937 in Manhattan, New York City, New York. He competed in the national boys' tennis championships in 1950 and 1951. He attended Phillips Exeter Academy and then Yale University, majoring in English with a concentration in Art History, in 1959. He attended Yale Law School and worked for Frank Coffin in 1960 as a driver, writing press releases and television programs. In 1961 he became editor of a daily newspaper in Saranac Lake, New York, then returned to Maine in 1965 with his wife to be editor of the *Bath Daily Times*, then managing editor of the *Bath-Brunswick Times Record* in 1967 with John Cole as editor. He started *Maine Times* with John Cole in 1968. He was involved in the Democratic Party's 1972 platform committee, and was briefly on the board of the ACLU. They sold *Maine Times* in 1985. He has served as president of the Wolf's Neck Farm Foundation.

Scope and Content Note

Interview includes discussions of: 1954 Maine gubernatorial campaign; environmental protection; Vietnam War; Democratic Party in Maine; media and Muskie; women's domestic role in Washington politics (1930s); Leon Keyserling, Truman economic advisor with a four day work week; Georgetown in the 1940s and 50s as segregated, but not yet gentrified; Ben Dorsky; Democratic Party revival in Maine and platform, citizen participation, and hearings; Don Nicoll;

Harold Pachios; Dick Goodwin; Dickey-Lincoln Dam project; evolution of Maine newspapers: merger between *Bath Daily Times* and *Brunswick Record*; creation of *Maine Times*; *Maine Times* one of the first all-women's issues in the country (1970?); 1976 John Cole editorial battle against Jim Longley; ACLU and Shep Lee as the Maine representative; Louis Scolnik, Maine CLU; inner workings of the *Maine Times*; trend in politics from 1950s: loss of grassroots connections and loss of ability to know needs of constituents; Maine newspapers: Gannett papers were Republican in the 1960s; Democrat could not walk into Bangor Daily News without being thrown out; John Reed; Ken Curtis; and Angus King.

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Transcript

Mike Richard: The date is August 23rd, 1999, we're at the home of Peter Cox in Georgetown, Maine; interviewing is Mike Richard. And Mr. Cox, could you please state your full name and spell it?

Peter Cox: My full name is Peter Winston Cox, P-E-T-E-R, W-I-N-S-T-O-N, C-O-X.

MR: And what is your date of birth, please?

PC: August 13th, 1937.

MR: Where were you born?

PC: In Manhattan, New York.

MR: And for how long did you live in New York City?

PC: A few months.

MR: And then did you move . . .?

PC: Then we went down to Washington. My father was working in the LaGuardia administration and went down to Washington to work for Henry Morgenthau in the Treasury Department in 1937.

MR: Okay, actually let's talk about your family background first of all. What were your parents' names?

PC: My father was Oscar Cox, and my mother was Louise Black Cox.

MR: And what were their, actually what was your mother's occupation?

PC: My mother was simply a housewife, and in those days very much a supporter of my father. In those days, that was a very big role in Washington: giving dinner parties, and socializing, and being on committees and things like that.

MR: And so your father, you said, was involved in LaGuardia's administration?

PC: He started in LaGuardia's administration. He was an attorney. He came from Portland, and actually went down to work for a very sort of Republican law firm, Cadwalder, Wickersham & Path, just by the names, that tells you, and then went into the LaGuardia administration. He started as a tax expert, and then he went down to Washington to the Treasury Department. And it was while he was working in the Treasury Department that word circulated that they were looking for a way to give arms to the Allies without violating neutrality. And he remembered an old act, I think it was called the Pittman Act [Resolution], that he reworked and redrafted into the Lend-Lease Act on one sheet of yellow legal paper and presented that and that became the Lend-Lease Act.

MR: And so he was, after this work was he also involved in the Truman administration, the Roosevelt, and the Truman administrations?

PC: Well, he stayed, he stayed on and after Lend-Lease was formed, Lend-Lease would have became, he was, Harry Hopkins was theoretically the administrator, Edward Stettinius was the Secretary of State who had oversight, but he was sort of *de facto* administrator for Lend-Lease. And most of the contacts that he made were through Lend-Lease. And, for instance, Averell Harriman was in charge of Lend-Lease in England, and you know, they were cohorts very briefly. Phil Graham, who became publisher of the *Washington Post* worked for Lend-Lease. I

mean, everywhere I went in my later life, I found people who have worked for Lend-Lease and it was sort of a really crucial point in their lives. Apparently it was a very exciting sort of comradely place to work.

But after that, he also, he became a special assistant to Harry Hopkins and he also was assistant solicitor general in the Justice Department. As assistant solicitor general, he's the one who actually tried these Nazi saboteurs who came in miniature submarines and were caught on Long Island when one of them was spotted. And they tried it down at the old Commerce Department building. We used to go down every afternoon and pick him up and it was always very exciting for me. I was probably about seven years old and we would go in and there was a mezzanine, so you'd go, and the mezzanine was up above you, and there were all these guys with those old water cooled machine guns, you know, the round ones with the little hole and sand bags all around, and I really thought that was exciting to go in there. And so he was assistant solicitor general and he was also the first administrator of FEA, which was one of the first foreign aid administrations, which was a natural sort of outgrowth obviously of Lend Lease. So, he stayed on during the early Truman years and left, and then after the war he left government and went into private practice.

MR: And for how long was he involved in his private practice?

PC: Well, from 19-, probably 1947 or '48 until he died in 1967, '66 or '67.

MR: And this was in the Portland, or the Washington . . .?

PC: Washington, he stayed in Washington, yeah. He kept on hoping he was going to be able to, you know, spend. He bought a house in Kennebunkport that actually had belonged to the writer Booth Tarkington, and he, we'd spend huge amounts of time there and we were, he didn't like people to know he was spending all summer in Maine. So everything was, and I found this out interestingly enough from a fellow named Norman Dorsen who was the executive director of the American Civil Liberty Union; I was on that board briefly. And he had worked for my father one summer, and one of the things he said they always did was, they always mailed everything back to Washington and then mailed it out of Washington, so the clients thought it was coming from there rather than from Maine. And, but he would work, you know, every morning for about four or five hours, and then he'd go out and mow the lawn and do the things he liked to do, and take his walks, so he was hoping to be able to spend more time here but then he died very young, sixty.

MR: And did you have any siblings, or do you have any brothers or sisters?

PC: I have a brother [Warren J. Cox] who's two years older. He's an architect in Washington, D.C. He does what's known as contextualism, which means he designs buildings to fit in with the existing buildings. And the epitome of this is a building he designed for the Jeffersonian Quadrangle at the University of Virginia that looks just like a Jeffersonian building. In other cases, he did for instance a addition to the Folger Shakespeare Library, which is modern but picks up all of the beaux arts, you know, vernacular to, into the building. And so it's, I feel as, I like old buildings too, and I think the city is more important than any individual building so

somehow we arrived at the same point.

MR: And has he been involved in politics in any way at all?

PC: No, I mean he has a lot of, he has a lot of friends down there who are in politics but he, no, not really.

MR: Okay. And how would you describe your parents' political attitudes?

PC: My father was definitely, you know, a liberal Democrat. My mother came from the south and she certainly, you know, after my father died a lot more of her conservative instincts came out, especially as regarded race, although she had to sort of keep them in check while she was, you know, while she was married to my father. Of course it's hard, I mean she grew up in a very different society. You know, in a small town called Bryson City, North Carolina where her father was the local banker and local lawyer and they lived in the house on the hill. And so she had a very sort of paternalistic attitude in race issues. But they were, you know, very definitely liberal.

My father was involved not only in Lend-Lease but in drawing up the GI Bill of Rights, you know, which gave returning vets rights to go to college. And he was involved in a lot of stuff; it was a very small town then, and, Washington was, I mean everybody knew everybody else and word got through. And I probably have, you know, ten or fifteen books upstairs where he is sort of mentioned about something. He was always sort of on the edge, like this ranges from discussing whether or not the Nisei should be interned in the Second World War to, he represented Aaron Copland before the McCarthy hearings, you know, there's always something out there.

MR: And would he or your mother discuss their political beliefs with you when you were younger, you and your brother, (*unintelligible phrase*)?

PC: Oh, yes. In fact, you know the great Washington, that was the one thing they would discuss. My father was Jewish and never mentioned it to us, so they didn't discuss background. Although my mother was, you know, we were brought up as Presbyterians as my mother was. But politics was, politics and sort of culture were the, the things you always discussed. And when I, and they had the typical Washington dinner parties in those days where after dinner the men sat down, you know, and discussed politics and the women were supposed to go upstairs. In fact, there's a wonderful passage in Kay [Katherine Graham] Graham's memoir [Personal History] where she says finally she refused to go upstairs one day. Here she was, publisher of the *Washington Post* and she was expected to go upstairs with the women after dinner. And when I was about twelve years old, I was invited to sit and listen after dinner. And I can still remember Leon Keyserling who was chair of Truman's board of economic advisors arguing for a four-day work week because it would free people up. Or he was saying that the next great wave of industry in the United States was going to be based on leisure time, which proved true. And, but this is back, you know, in the early 1950s. And in those days it was very different.

In fact, this was one of the sort of key issues that concerns me about journalism and the

separation, because certainly people then, you know, the columnists and editorial writers and stuff, actually mixed with the policy makers. So, you know, later I remember, you know, by this time I was in college and still, you know, when I'd be home for a vacation or something, and listening to people, you know, argue about Vietnam and, you know, listening to J. William Fulbright and Averell Harriman with maybe Walter Lippman or Scotty Reston [James "Scotty" Reston] there, you know, arguing about, and this is how they got their backgrounding. It was a sort of unofficial Washington political salon, if you want. And this was very typical of Washington.

It got out of hand at times, if you've read the double biography of Stewart and Joseph Alsop, Joseph Alsop particularly tried to sort of use the Georgetown salon, you know, for his very hawkish viewpoints. But of course all that would be frowned on today, but back then.

And then my father was also involved with a thing called the Institute of Contemporary Arts, which was their sort of little artistic, literary and discussion thing in Washington and they would invite people to come and give a lecture and then they would, you know, give them a stipend, and then they would have a dinner for them or maybe afterwards an. And I remember sitting there and listening to Marcel Duchamp tell these wonderful stories about filming (*unintelligible word*) descending a staircase in this apartment in New York City and having one of the actresses with nothing but an apron and having the people who own the apartment come home and ring the door bell and out she came to the door. They hadn't known that their own daughter had lent them the apartment for the weekend, that sort of story, you know. It was very much a salon type thing. My mother, when I used to come home from college, my mother would say, you know, who would you like to meet? And I remember one time she said, "Oh, I think I'll have Nick Katzenbach," who was, I don't know if he was AG by then, but he had, remember he was the one who stood up with George Wallace on the steps to open up the University of Alabama. And he sort of told the story everywhere he went, you know, and there he was for lunch, I said, "Boy, those guys got a lot of bunches out of that story. But this was my mother's idea, you know, this is the way she operated in Washington. If you wanted to meet someone, that's what she did, she called them up and, you know, she would have met them somewhere else, but that's the way Washington was in those days. It was a city of lunches and dinner parties and political conversation, so, yeah, we talked politics. That's about all we talked.

MR: What was the neighborhood that you grew up in like?

PC: Well, I moved to, we moved to Georgetown in 19-, well, I was in the third grade so let's add that out, that's going to put it, you know, in the '40s somewhere, about '46. And Georgetown was not yet gentrified then. It was, well one little part of it was down by P Street, but where we were wasn't, and it was very much a mixed neighborhood in those days. In fact there was a little area called Charles Court, which was all these Black tenements which was about a block away. And, you know, I used to have Black friends that I would play with, but we weren't allowed to play together in the playground because it was segregated. And of course the schools were segregated until 1954. In fact, my high school class, by then I'd left and gone off to school, at Exeter, but my graduating class, which is the class of 1955, was the first integrated high school class at Western High School. Remember *Brown vs. Board of Education* was just 1954, so, but it was mixed neighborhood and we had, we had our own baseball teams and

football, touch football teams, and we'd travel all around the city on public transportation and play other teams and stuff.

MR: And what were some of your interests growing up and going to school in Georgetown? Maybe academic or outside clubs, sports, or anything?

PC: Well, the main thing was that I played tennis, and I started playing tennis when I was, oh, probably about ten years old. And by the time I, well let's see, I went to the national boys championships two years, it would have been like when I was fourteen or fifteen, and that's where my best friends came from. I mean we, we'd go out to Bethesda where my coach was and I'd play out there, I played four hours a day, and then we'd go all over the, really all over the east. The nationals were out in Kalamazoo, Michigan, that was sort of the final tournament, and that was about as far west as went. And we all rode together in cars and a different parent, you know, would take us. And one of my friends at that time was a guy named Donald Dell, who later became, you still see him occasionally, he's a commentator, he was captain of the Davis Cup team and became a sports attorney, was a big buddy of Arthur Ashe. But Donald and I, this will give you an idea, a feel for the time, Donald and I used to spend hours in the car arguing over whether or not Alger Hiss was innocent. So, I guess we were about thirteen years old.

MR: Wow, early starters.

PC: Yeah.

MR: Okay, and . . .

PC: But I was not, you know, it was one of those things where, yes I was academic, but it was only when I went off to Exeter that I really was in the position where it wasn't something you hid (*unintelligible word*).

MR: This was Phillips Exeter Academy?

PC: Yeah, but I mean at school in Washington, I mean you, you know, if you liked to read and stuff you, you pretty much kept it to yourself.

MR: Okay, and what was your time, actually where did you attend college?

PC: Yale.

MR: Yale. And what did you study there?

PC: I was an English major and also studied a lot of history of art. And I was supposed to go to law school, which I did go to for six months, but I decided very quickly, I didn't want to be a lawyer. And if I was going to go to law school, I probably shouldn't have gone there because everybody knew my father, he had gone there. And I claim they gave me the famous breath test to get in, you know, you breathe on a mirror and if it clouds up you're in. Because, you know, I was, I mean unless I was just a total dope, I felt that I was going to get in, but then I decided it

wasn't for me.

MR: And were there any professors or clubs or groups at Yale that particularly influenced you in some way, or that you were very interested in?

PC: No, in fact I had a much more, my really major educational experience was at Exeter, and I think it may be when you go away from home the first time that, you know, that has a bigger impact on you than anything. And we had very, very intense sort of teachers. You know, the whole Exeter system is you sit around an oblong table with about twelve people, and it's peer teaching, the students, the faculty member is really there to direct things, he doesn't lecture you, he sort of leads the conversation. And the result is, of course, is that you have to do your homework if you want, because you're arguing with all your friends; you know, with all your classmates and that really influenced me tremendously because throughout the rest of my life I always assumed, and this was part of what I'd listened to in the living room, too, that it was all right to disagree with one another and to challenge one another's thought process and everything else. And, you know, I found at different places that that was considered very threatening to do. But that was certainly the greatest influence of Exeter, and that's where I really began to like to write. And I remember wanting to get into the Darcy Kerwin senior English program. Darcy Kerwin was probably a fraud but he worked everybody very hard and everybody wanted to be in that class and, you know, we wrote what were called themes every weekend, and then, you know, often read them in class and had them critiqued by our fellow students and stuff. And if you, when we, in fact we continued that through college, and I was probably more influenced by my peers in college than anything else.

We had groups, you know that, we sort of did things. And I remember there was a cartoon in the *New Yorker* which we all loved because of these two guys, you know, sitting on a desert island with one palm tree in the middle, and one's handing back a manuscript to the other and saying, "I hate to tell you this but I don't like it." (*Laughing*) That was sort of the way we were in college.

MR: Okay, when did you graduate from Yale?

PC: Fifty-nine.

MR: Fifty-nine, and then, then you had the six months at Yale Law School?

PC: I had six months in Yale Law School, then I went into the Army for six months, which you did in those days. You know, and had a long Reserve obligation, and then as soon as I got out of the Army which was the fall of 1960, I went to work for Frank Coffin.

MR: Okay, and how did you first get involved with Frank Coffin?

PC: I had a, when I was still, you know, previous life, I worked summers for the, what became the *York County Coast Star*, it was then the *Kennebunk Star*, and I did a series of articles on the, on the congressional delegation and Frank was one of the people I interviewed. And, and I obviously was impressed by him, but also my father stayed very much, you know, sort of in

touch with Maine politics and he was a great admirer of Frank's. And, you know, I was, you know, sort of finished the Army, I was saying, you know, what am I going to do next? I mean, I want to go into journalism, and I think partly at my father's instigation I volunteered for the campaign and they took me on. I started as, you know, they hired me to be the driver and sort of advance man who would go to some small town. I'd usually go into the newspaper and tell the person who, you know, would you like an interview with the candidate and then brief him enough so he knew what questions to ask, and then he let me write press releases. And then he let me write speeches, which he would sort of, you know, rough out to me as we were driving along, I had this little Olivetti portable typewriter which I put on the hood of the car and then type up. What it started as, he would say this is the speech I'm going to give and I would type up the press release. You know, Frank Coffin said today, based on his speech. And then he let me work on speeches. And then we had these three television shows which we had there and I became, then became, I worked on them with Libby Donahue, and Libby was Frank's administrative assistant. Have you run across her? I don't know how much background you have on the whole thing!

MR: I've heard the name.

PC: Yeah, she's really key in a lot of this stuff. And so Libby really took me under her wing, I really became her protégé and as I say, and worked on this stuff, and we worked on these what we thought were terribly clever television shows. We're not sure anybody else understood them but we thought they were great. And so Frank kept letting me do this other stuff, and Shep Lee tells this story about, Shep was the campaign manager and then Don Nicoll was running the Democratic Party then, all this was in Lewiston. And one day Shep asked me, this is Shep's story, he says that one day he asked me to take a press release over to Augusta and I told him I was too busy, to do it himself. He says, then I knew, he says, and this kid was supposed to be, come here as a driver, suddenly telling me what to do; I knew the cause was lost. But I, he tells it with a certain amount of good humor, but you know, he says, and then he looked at Frank and he says, "Frank, you know, Peter says he won't take the press release somewhere, he's too busy." And Frank said, "Good for him." That's when Shep said he knew we were in real trouble. So, it was, you know, so we, it was great because, I mean, I learned so much about the state traveling with him. And it was very different in those days because the candidate did not go to hotels and wasn't surrounded by a big entourage. We stayed at people's houses and, you know, the candidate would make a speech and then afterwards there be a coffee or drinks or something at somebody's house and everybody gathered and there they were.

And I met people from all over the state that when I started the *Maine Times* in 1968 were still key people in politics and stuff around the state and, you know, most of them didn't remember me, I mean I was just this kid, I was, you know, I was twenty-two years old or something and stayed in the background.

One of my favorite stories to emerge from that was, there was a very famous scene, (*unintelligible phrase*). But we were all in Tom Delahanty's basement in Lewiston. Tom let us use his basement as a room, I think he was even a judge then so it was sort of touchy, but there were two, there was a study and a room there and Libby and I often stayed there, and there was a strategy meeting and Ben Dorsky was there. Ben Dorsky was a sort of top labor guy in the state.

And someone said he was really a Republican but because of sort of, you know, union stuff, he had (*unintelligible phrase*) a Democrat. And Ben had a heart attack, well we think it was a heart attack anyway, but he collapsed in the basement and everybody was saying, "Oh God," you know, "What are we going to do?" you know, "We probably shouldn't be in Judge Delahanty's basement anyway." First of all they called the doctors and he came right around, but I got to see sort of a lot of Dorsky there and I was given responsibility for putting out this little Democratic newspaper that we had and, and one of the things, it had to be printed in a union shop of course, you know, because we needed people and I think the only place there was a union shop was in Lewiston so we printed it there. And then, I guess this was 1960; five or six years later, I've come back, I'm editor of the *Bath Daily Times*, and what should we be publishing at the *Bath Daily Times* but Ben Dorsky's labor newspaper, which apparently Dorsky owned a part of, okay? We're not a union shop. So I'm sort of in charge and I see this thing coming through and I say to Dorsky who's in, you know, to get, I say, "Well, you know, that's fine that we print it, but we can't put the union bug on it because we're not a union shop." Well, I thought he was going to strangle me on the spot, like who the hell are you, you know, and what makes you think you can raise an issue like that. And I later actually, Cam Niven was our owner, I later raised the issue with him, I said I thought it was, you know, totally unethical. We lost the business; we lost the printing contract through my twenty-seven year old idealism (*unintelligible phrase*). So anyway, I learned a lot, a lot about the state. And that's the first time I came into contact with Muskie, and there's a very interesting contrast there.

I don't know if other people have brought this out, but whereas Frank is sort of the warmest personal person on one-on-one relationships you can imagine, he was not, or he did not project this warmth, you know, to the crowd. And Muskie's just the opposite, incredible, you know, crowds just loved him and people just loved him, he was, you know, this figure, and, but he didn't have the same sort of personal warmth that Coffin had. And I remember going to a fair over in Bridgton I think it was, Bridgton or Bethel, and after the speeches that afternoon we were having this big luncheon in some farmhouse and Muskie was coming. Muskie was there that day. And, God, they had the food, I mean they had every bit of food on that farm, it was just stacked with corn on the cob and new potatoes and string beans and tomatoes and cucumbers and three different kinds of meat and everything, and I said to Frank, I said, "Boy," you know, "It's good when Muskie comes along, we get a lot better food." So that was really, you know, he was, he certainly had the political charisma. And, you know, that's, that's carried on. I mean, he is certainly, you know, credited with reviving the Democratic Party, which of course he did by being elected governor in 1954, but of course Frank Coffin was also sort of the brains behind the whole thing and is a much more, you know, much less well-known person in that sense.

And I really got exposed to all of that because even though this was later, it was all the same people, you know, Don Nicoll was still there, I mean these were all people who had started the thing back in the early '50s, and very idea driven, very, you know, one of the keys to the resurgence was the idea of the Democratic platform and the fact that you had hearings around the state and you really had citizen participation in drawing up what the policy, what the issues would be. And, and I think that was a terribly important key point. I mean, now, you know, platforms don't mean anything again, but I was actually on the platform committee in 1972 which Harold Pachios was chair of the committee. You know, he'd been down in Washington as some kind of a press aide and stuff, and Dick Goodwin ran our foreign plank which sounded like

something, you know, more sophisticated than you could hear anywhere, I mean a very strong environmental plank and stuff like that. But that was one of the last really, you know, well wrought, thought out Democratic platforms, and we really, I mean, we, you know, there were still hearings all around the state. People were really trying to be thoughtful, you were trying to get the people who were most thoughtful on these issues, and then it just sort of died off.

I remember, I went to Democratic conventions probably for twenty years uninterrupted, and finally I guess, you know, I remember being at one where at the end, they'd had a long debate on gay rights, and at the end there was just sort of the Aroostook delegation there. And I'm sitting with my wife so I'd moved down to the press section onto the, by this time I was no longer a delegate, I was, you know, going as the press. And so I was sitting down with her and there's this guy behind us whose got this ponytail and everything, and he says "Who, who are those people and why are they still here?" And I said, "That's the Aroostook delegation." And he said, "Well why are they still here?" And I said, "Because Dickey-Lincoln hasn't come up yet." And he looks, he says "What's Dickey-Lincoln? And I said, "Boy, times sure have changed," you know, it was like, nobody even knew any more. And it was, you know, of course it was one of those perennial things that, you know, even though it was long gone and nothing was ever going to happen, it was a symbolic sort of thing. And Aroostook wanted Dickey-Lincoln and, by God, the Democrats supported Dickey Lincoln and went through there. So, that's sort of the Coffin years of learning that.

And then after that campaign, I worked briefly for the *Biddeford-Saco Journal* covering court in Alfred, and typically, you know, Washington dinner party, my mother was sitting next to this guy who says, "Jeez," he says, "we've got this newspaper in the Adirondacks and we need an editor because we're going away. We've got appointments by John Kennedy and," you know, "We're going to be away." And my mother says, "Oh well," she says, "you know, my son can do that." My big experience was having this little Democratic paper one time, so she told me about it and I wrote a guy named Jim Loeb who was, these two guys were, also I'm trying to remember the first guy's name, it was, later became ambassador to the U.N. and Jim Loeb was being appointed, I don't remember if he was appointed ambassador to Peru first or to Ghana [*sic*] [Guinea]. Anyway, he was, he had both of those appointments. And so I called up, you know, Jim Loeb, I says "Is there a job opening?" He says, "Yeah." He says, "Come on over." And so I went over to see him and it was, you know, this tiny daily newspaper in Saranac Lake, New York, thirty-five hundred circulation, the salary was eighty-five dollars a week, so you know, I fit the bill but it was cheap. And Jim Loeb had been one of the people to start Americans for Democratic Action which was the liberal anti-Communist sort of, how do you call it, (*unintelligible word*) group or whatever. The other two founders with him were Reinhold Nidouhr and Hubert Humphrey.

And in those days everybody did all these rankings of everybody, you know, the political, with Congress and stuff, and it was a very big thing in the 1960 campaign too. If, you know, when, and ADA was the liberal one and then there was like ACA, Americans for Conservative Action, so you'd get a hundred ADA and zero ACA (*unintelligible phrase*).

And so I went over to see the Loebs and we got along extremely well and Jim Loeb was, figured well, he had to get up a recommendation. So, obviously I said I'd worked for Frank, and he

remember Libby Donahue, and, and he remembered Libby. Libby had been White House correspondent for *PM* which was the Marshall Field alternative newspaper, you know, in the '50s and Jimmy Wechsler was editor and she had been involved, she was a speech writer for Adlai Stevenson, she'd been involved in a lot of stuff, and Libby's always been very acid toned about, especially about people. And so Jim later told me the story, he says, "Look, I called Libby for a, for a recommendation," and remembering that she never, you know, says anything nice about anyone, and Libby said to him, he says, "Libby told me," he says, "If you don't hire him, you're making the biggest mistake you've ever made in your life." So I didn't tell him, you know, that he wouldn't have gotten a more biased recommendation from my mother because we'd become such great friends when I worked for Frank. So she got me that job over in the Adirondacks and I became a daily newspaper editor at the age of twenty-three, and somebody that had to write editorials every day about everything. So, you know, I obviously sort of primed myself.

By then the *Herald Tribune* still came out, I'd read it for the, the sort of Republican viewpoint, which was then a liberal Republican viewpoint. And then the *New York Times*, then I'd read the *New York Post*, which Jimmy Wexler was then editor of for the liberal viewpoint. Sort of get it all together and figure it out and rise to it. And I stayed there for four years and the guy who had been the publisher left, so they made me publisher as well, so I learned how to publish a newspaper.

And then in 1965 I met my wife there and we got married and came back in 1965 with the *Bath Daily Times*. And I had met (*name*) the publisher when I was working for Frank, so there's another one of those, you know, connections. And the idea was that we were going to merge it with the *Brunswick Record, Brunswick Record;* was a weekly but it was larger. Like Bath had a, you know, thirty-seven hundred circulation and Brunswick had ten thousand circulation, and Bath, but Bath was daily and Brunswick was weekly. And also, you know, part of the plot involved there was, I had worked for John Cole when he was managing editor of the *York County Hill Star*, the *Kennebec Star, Kennebunk Star*. I had worked summers for him there, and Sandy Brook was there as well, I mean, on the paper as publisher. And so John was editor of the *Brunswick Record* and I came back and (*name*) was sort of dragging his heels about merging them, we went through a whole bunch of stuff, and we merged the papers in 1967. And John became editor and I became managing editor, we sort of split it up that I was the Bath person and he was the Brunswick person.

And then, and we had wanted the whole concept of *Maine Times*, we had actually discussed with my father for years, was the idea of an issues-oriented state wide newspaper. And certainly, you know, my experience traveling around the state in 1960 had really given me a feel that there were, you know, statewide issues that no one was discussing. And the original concept was to get, was to buy three different weeklies in different parts of the state, and the first section would be on local, and then the second section which would be the same in all three of them would be state wide. And that idea never took off, but then when we were at the *Times Record*, we had hired this guy who was the, we felt was the best reporter in the state. He was working for the Associated Press, and he did some of the first stories on the Indians, you know, Passamaquoddy. We still haven't, you could still put people in jail for debt in those days. We attacked, you know, that sort of stuff.

So we started doing some state wide, I won't say investigative, some state wide in depth stuff and, you know, (*name*) didn't, the (*unintelligible word*), you know, this is costing us a lot of money and what good does it do, you know, in Bath and Brunswick. So we said, okay, we'll do a section of the paper on Thursdays, let's say, which will be part of the *Times Record*, but it will be a tab, and we'll also circulate it outside our circulation area and build on that.

And then we had a strike at the paper which I won't go into, and the idea was killed and we decided to start it on our own, and that became *Maine Times*, which essentially was a state wide issues-oriented newspaper. Didn't cover any fires, didn't cover any deaths. And of course Ed Muskie was our first cover and with a little thing of Hannibal Hamlin who had been of course Lincoln's first Vice President. If he stayed on he would have become president. And that was a big mistake because we gave away obviously a lot of those first issues. And no one had ever seen a tabloid with color on it except for a political handout, and so everybody thought it was a political handout because it had Muskie's picture on it because he was, you know, he was running for vice president then. So, I guess that makes sort of a weird connection, and that's when we started the *Maine Times.*

You know, to get back to the, sort of the Muskie connections and the, and that's what, you know, I saw him, you know, I'd met him a few times at my parents' house, I remember, you know, arguing over lunch about the Vietnam War and this was still the, he had not sort of switched. And I remember getting in an argument with him about. I raised the issue that maybe instead of building all these water treatment plants which of course was one of his great landmark things, we should have right then looked at ways to decrease the amount of water going into the sewage treatment plants. I mean, it's only today that we're finally mandating, you know, one point six toilets instead of eight-gallon toilets. And he really lit into me. It was, because, you know, he was, you know, and he was right, I mean it was, you know. Here I am making this futuristic projection about, you know, what should have been and his point was you do what you can do and get it done. And I think Muskie was always, was treated by the press in those days with a good deal of respect. I think people really admired him, even though a few people really just hated him, you know, like John Gould of the *Lisbon Enterprise* and stuff, was a, and, you know, Neil Bishop who seemed to run against him every. Well that's about the only person they could get to run against him.

But I think he just had incredible stature and Ed was a significant, always recognized. He was a significant, you know, national and international figure and was treated with that respect. And I think he did, you know, sort of, I don't want to say short-tempered, I want to say, you know, he didn't want to waste a lot of time on people who he thought didn't know what they were talking about and he tended to react to that, but I, I think justifiably so. And I think throughout Maine also people were terribly proud of him. And I always found him a very, you know, sort of straightforward nice person. The person with the real worth, of course, was Jane [Muskie]. You know, she was always very, she just (*unintelligible phrase*), and that was, you know, that's a role that women in that generation played. They were the ones, they were the sort of the family people. I remember she came to my, my father's burial, you know, which was really just sort of a family thing, but they were in Kennebunk at the time and he was buried in Kennebunk and, it was just the kind of thing she would do; and it was common then. You know, women then

always knew what their friends' children were doing and always sort of kept track of that.

There is an interesting little thing where after I sold the paper, Anna Ginn, who became the publisher, went down (*unintelligible phrase*) in Florida and there, and one of the sort of key figures, you know, there doing stuff was Kay Graham. And Anna introduced herself as the publisher of *Maine Times* and Kay Graham immediately said, "oh," you know. "How's Peter doing, what's he doing these days?" Well, you know, I might have met her three or four times, you know, and I probably hadn't seen her since I was twelve or thirteen years old, and, but you know, she knew my parents, was a friend of my parents, it was that kind of thing that I considered a skill, you know, that all these women had. But it was also very genuine that they all knew where everybody was, were sort of interested where everybody was and always things to this very personal level. So in a way, I think, you know, this whole idea of the teamwork of the woman as supporter of the man in his career, I think that Jane and Ed Muskie were a great team in this way. And just to give you a feel for that . . .

MR: Actually, I'm going to stop the tape and flip it before we lose this.

End of Side A, Tape One
Side B, Tape One

MR: Okay, we're on the second side of the tape of the interview with Peter Cox on August 23rd, 1999.

PC: To give you a feel for that, when my father died, my mother assumed, since she'd sort of lost her power base, that all the people who had been her friends weren't particularly her friends anymore. And I had some of those old friends said, you know, we keep inviting your mother, if you come over to dinner and, you know, she sees, she doesn't recognize that we liked her because of her, not because she was your father's wife. But that was, that was the way Washington was in the '50s and '60s.

MR: So now, just to paraphrase, you said that you moved to Portland, not to Portland, but you moved up here to Georgetown after '59 . . . ?

PC: No, no.

MR: . . . and your mother remained in Washington?

PC: No, in, okay, in, I came right out of s-, right out of college, or you know, the Army, I went to work for Frank in 1960 and I actually lived in a, we had a converted garage in Kennebunkport when I worked for the *Biddeford-Saco Journal*. Then in 1961, in February, I went over to the Adirondacks, worked there until '65, came back to Bath in '65. In '68 we started *Maine Times*, October of '68. That year I moved to Topsham, we bought a house, we'd been renting, I'd lived in, you know, I'd lived in Bath, I'd lived in East Brunswick, etcetera. We lived in Topsham until 1985, and then we bought this house. And '85 was the year I sold the newspaper, just sort of converted it into this house. And, but I always, I like to joke, I always lived in Sagadahoc County, (*unintelligible phrase*), of course Sagadahoc County used to be connected by water, so

Topsham, you know, I figure it's part of Sagadahoc County.

MR: What's your wife's name?

PC: Eunice, E-U-N-I-C-E.

MR: And her maiden name?

PC: Was Theodore, and I met her, she was working for. We also had a sister paper, the *Lake Placid News*, and she worked for *Lake Placid News* during the summer. She was in college then, and that's where I met here. Matter of fact, her mother now, her mother, after her stepfather became quite sort of ill, moved over here, her mother's been living in Brunswick for, I don't know, fifteen years or more.

MR: And has she shared your political concerns or been politically active herself?

PC: Yes, she certainly shares, you know, we certainly have a very similar political view, and, and she's tended to be more involved in things like women's issues, gay rights issues, stuff like that. But, and she was, yeah, we did a women's issue of *Maine Times* about, boy, could have been as early as 1970. And, in which we turned over the paper to the women because we, actually we had a majority, the staff was a majority of women anyway, and they did the first, you know, one of the first women's issues in the country, and she was very involved with that. And then she worked for the paper for a number of years, too, after the kids, you know, were in school and she could do it. And then she worked on the AIDS project as a volunteer down there after we sold the paper. And she now runs the computer lab at the Woolwich Central School, which is kindergarten through eighth grade and is still sort of, you know, leader of a certain, or extremely involved.

I mean, we still have a, you know, we still have a fund-raiser down here for a local candidate and something like that. I still see Ed Pert in the post office. When I went to work in Lewiston in 1960, one of the first people I met was Ed Pert. I think he was secretary of the Democratic Party then, he was for a long time secretary of the House of Representatives; he was the key staff person there. And Ed took me to all the great places to eat in Sabattus and outside of Lewiston, so it's great to see, all these years later, to still see (*unintelligible phrase*) in the post office. But I've become, you know, I'm very involved in policy issues sort of on a different level through the nonprofits now, and so I'm still very much, you know, involved in policy, although it's in a sort of different, a different way at it, and not as, you know, I'm not particularly partisanly political. And certainly, I mean I supported, you know, in his second term I supported Angus [King] very strongly. I did not support him in his first term mainly because of the CarTest thing which I think I was right on philosophically and he was right on politically, because he never would have gotten elected if he'd taken my position. And in fact, we're pretty good friends because he has a house down here, and I see quite a bit of him, and he was our attorney during a libel case and stuff, so I've known him for a long time. So, but I'm still very involved for instance in the sprawl issue, farmland preservation, all of those kinds of issues which are back there. And I suppose, you know, you can say I'm no longer the only Democratic, you know, growth at any cost sort of thing, but I don't think anybody is, that's all, that's all evolved so

much anyway. But she is, yeah, she's involved, but neither of us are particularly involved in, you know, campaigns. Although, if, you know I could be again. If somebody Chellie Pingree, I like her a lot, if like that ran, you know, as Democrat for governor I can see playing some kind of role.

MR: And so you're direct involvement in the Democratic Party lasted pretty much through '68-'72 period?

PC: It lasted, direct, yeah, probably into the early '70s and, and then, you know, I'd still be, I mean we'd certainly see all the state candidates, and because of the newspaper, I mean, obviously we were a stop to be made, right. And although I usually, my endorsement usually meant you were going to lose, (*unintelligible word*) infallible. But, and then of course we had that big, actually our best period for circulation was in '76 when Jim Longley was governor and John Cole had gotten, John was still, John was still, he wasn't editing the paper but he was writing editorials and got in some wonderful battle because he was the only one who'd really take Longley on head on, and that created a great friction and got everyone interested and mainly, well, Democrats and liberal Republicans both. It was really sort of a, it was a high point, everybody was waiting for *Maine Times* every week to see what clash John Cole and Jim Longley were going to have. And of course I remember, you know, all our sort of Lewiston Democratic friends saying, "Oh, we could have told you Jim Longley was crazy." I said, "Well somebody should have said it beforehand, not let us learn later." But that was, you know, and that whole group.

I mean I talked to other people, you know, about that group, you know, George Mitchell was a young attorney, John Donovan was still alive then, and you know, there was Frank and Shep and Marvin Sadik, he used (*unintelligible phrase*) involved in Democratic stuff. And you know, those get together at Shep's house on Maple Hill was as many, you have bright, thoughtful people in one room as there used to be in my parents' house in Washington, you know, when Averell Harriman and Walter Lippman were sitting there arguing. I mean it was the same kind of atmosphere, it was just moved to Maine. And then Jean Sampson and Paul Hazelton, I mean these were really incredibly well-informed, thoughtful people. And in fact I relied on them for years for new ideas, for sort of reality checks, you know, if I was, if I was doing a story that was, you know, I wanted to be sure I was on the right track, this is as an editor, and if it was in their, you know, in their field I'd call on them and say, you know, am I on the right track? I just, you know, want to make sure we're not going off the deep end on this. And those were the people that I wrote for.

I mean, you always have, you know, someone in your mind that's your audience, and they were the ones. I mean these were well-informed people who cared about everything that went on in the state. They didn't just care about their own special interest. And that was the other big thing, you know, that of course has changed is we've gotten into special interest politics. Is that people say, you know, your vote on this one issue is everything, I don't care what you do on every other issue, that's all that matters, that was just anathema to this whole group of people who saw all of those things and had sort of been working their way up through the ranks.

The, I guess it wasn't for me when they put me on the ACLU board, I lasted for about six or

eight months, and it was just, you know, eighty people arguing not only how many angels can dance on the head of a pin, but what their sexual orientation is and whether or not you have the proper number of handicapped angels. And, you know, Jean had been, well of course Lou Scolnik founded the Maine Civil Liberties Union and he was that Lewiston group. In fact was our attorney when we started *Maine Times* because of that connection. This is really, you know, Maine is the small town, right? And then Shep had been a long time, you know, Maine representative to the American Civil Liberties Union, on the board, and so then I was the next one and it was like it was handed along, you know, through this group. And those, and those connections, you know, obviously remained very, very strong.

As you probably know, there are a group of us who still get together for New Year's Eve and sort of a couple other things during the year, which is the Lees and the Coffins and the Isaacsons. You know, I don't know how much you've read the Muskie Archive, Irving Isaacson was the debate partner, etcetera. And, Jean and Dick Sampson, Jean died two years ago, and they're still just a fabulous group of people, you know, and fun. Can't get anybody to stop talking, but. And I often even today will take an issue to them and, you know.

I've, we have this thing where I'm president of the Wolf's Neck Farm Foundation, which is a six hundred acre organic farm in Freeport, and the Smiths, L. M. C. Smith and Eleanor Houston Smith in 1985 gave the farm to the University of Southern Maine and the university sort of just couldn't deal with it, it was losing money on it, and gave it back two years ago, and I negotiated the return and with the foundation actually took it over, but I sure learned a lot about universities and how they work or don't work, etcetera, at that time, and I had some real questions, and this was just one of our get-togethers, and, you know, I posed the question to the group about, I had a lot of questions about university boards and what they should do and how they function and not function. And of course Jean had been president of the University of Ma-, Maine board and both Jean and Judith Isaacson were on the Bowdoin board, you know. Frank had a lot of experience with this, I mean it was, you know it's great, I just, you know, I said, "Okay you folks," you know, "Give me some insights." And I get, you know, hundred years of combined experience all at once in this. And I still rely on that sort of wisdom that comes from having lived through this stuff and having some continuity.

MR: And just to pick up one thing about Muskie, you said on the first side that his stance on Vietnam at one point, that you argued with him when you were at a dinner party at your mom's. What was, how do you assess his stance with Vietnam and how it changed over the years?

PC: Boy, I can't be, you know, positive. This was right at the time of the Mansfield report and you're pulling hard on my memory. And I think it was my wife who had the major argument then, but we were certainly, this would have been, you know, well before Nixon's years and, and we were certainly (*unintelligible word*) because it had been a big mistake, it was a political question, you know, not a military question and we had no business trying to impose our, our sort of beliefs, etcetera, on them. And that was still seen as a pretty left wing position at the time.

I mean, my feeling that, I, you know, I'd have to cross reference this and I'm sure you've got much better detailed information of exactly what Muskie's position was, but at that stage, while

he certainly he wasn't a major hawk, he certainly was, you know, supporting the administration policy in the war then. And so, you know, he was a little bit, you know, he did have a tendency to say you don't know what you're talking about. And I'm sure that's what he said. It's all right, you don't know what you're talking about. And I'm not sure what my, I mean I think, I'm not sure what my father's position would have been at that time. My father was always sort of a moderator in those sorts of circumstances and I'm sure he would have been more the moderator, you know, although I know he had great reservations about it in that sort of circumstance. It was just one of those, you know, heated dinner table conversations that were pretty routine in our house, so.

MR: Did you continue to have a fairly close relationship with Muskie through the '60s and '70s in Maine?

PC: I wouldn't say it was close. I mean I would say, I mean I was never close to him the way I was, you know, with Frank and those people. But certainly because of the, you know, the family connection, you know, they certainly were people who saw one another in Washington, were very friendly in Washington. My mother and Jane were, tended to be on committees together and, you know, stuff like that. So there was sort of a, you know, (*unintelligible word*) and Steve was first starting out doing photo-, you know, doing photography, and I was in journalism, I was very friendly to him and, you know, what he was doing. He was a good photographer, too. And so I would say it was cordial and, here's the kind of thing where, you know, I would see him in an airport or something, you know, and I'd go over and, you know, sit down and we'd start discussing politics or whatever the issue was at the moment, and he loved, I mean he loved issues and politics and it was fun to talk that stuff with him. And so I think that, you know, but it was, I'm sure at different times I criticized him in editorials, but, you know, never in a, in an offensive way. And he was, I mean, you know, that was his milieu. I mean that didn't bother him, you know, he never took that kind of stuff personally, you know, that you could disagree on issues. If he was short with you it was because he thought you didn't know what the hell you were talking about, you know. You hadn't done your homework. But he was very open to discussion on issues. And those were the, those were the places I would see him, you know, when he was back in Maine making the rounds or campaigning, you know, he'd stop by. But I'm sure he stopped by because we were a newspaper that you stop by. And, and you know, we'd always, you know, he'd come in and we'd do an interview with him. So, I never felt that he was a, a close, you know, personal friend but I admired him. I thought he had, I mean I, they call it, you know, nowadays they call it *gravitas*, you know. He had *gravitas*, he was a thoughtful person and there are not many people like that nowadays, right.

MR: And your connection with Jane, was that more through your mother's dinner parties and things like that, or would it also be your own personal . . .?

PC: No, it would be through my, my connection would really be through my parents, you know, and seeing her. As I say, that role, she's a very warm, you know engaging person on a personal level and I was, I just always found her a very, you know, charming, nice person.

MR: Okay, well let's talk a little bit about your time with the Maine papers after '65, and especially the *Maine Times* around '68. Who were some of the reporters and staff members,

people that you worked most closely with who were important to the paper that you felt, that you had the closest relationship with perhaps?

PC: I really had, I would say I had a close relationship with everyone. The, it was really, there was a culture in the paper that was very important to me that everyone knew that they did was important. A person in subscriptions, you know, a person in, doing bookkeeping, that everybody was part of it and that we could do anything we wanted. After the first couple of years we moved up on the hill in this big old house where I had a garden out back and that was sort of my therapy, that I could go out and work in the garden, and it, you know. In the summer at ten o'clock I'd go out and pick tomatoes and cucumbers and carrots and things and put them in the composing room and everybody would come in and have a snack. And every Monday we had a lunch with, you know, the, quote, department heads even though there might be a one-person department. But this was just something to, and, you know. We had editorial staff meetings every week where we discussed the previous week's issue and the upcoming stories and that's where I practiced the old Exeter thing, you know: everybody participates, every is open to criticism, you know, how could we have done this? I would get short with people who only wanted to talk about their own stories because one of the ideas of these meetings was if somebody was talking about an upcoming story, you know, I wanted help from other people about who might be good to interview.

Because the stories we did were issues oriented, not event-oriented, even though they might center around an event, so it wasn't just going to a meeting or something, you had to know who were the people informative on the subject who we could go and, you know, get different perspectives from. So, so there was very much this sort of culture.

When we started the paper, I mean it was tiny. There was Ken Morrison who was our chief writer who'd been the one from the AP there, and Buffer Fine, who had also been at the *Times Record*. And we had one ad person, and Gidget came right at the beginning to do production, and, you know, John and me sort of sitting across from one another. And after a very short period, it became evident that John didn't like to edit in the sense of actually editing. He was great in, you know, conceptualizing stories and how you do them, and he was a great writer himself, but editing was something else.

For instance, I remember a story this woman had done for us. And, you know, we sort of hired who we could afford, too, there wasn't a lot of money, so we tended to hire young people or people who were untried. And the sort of end of her story just disintegrated, I mean it was just awful. And I said "John," I said "John, you know, how could you let that go through?" He says, "Oh," he says, "well that's about the point I got bored with it so I just let it through." I said, "You can't do that." So at that stage, I took over the actual editing, and this was very early on, this could have been as early as '70, as late as '72, you know, (*unintelligible word*) near enough.

And John still, you know, and John did more writing which was good, he covered the legislature in a way nobody had ever covered the legislature before. Boy, he really, you know, exposed people falling asleep and everything else. So, but certainly, you know, things became, you know, somewhat testy with me and John at that period, and also John wanted to be able to, you know, take more money out and there just wasn't any those first years. And there wasn't a heck

of a lot of anything, you know, later. So by, oh, 19-, the mid-1970s John was doing other things, he (*unintelligible phrase*), and then he finally left and I bought out his interest. And even though there was the impression that, you know, that John (*microphone problem - unintelligible phrase*) visible in those early years, that he sort of owned the paper. In fact, I owned about eighty percent of it and he owned twenty percent.

And, but then, you know, with the, with the, and everybody related so closely, like the, Karen Taylor who was just going to go away and sail around the world with her boyfriend. We had a party for her here this spring with old *Maine Times* people, none of whom went down (*unintelligible word*) moved the paper to Portland, we fired everybody, so nobody was left. So we still stay in touch with all those people. I mean it's like a, you know, sort of an extended family. And Gidget who did production, and Margaret Campbell who was our staff artist and worked in production, both of their kids, you know, came to the office in those days (*unintelligible phrase*) we had a little, we had a little thing up so they wouldn't fall down the stairs, you know, across the stairs. And they, they crawled around the production room. But, and the way, you know, the way I would find people, Edgar Allen Beam was working at some give-away publication in Portland, I can't remember the name of it now, and he wrote a column called "Moto and Guzi" and he wrote a column making fun of us that I thought was really funny. And so I called him up and asked him if he'd write for us and he became a (*unintelligible word*) writer; he still writes for them. Phyllis Austin was the same way and I, I suppose I had almost these individualistic relationships with almost every writer because I recognized that, you know, what their strengths were and what their weaknesses were, and that was, that was part of the job.

And we often got people who were very young and had to train them. Scott Allen we hired right out of college and, you know, he had a lot of rough spots to get over but I hired him because he was extremely intelligent and he was the only person in that batch that I, that I interviewed that thinks sequentially. But by that time, even though we weren't paying as much as the dailies and stuff, because it was a place where you could really practice exciting journalism, we were getting very good applicants. But Scott was a better applicant than anybody with much more experience, etcetera. And, you know, he's now the chief environmental reporter for the *Boston Globe*. And, so we were, in some ways we were a training ground.

But then on the other hand Phyllis Austin had already worked for the AP and, you know, Phyllis wanted that one-on-one relationship. I remember one time, this is right after going to computers so we could do this, there was a sort of scandal involving a director at Central Maine Power that she'd gotten the story on, and we were going to press the next day and I said, "Well," you know, "it's beyond deadline." And Phyllis says, "No, no, it can't be, we got to, we got to redo the whole paper to do this, we so seldom sort of get a major scoop like this." So that night we came in, Eunice came in and Phyllis and I, and the typesetter, and we redid the whole paper that night and had it ready, and Phyllis loved that, I mean, you know, that she, she (*unintelligible phrase*), you know (*unintelligible phrase*). And, but that was part of, that was part of the fun, that you had these, you know, relationships. One of the problems we had was that sometimes, you know, I'd hire someone who was very adequate at that point but I kept upping the ante for what we should be able to do and so we'd sort of outgrow them, and that was, that would become a difficult thing at some point.

But, you know, I had to make up for other things by my working with the reporters, and we were very different than most newspapers in the sense that I as editor felt I had to be well informed on almost every subject we were writing about, so that I had to read a lot, you know, and be in contact with people and talking about things. And then when I would write an editorial, I would always discuss it with the reporter who was covering that area. That's something, you know, newspapers don't do. They sort of separate the editorial writers from the writers, which always seems to me crazy because who knows better than, you know, the writer's supposed to be objective, well that's all, let's face it. But, you know, the writer can be fair obviously, that's a whole different situation.

So, you know, I, when you say, you know, about special relationships, I would say, you know, I had a special relationship almost with anyone, but that doesn't mean I had no relationship with anyone. It means that that was a very particular culture that we had there, and we were also a place where everybody stopped by. You know, all the people sort of in policy in the state, if they were going through the Brunswick area, we were right there on the road and they'd stop in and we'd make time for them and talk with them, and we had a lot of connections out there. One of the ironies is that after I left *Maine Times* and went on all these boards which, and I think that the private nonprofits are a place where a lot of policy is being made in Maine now. The, I learned a lot of things and had a lot of contacts and nobody, you know, left back at the paper, you know, none of the editors was interested in that.

I mean I've got, I've got better insights into stories now than I ever had. For instance, you know, the whole sprawl issue and smart growth thing is coming through a group called Eco Eco, which I'm the chair of their steering committee. But it's really, the key person is Ted Koffman at College of the Atlantic and we were having these, and this is really in cooperation with Evan [D.] Richert in the state planning office. But we have all this very diverse group which meets once a month to plan, you know, what our strategy should be for combating the sprawl in Maine. And I come out of every meeting there with twenty story ideas. You know, because you learn to see things from a different perspective, but this really goes back to those early days in the Democratic party when, you know, the politicians were really in touch with their constituencies. The grass roots ground level, they knew what the real problems were. They knew what, you know, somebody at Millinocket faced on a day-to-day basis, and that's of course been lost just in the way, you know, politics takes place, in the removal of the politician from the grass roots.

And I'll, I'll give you an example of, you know, there on the sprawl issue of, you know, one of the things we're, we talking about is, you know, can't we recreate the old neighborhood which is, with its density, with its mixed services so you don't have to drive everywhere and eat up all this land. And this guy who's a realtor says, well I'm a realtor in Brunswick and I do a lot of Farmer's Home Administration houses for which the limit is ninety-six thousand dollars, and I can only spend about fifteen thousand dollars on the lot, and you've got a two acre minimum lot size. And in Brunswick, there's no way I can get a two-acre minimum lot for fifteen thousand dollars. I have to go over to Richmond to get a lot for fifteen thousand dollars. Now if you let me go to a quarter acre in Brunswick, I could then have moderate income housing there. But in fact, by your zoning you force me to go out in the boon docks and create sprawl.

That's the kind of thing, you know, if you're only sitting there at the sort of, you know,

bureaucratic policy level, you never see. You have to talk to people who are actually there, you know, experiencing this. And I think that's something they had back in the late '50s and early '60s politics, but it got lost. And now we have to recreate that to bring reality, grass roots reality and policy together. And we're doing it, we're doing it in different ways now but it's all the same thing.

MR: You mentioned through the *Maine Times* that you've had a lot of connections around the state with policy makers and politicians. Were there any particular locals or state or legislative politicians that you really see very often or like could get close to through the paper?

PC: No, I can't think of anybody that, that was, but you know when John was covering the legislature and he was a great buddy of Joe Sewall of all people, Joe Sewall the president of the Senate and a Republican. In fact, we thought sometimes that relationship got a little too friendly, and you know, and John made those friends. And of course Phyllis had people she would go back to. You know, I certainly knew people I would talk to, but I can't think of anybody, (*aside to wife*) Eunice, can you think of anyone in state politics that, or you know, state office that we were particularly close to?

EC: Give me one second. What was the question?

PC: Is there anyone in state pol-, during the *Maine Times* years, anyone in, you know, in state pol-, state elected office, that we were particularly close to?

EC: Peter [A.] Bradford.

PC: Yeah, he wasn't elected, but he was certainly . . .

EC: Yeah, I know, I'm just trying to think.

PC: Yeah, he was chair of the Public Utilities Commission, that was the reason we got city . . .

EC: State elected.

PC: And we've always like, you know, from policy discussion viewpoint, always been in contact with someone like Dick Barringer, but he's (*unintelligible phrase*) . . .

EC: Joe Sewall.

PC: Yeah, I mentioned Joe Sewall and John.

EC: Somebody, you know, we weren't close to anybody really, dear.

PC: Yeah, I don't think so, I think this was, you know, there was a certain separation because of the paper, that you couldn't be, and . . .

EC: There were plenty of people you'd call up and ask a question, but he wouldn't necessarily

be close to them.

PC: Yeah. But certainly there was that thing, you know, which I'm not sure is quite so common now. If you had a question you might just call four or five different people to get some perspective on it. You weren't calling them to get the instant quote, you were calling them to get some feel for the, the contact, the background, the . . .

EC: Lorraine Chonko?

PC: Hey, she was a local legislator in Topsham when we were there. So, no, I wouldn't, I wouldn't say there was anybody we were, you know. In fact, I think I was always probably perceived as fairly, fairly much of a maverick, not too predictable, and, you know, and a lot of stuff. We had, now certainly in the first Brennan administration the people who became his cabinet were all people that had sort of grown up on *Maine Times* and they all wanted our approval. I mean, we carried, you know, a sort of ethical standard that was, you know, that was not neutral, and people like Mike Petit and, at, you know, Peter Bradford was at the Public Utilities Commission and stuff, and all of these people were very much, you know, they'd call us up, give us leads, they wanted us to approve and write in a positive manner about what they were doing. And so that was, you know, that was certainly there.

And I think it was probably more people in that level rather than the purely, you know, the people running for office that we tended to be more in tune with and more communicative with. And then when those people went through the Longley administration where, remember, he made everybody sign undated letters of resignation and everything. I mean all the people that were getting beaten up by Longley were down in our office all the time giving us leads. And, and about the next bizarre instance, you know. When he made them sign those undated letters of resignation and stuff, I mean we must have gotten, you know, six copies from different departments of that letter within half an hour, you know, when it came out. So we were seen as the, as the conduit. But also, you know, you've got to be very careful because anyone pushing a story obviously has their own axe to grind, and you have to be very careful in that as well. But people came to us with a lot of stories out of government because they thought, they thought we were the ones that would write about them. And in fact, I'm trying to remember who it was, but it was somebody who was very Republican, and this woman came to him with this, you know, story of misuse, abuse or something else, and he said, "Well, you better go to *Maine Times* with that." So I considered that sort of a compliment.

MR: So you had a pretty, pretty large reputation as kind of a special paper I guess? (*Unintelligible phrase*).

PC: Well taking, certainly we would take, it was the place that would take the role of the underdog. In those days, nobody else would cover, you know, that kind of story, which now everybody covers. You know, the person who is, you know, misused by some, you know, by some agency. I mean we did the first stories on Pineland. You know, Pineland was literally a snake pit. I mean kids were tied to, this was in '68, were, you know, tied to their chairs and tied to the toilets and there was all these big holes in the walls and the paint peeling off, and we photographed and wrote about it and where, you know, that all led . . . , and it wasn't our stories,

but other people acting, you know, concurrently that led to the Pineland Consent Decree. And here was a story, I mean that place had existed for years.

We did the first stories of the boys training center which hasn't, unfortunately hasn't changed all that much. When Don Allen, who later became Commissioner of Corrections, you know, was macing little kids in their solitary cells. I mean this was stuff that nobody was covering, just because, you know, why rock the boat? So, we literally, I mean we would have a story probably at least once a month about someone who was treated, or quote, treated unjustly, and presenting their side of the story. So yeah, people, you know, it's a lot like the, like the Civil Liberties Union, you know, everybody, all the conservatives hate the Civil Liberties Union until they get a problem involving their free speech or something and then they go ask to be defended by the Civil Liberties Union, and we were that way in some ways.

MR: Were there any papers in the state that you had kind of a direct maybe rivalry or at least some kind of political opposition to, or any type of tension like that?

PC: No, we actually avoided that. I mean one of the things that was too bad was when we would break a major story and they wouldn't follow up on it because they didn't want to admit we existed. We did the first DeCoster stories in the 1970s; in fact they were issues, they were the best selling issues we ever had. People like five years later would be asking for copies of them because, you know, two or three years ago finally OSHA, went in and closed him down. This was, you know, twenty years later, and you could have taken those stories we wrote twenty years ago and published them again, nothing had changed.

And so the daily press essentially tried to pretend we didn't exist. That again, that's different, you know, the *Press Herald*'s always quoting the *Casco Bay Weekly* now. They would never, back in those early days, would never have quoted us on anything. They were sort of, you know, we had a national reputation, which no other newspaper in Maine had. And in 1972 or '74 we were given a University of Missouri medal in journalism, which is one of these things you don't enter, I mean they, they decide, and that year we shared it with *60 Minutes*. So, you know, we were dealing with a whole different league in a way than they were. That changed obviously.

MR: And, also what was your assessment of the Guy Gannett newspapers, and maybe their political leanings or his operations, some of their press?

PC: Well certainly, you know, back in the '60s, we'll begin with that, they were very Republican, they really, you know, they were pretty slanted back then. Even though Peter Damborg, who was their chief correspondent was certainly friendly enough to everybody. And, you know, you had May Craig, May Craig always loved my father, I'll say that for her, but she, you know, I mean I think she did a competent job but it really wasn't tough journalism she was doing out of Washington. And in fact everybody, I mean even today, that, both the Portland paper and the Bangor paper, the people that go down to Washington tend to become the captives of congressional delegation because that's the news source. You know, they don't want to antagonize them.

But back in those days they were certainly much narrower. I don't know if it's true, but Ernie

Chard who used to be editor of the *Portland Press Herald* is claimed to have said when we started publication at *Maine Times* that we'd run out of stories in a month. However, I thought back a few years ago, oh God, what's, I just lost his name, was editor, it'll come to me. He left about four or five years ago. I thought he really brought the Gannett papers, especially the *Sunday Telegram* up to a much better level, much higher level of doing some serious reporting. And I think it's sunk tremendously since then. And I think that, you know, even today they're reporting, they, they equate length with insight. So you have these incredibly long series of articles, you know, that are totally redundant and impossible to read, and they're writing for awards so they get awards for them, but at least they're writing about issues that they never would have written about twenty years ago. So they were very narrow in their focus; they were very Republican in those early days. And, you know, it was, the rumor then was that no Democrat could walk into the *Bangor Daily News* office or they'd be thrown out. I mean they were seen as sort of black Republican back in those days. And, you know, *Bangor Daily News* had its ups and downs, they had one good editor and now they're going back sort of to mediocrity again. But anyway, so I think there are ups and downs. I think you can read the, I think you can read the *Press Herald* today and be moderately well informed on what's going on in Maine. It's not, I think thirty years ago you wouldn't have had a clue what was going on by reading that stuff.

MR: I'm just going to change the tapes right now.

PC: Sure.

End of Side B, Tape One
Side A, Tape Two

MR: This is the second tape of the interview with Peter Cox on August 23rd, 1999. And, we were talking a little bit about your assessment of some of the other papers in Maine on the last tape. Who would you say were some of the most valuable reporters, or other people that you saw working for the other papers during the time you were involved in the *Maine Times* in the '60s and '70s.

PC: Okay, by the way, that editor's name is Louis Uronik, that I was trying to think of at the *Press Herald*. Glad I remembered that. And Marshall Stone was the good editor at the Bangor paper, which was probably back during the '70s sometime. You know, I think when he was reporting out of Maine, I really haven't followed his Washington career, but John Day was doing a lot of interesting stuff in Bangor. And Bill Langley who actually worked for us and was a sort of a very difficult personality had done some good stuff. So there were, and, oh, Bill something else did some of the really early Indian stuff in the Portland papers, his last name escapes me. You know, you would see people, you know, do good stuff and you could tell they were sort of getting tired. That's one of the problems with journalism, that reporters get tired and then they begin to repeat the same stories, they go back and do the same stories because they've got all the contacts, etcetera. Like Tux Turkel I used to think did a lot of good stuff for the *Press Herald* and he still writes very occasionally for them. So I think there have been a lot of, you know, good reporters from time to time who have done particularly good stuff in Maine, in print media, I don't think I've ever seen a good reporter in our, you know, in our electronic media. But I

think there are people like that. But you see, they get tired, they burn out very quickly unless they've got an editor who really, you know, pushes them. And, you know Dennis Bailey was a good reporter, I mean, not only for us but he worked for the Portland papers, he worked for the Biddeford paper, etcetera. They, they come and they go.

I think the problem, I think what we really lack in Maine is good editors. I mean, I think Marshall Stone and Lou Uranik being a couple of exceptions, people who really knew how to draw out and develop a story and develop the issues around a story. I was, like there was a story in the *Press Herald* the other day about, or the *Sunday Telegram* about traffic congestion, and you know traffic congestion in Maine is caused almost entirely by sprawl, yet it never made that connection in the whole story. And, it's that, it's that kind of thing that, you know, that I think really need some thought. I think the, the editorial page of the Portland papers now is just abysmal. I mean it just makes me cringe because it's either these sort of Pollyanna editorials or someone like M.D. Harmon who's come from another planet. He's finally, you know, now arguing against evolution and, the old flat earth crowd, you know that, I suppose, you know, you want a range of opinion but, you know, you want a range of intelligent opinion. It's like I've always been a great opponent of man on the street interviews on the basis of why the hell should I care what somebody's totally uninformed opinion on something is. And I think that's what, you know, what you try to do is you try to get thoughtful people to comment on things, and then give you, to tell you something you didn't already know. And that's probably journalistically still a fairly radical idea.

So while I don't have, you know, I don't think there's a lot of great journalism going on in Maine, I really don't expect very much either. And one of the ironies is, people say, well, you know, it was a different time in 1968 when you started *Maine Times*, things have changed. Yes, things have changed, but there's still a lot to be done out there and one of the issues that I think has occurred, which is an interesting one, you know, I was talking earlier about the sort of Washington living room where everybody knew, the policy makers and the pundits are sitting down and discussing stuff together. And even though, you know, I wasn't close to a lot of these people in policy making positions, I was close enough so I would not hesitate to call them to get background on an issue, or to go somewhere where they were and sit and listen to them; and I never felt I was compromised by learning what they had to say. I mean, I was going to reach my own conclusion anyway, and I think that's a big mistake.

And one of the things we're going to try, we've got this journalism institute in Maine now called the Acadia Institute, we're bringing environmental reporters from all over the country to Maine to look at issues in more depth and stuff, and largely at my instigation we have a session planned where Angus is going to meet with them one on one, just Angus and them and discuss, you know, from a governor's viewpoint what it means to policy the kind of press coverage you get, that people don't try to get really all the background. You know, they look for the con-, they still do. They look for the conflicting statements.

You know when I was at the Adirondack enterprises and all the stuff was coming out about, out of the Supreme Court about school prayer, and you'd get the wire service thing, you know, an hour after the decision was handed down. Obviously nobody had read the decision yet, and they'd go ask some Bible belt congressman what he thought and he'd say, "It's the end of the

world." And, you know, the predictable comment where, you know, that was one thing we did at *Maine Times*; I used them for short pieces, I actually personally read most of the Maine Supreme Court decisions. They made the story in and of itself because they told you the facts of the case, then they told you their conclusion and why they reached it, and if there was a dissent you got the dissent. And, you know, I might only write a really short piece for it, but there it was, a key issue, and I would only pick the issues that were important. But nobody does that, they just go out, you know, now you'd go out and you'd say okay, you know, we just had a thing upholding right to privacy in abortions, and then they go find somebody (*unintelligible phrase*) abortion to say it's the end of the world, they still do it. And, and so that's why, so anyway.

The idea of the session with Angus is to really, you know, get the reporters sort of in a non-defensive, he didn't want to do it with just Maine reporters because he thought they'd be so defensive about it, to really look at it from the other viewpoint and what information is available out there if you want to get backgrounded. And a lot of things, I mean, I think a reporter would learn a lot coming to one of our smart growth sessions, but you know, they might have to go to a meeting for five or six hours, and they wouldn't get a story directly out of there. What they do is they get a lot of story leads and contacts to talk to. Well most editors won't allow reporters to do that, so, so I think that, and the fact that, you know, the, that I think the policy issues have so much switched to, to the nonprofits and what's going on in them because (*unintelligible phrase*) involved in the farm land preservation thing and, you know, buying development rights and all this stuff, but this all connects with a whole bunch of other things and, you know, nobody in the press knows how to do that story because there's not one critical event. Which means that the people who can determine stories are politicians because when they make a statement or hold a press conference it gets covered, but of course they want to avoid controversial subjects. So I'm, I'm very interested in who sets the agenda and I think that was one of the things that was a difference with *Maine Times*.

If you said, you know, "What made *Maine Times* different?" It was, I think what made *Maine Times* different was story selection. We set the agenda; we didn't let the politicians or the bureaucrats or the, you know, I mean, not the stuff you see in a newspaper that is derived from press releases. You know, I think the public should be warned that that came from a press release, that somebody wanted them to do that story, and why did they want them to do that story. So I could go on in journalism sort of forever.

MR: Well I guess I'll ask you about some of the governors that you might have had an opportunity to follow their careers and covered through the paper. This one, maybe you were away in New York for most of his terms, but Governor Reed, did you have much of an assessment of his political significance or his style, or?

PC: Yeah, John Cole, when he was still writing for the *York County Coast Star*, called Gov. Reed a rimless zero.

(*Tape stopped.*)

PC: . . . obviously (*unintelligible word*) against him, so. And even though I was in New York, I mean I paid attention to what was going on in Maine. And he was just sort of a, you know, he

was your classic *laissez faire* governor who really was, well I mean, you know, you know. You know his whole background and stuff; he sort of fell into the position because [Clinton] Burton Clauson died in office, you know, and the Nixon landslide in Maine got him reelected, so, but I would say, you know, he was an indication as several governors have been of you can't do too much damage.

MR: And you mentioned Governor Longley a few times in the interview, but what's kind of your general overview of his period in office as governor?

PC: Well, I mean it was obviously a disaster, I mean, you know, he gutted education in Maine and it took years to recover from that. And, you know, his whole idea of, you know, downsizing, etcetera, was sort of to chop government apart and which was, you know, also sort of the Newt Gringrich thing of, you know, years later. And I think he essentially bamboozled a lot of the public. I mean, even today when they look back, you know, when Jim Longley, Jr. was running for office and they said, you know, rely on the popularity of his father, etcetera, as if, you know, as if this was a great glorious day in government and Longley was just not, you know. He was off the wall. And, again, I mean, you know, he, you know, his damage was fortunately limited because you could only do so much damage in four years. But I can't, I can't think of one positive accomplishment. You know, you can run on distrust of government, and fine, but what does it get you? Unless you don't want government.

MR: And how about Governor Ken Curtis?

PC: Ken Curtis was certainly, you know, the first person to really take, I think, to take a very activist, positive role for governor in Maine. I mean he was probably even more, you know, activist than Muskie was. Of course it was ten, more than ten years later. And he brought in all those sort of brain trusters, all those people he brought into state, Peter Bradford, Andy Nixon, Kermit [V.] Lipez, those people also continue to have a real influence on the state. And (*unintelligible phrase*) it was under Ken Curtis that you, you know, that the income tax was put in, which was pretty darned important if you want landmark legislation. So, and Curtis was a very personable, open sort of guy, so I think he was open that way. I mean we, we would come across him, you know, when we were going to attack one of his bureaucracies, and, and, you know, his sort of big deal. He was the end of the Democratic growth promotion of, you know, the oil port, Machiasport Free Trade Zone, all that stuff, where I think, you know, he sort of, we just began to realize that that wasn't such a good idea as we thought it might be in the beginning. But I think he had a very positive influence in the state, and I think he was a very open sort of person.

MR: How about Governor Brennan?

PC: Brennan was great on certain issues. One of the problems was he's a little thin skinned politically, and so, you know, whenever you opposed him he tended to take it a little personally. And I think he was really good on the social issues, not as good on the environmental issues. But again, his, especially his first cabinet was terrific, I think until the, until Governor King we haven't had such a, you know, that's, we didn't have such a good cabinet again. And I think the unfortunate thing about Joe Brennan was he didn't move on. You know, he obviously didn't

want to be a congressman, but I think, you know, you can't be governor of Maine forever and I think he got enamored of the office and lost sight of what it was he could accomplish. And he did accomplish a lot in two terms, but then, you know, I thought it was unfortunate when he came back, ran again, and really didn't have, you know, didn't have much to say, didn't have a real vision any more.

MR: Okay, well I guess I'll ask you now about some of the other state and national politicians from Maine like, well we'll start with George Mitchell, Senator George Mitchell?

PC: I think George Mitchell's terrific. I think he attained a stature that I would not have expected, you know, thirty years before. He, as an attorney, represented a guy named Freddie Vahlsing, who was also not a great star in the, Ed Muskie's crowd. And, you know, I was really, you know, we were really giving. I remember giving George a lot of trouble one time for representing Vahlsing. But I just think he grew so much. I wish that, you know, some of the things he did after he left office, you know, some of the lobbying and stuff like that, I wish he hadn't done but I guess it's inevitable. But I think he's a person of real stature, I think he's, you know, he's right up there with Muskie. And I think it's, you know, wonderful, his association with Maine.

MR: How about Margaret Chase Smith?

PC: I was not as big a fan of hers. I mean certainly, you know, I've got to, you know, step back and recognize that, you know, she was a major figure. You know, she tended to be somewhat vindictive. And she tended to be, somewhat vindictive, yeah, I mean in the. When we started *Maine Times* we sent a copy of it to each person in the congressional delegation and she sent us back a letter which said essentially, considering what you've written about me in the past, why should I wish you luck in the future, I hope to God (*unintelligible phrase*) as soon as possible, so, it was not a warm and fuzzy relationship with us. But I mean I, I've got to admit, you know, she was a, she was a, she had real stature. What will they do?

MR: (*Unintelligible phrase*).

PC: Yeah.

MR: Okay, how about Bill Hathaway?

PC: Bill Hathaway, you know, never struck me as having that depth. You know, he was a good guy, he voted the right way. But he just didn't, I don't know why he never, he just always seemed like a, like a politician and he seemed, and I guess also he had that sort of Washington focus, you know, sort of like Peter Kyros, you know, he disappeared from the face of the earth and, you know, when he went out of office. And, so you know, I'd say, you know, Hathaway was a good Democrat.

MR: And how about Bill Cohen?

PC: Bill Cohen I think is very solid, I mean I can't help but admire, you know, his

independence in the whole Nixon years and that thing. I often disagreed with him on, especially in the earlier days, on military stuff where he just seemed to be, you know, sort of rubber stamping any military expenditure. And, and, you know, but I think he was, I think he was a good senator and I think, you know. I don't put him, I don't put him in a league with Muskie, but I'll put him right below.

MR: And how about David Emery?

PC: I think David Emery is your classical, you know, political nerd who couldn't do anything else. And, you know, here's a guy who sort of couldn't make a career before or after politics, and so he just kept hanging on. And I would say just totally undistinguished. He's what happens when you, you know, he's just a lower grade, lesser grade congressman who didn't do anything memorable except sort of make stupid remarks. I remember, you know, at one point his attacking something like, there was some kind of mussels in the Great Lakes and he was pooh-poohing that, why would anybody spend any money on it. Well, in fact they were a big problem because they were clogging up everything, they were one of these species that had been brought in, you know, that are multiplying, and it was, you know, it was the easy crack without any thought to it. That's, he was just your, you know, your knee jerk sort of political person.

MR: Last but not least, how about Olympia Snowe?

PC: I mean, you know, it's an interesting selection you're throwing out at me. Olympia and I don't mix. [Brief dialogue with Eunice Cox] I feel that she's always been terribly overrated. I feel she's always been, you know, an intellectual lightweight. I mean, I don't disagree with the position she takes on a lot of issues because, you know, they're better than the right wing. And she, she took a dislike to us for a long time and, we did a piece on her early on in her career where we said essentially that her handlers liked to, you know, minimize her direct contacts with the press and the public because they liked to control, you know, what she said and that, so she's never had a real interplay with the public.

But to give you an example of where I really, really break ranks with Olympia Snowe is a few years ago there was some guy who wanted to talk to her about, you know, the war in Latin America, you know, the Sandanistas, Honduras, etcetera. And the person had tried to get an appointment with her and she kept avoiding it. And so he went to her office I think in Bangor or somewhere north of here, and simply said he was going to sit there until he could get an appointment with her. He wasn't going to cause any disturbance or anything, but he was going to sit there until he got an appointment with her. And she had him arrested. And it went to the Maine Supreme Court, and she was upheld, except Lou Scolnik, there comes the name again, wrote a great dissent and what she said, you know, this person was doing nothing disruptive, and whether she likes it or not, Senator Snowe must recognize that when she's elected she represents all the people, not just those people who voted for her. And I would say Olympia is a classic person who feels she only represents the people who voted for her, and if you didn't vote for her your opinion doesn't count. So, enough.

MR: I see one thing I didn't pick up on earlier, your uncle was a Maine federal court official . . .?

PC: My uncle was clerk of courts for the, for the federal court when Judge Gignoux was federal district court judge in Portland. He was, and it must have been previous judges too, and subsequent. He was a long, long time clerk of courts, and very much, which I find is sort of a family trait, he knew everything about the courts and the court system. If you wanted to know anything about what was going on in federal court, he was the one you went to to get that information. And was very, apparently, very highly respected as clerk of courts. I had another uncle who I discovered, actually Uncle Maurie, who is the clerk of courts, his son Jim discovered about this other uncle that he'd once served time in Thomaston for running numbers. And today we've got the lottery, back in those days he worked for a place called Century Tire which then was, and I always knew he was sort of the black sheep, I never knew why he actually got sent to prison. He was a great guy; always knew the best places to eat, would take you to these places. And then another uncle who was in the treasury department, and one who died and then an aunt who married a fellow that ran a haberdashery store in Old Town. She just died about two years ago.

MR: Okay, and throughout the interview you talked a lot about the Democratic party and how it's developed a little bit over the past thirty or forty years. How would you asses the Republican Party in Maine and how it's changed since maybe 1960s or '50s?

(*Tape stopped.*)**PC:** . . . Republican Party went through an incredible transition since 1960. I mean, in 1960 it really was the party of the corporate leadership of Maine. Jim Haskell who is president of the Senate was after all, you know, also chief executive officer at Bangor Hydro Electric, and in those days, you know, the president of CMP, the president of Great Northern which was then located in Maine, you know, Spencer Miller, president of the Maine Central Railroad, all these guys sat on each other's boards. And they really did, you know, say what was to be done, make policy. And they pretty much controlled the Republican Party in those days. So that was, you know, the beginning of it then, and of course that opened the way for the great Democratic resurgence.

By the late '60s however, you know, partly in response to the Democratic resurgence, the Republican Party had really opened up and you had good liberal Republicans. One of the interesting things is about *Maine Times*, our readership was split almost thirty-thirty-thirty, between Republican, Democrats and Independents. And in fact, you know, you had this big group of very well informed, civic-minded Republicans, and so a lot of the early environmental legislation under Ken Curtis was herded through by Harry Richardson who was a Republican. Joe Sewall, Hoddy Hildredth was a Republican, I mean. I saw Hardy recently and he made the comment to me, I don't know why I'm still a Republican. He's been voting for Republican the last twenty years. So you really had, you know, this Republican alternative. You really had people you could vote for.

Now, they still had that problem that, you know, in the primaries the right wing tended to push them a little bit that way, and they didn't necessarily get the best candidates out, but for a good long period in there, for me, you know, a Democrat, definitely, that someone was a Republican was irrelevant. Then we began the, you know, the national thing sort of, you know, came back home and the sort of right wing took over again. And I had a kind of interesting conversation

with Angus when he said, you know, when he first got into office. He realized that the Republicans were trying to sabotage everything he did. And the Democrats were sort of taking a wait and see attitude, you know. They would cooperate with him on something they believed in. And he said he realized then that for the Republicans in the legislature, victory meant your opponent's failure. Didn't mean getting through the programs you wanted or anything else, it was all, you know, this is hand-to-hand combat: I win, you lose, or vice versa. And I think this was very much reflected in the early Newt Gingrich. You know, contract with America years, and the fact that we've got these, a lot of people in there now on the Republican side who want to destroy government. They want to, they don't want to improve government. I mean, I think that's, it was the liberal Republicans. Their idea was that, you know, by controlling government, by keeping, making it responsible, etcetera, we improve government. Now it's, you know, let's make government nonfunctional.

And I think all this stuff of, you know, the tax give backs, which really don't amount to anything when you, you know, when you actually get the money back, are all based on that idea, if we can cripple government, we can destroy government, we can remove government. Now that doesn't mean there aren't, you know, Phil Harriman or some of those people who I think are, you know, good old line liberal Republicans are fine. I think the other thing that's happened with the Republicans is unfortunately they've been caught, and this is where, you know, Susan Collins and Olympia Snowe are free of that, on the whole social issues agenda which is, you know, the anti-gay, anti-abortion, religion in the schools, which really. I mean I understand abortion is sort of a key emotional issue, but you know, most of that other stuff is going to have no effect on the quality of our lives whatsoever. They're just total red herrings as far as any real meaning in our lives goes. And I think the Republicans have gotten trapped by that. And the, you know, maybe the Democrats were lucky because our fringe went out and formed the Green Party. You know, and stayed over there and the Republicans are still crippled by them.

You know, I mean Mark Finks was around, you know, he's heading this thing in Falmouth to overturn a gay rights ordinance they have down there, you know, major threat to democracy. Mark Finks was around doing that stuff, you know, twenty-five years ago, and he's still, you know, making the Republicans look like a bunch of Neanderthals, which is, you know, it's unfair to them. And I think, I'm hoping that at some point, you know, they're going to come back in and form an alternative, and not get caught in some of these old issues. You know, when I was, in the early days one of the big issues was union shop, you know, closed shop, you had to belong to a union, they already had the union dues, to be able to work there. And it was, you know, it was a hot issue, but really sort of an irrelevant issue.

(*Taping stopped.*)

PC: . . . and things like minimum wage are similar, you know, they're sort of symbolic issues, and I think they've gotten caught up in a lot of these symbolic issues that don't really, don't really mean anything. And I'd like to see them break out of that and offer a real alternative. And I think there is a real alternative for a more, I mean all of us are more fiscally conservative than we were twenty-five or thirty years ago, and all of us are much more, recognize much more the limitations of government. And I think there are very creative things that can be done to bring in the private sector. I'm very big on mentoring for instance, and I think this, you know,

this could be done as a great benefit to the schools of volunteers, of mentoring, but really creatively. And I hope, and that could be a great Republican issue, and maybe, maybe in the future they'll go that way, I don't know. I don't think we have as, I don't think we have as many good people in state office as we used to have, that's a problem.

MR: And what about your assessment of the Independent movement in Maine and maybe why that's become more important, or how it's become more important? That might have actually slanted the question a bit.

PC: No, it's not, because I don't think, I mean, you know, I think that what's happened, I mean, Angus is not an Independent movement. Angus is someone who, you know, he's a fiscally conservative Democrat is what he is. You know, the reason he didn't run as a Democrat is because he didn't think he could survive the primary. And even if he had survived the primary, he felt that he would have had to make so many promises to groups like the teachers and unions or whatever, he would have been compromised in what he wanted to do. So, he was fortunately in the position where he had enough money to get his message out, but he's not a movement, there's no party there, I mean the Independent movement, Independent party would be somebody like the Greens or Ross Perot who, you know, had his flash and disappeared.

And the Greens, I think, have become a very negative force. I thought, you know, their opposition to the Compact for Maine's Forest just set us back a number of years, they, you know, they've become the weapon for Mary Adams who's probably done more damage to this state than any other single person in the last thirty years, both at getting, you know, the fairer school funding repealed and now the whole forestry issue, so that I really don't believe in Independent movements.

I believe it's better to go back and reform the parties because I think that the consensus you have to build within the party, the fact that you do have to be broad based, you know, those, those things are good, those things are a good way to set policy. I think that setting, you know, if, the more Independents (*unintelligible word*), the more you could try to set policy in a void. And I don't think that's wise in my old age, I don't think that's a way to function. I think you need that interplay and you need to know when you're wrong. And if you're just, if there's just half a dozen of you sitting in a room declaring you're a party, you think you're always right and that's the biggest danger of the Independents is they're so sure they're right that they can't believe there's any possible alternative viewpoint. So I would like, and I think both the parties could do with a lot of rejuvenation. But that's where, that's where I think the emphasis should be.

MR: And, is there anything else that we haven't covered about your involvement . . .?

PC: Is there anything we haven't covered?

MR: . . . maybe that you think you'd like to add about your own political involvement or people you've dealt with, issues you've been involved with, whatever comes to mind.

PC: Well I think the, the thing that I really feel is important, because I feel Maine is a place where you can make a difference, Maine is worth saving, we can still, we are still functional. I

think there's a lot that needs to be done and I get frustrated when people don't, you know, react to it quickly enough. And, you know, but I'm gaining some perspective, I'm working for instance now with these people in downtown Bath.

I'm very much sort of an advocate that one of the ways to counter sprawl is to make downtowns more functional and more livable. And, you know, they're discussing some of the same issues we were discussing thirty-five years ago when I came back. I'm now realizing it sometimes takes thirty-five years for something to happen. So, but I, I think it can happen and I think it will happen and I think that, you know, there's a level of civility we still have within our political institutions in Maine that is important. I think the fact that we all know each other, that we see what happens.

I used to have, you know, one of my theories of journalism is that the farther away the publication is from what it's writing about, the more inaccurate it probably is and the more inaccurate it can afford to be. And by that I mean if you're the, you know, the local newspaper and you write about the town council meeting of the night before, you're going to run into one of those town councilors the next day you're walking down the street, so you better have accurately represented what the person had to say. Paul Hazelton had the wonderful idea that in awarding journalism prizes for stories, you know, exposes or stories about, you know, the big, the big blockbuster story about a community or situation, you should always have on the review panel someone who knew about that situation, either someone from the community or something else.

At one point the Maine, some of the Maine Press Association, knowing I have total contempt for their prizes, asked me what I would do to improve them and I said, "Well one thing I would do is I would have someone, a non-journalist who knew something about the situation to give an opinion on the thoroughness and accuracy of the stories," and that was like total anathema. So, but I think that's one of the things that we have is Maine is what you can't get away with, and what you, and what you, you know, and what you are held responsible for.

And so my, I guess my final anecdote is a good friend of mine named David Turettes, who's just total integrity, called me one time about someone who wanted to do a business deal with him, and said, "Should I do a business deal with this person?" And I said, "David, I've been waiting twenty-five years for someone to ask me that question, the answer is no." This is someone who I felt, you know, had dealt unfairly with me twenty five years before, and I think in Maine, you know, what you do over a long period of time counts. And so, if you take the long range view, you know, when you do something because you think it's the right thing to do even though it may not be immediately advantageous, in Maine that will pay off twenty or thirty years down the line because somebody will remember it. I think it's, you know, you can't, I think that's one of the great things about this state, and you know, even in your doing these interviews, the, you know, the fact that we can talk about incidents thirty, thirty-five years ago and they still matter in evaluating someone, that's important, I hope you're going to use that.

MR: Okay. And just one final question I've got. What is your general assessment of Muskie's legacy, maybe for the politics of Maine, and for national politics?

PC: I think his legacy for Maine is really, you know, not as much in particular in policies,

although the water pollution thing is certainly very significant for Maine, but really in the idea of the Maine politician is a person of stature. I mean, we, especially our senators I think, we justifiably hold to quite a high standard, and we've been lucky enough to continue that standard and I hope it does continue. I think nationally, I think, you know the, all the environmental legislation is tremendously important. And I think he still stands for a lot of integrity which I still think is an admired quality. And I, so I think he brought, I think he brought prestige, I think he brought honor to the Senate and allowed people to see major national politicians as honorable straightforward people. I have never, I mean I think it was, you know, his taking an airplane ride from Freddie Vahlsing was not a good idea in 1963 or whenever it was, but I have never heard even the, a rumor that Muskie might have decided any issue on anything other than its merits, and I think that's an earned image that is of great value to the nation, that there are people like that.

MR: Great, well thanks a lot for your time.

PC: Thank you.

End of Interview