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Mills, Paul oral history interview

Andrea L'Hommedieu

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Interview with Paul Mills by Andrea L'Hommedieu

Summary Sheet and Transcript

Interviewee
Mills, Paul

Interviewer
L'Hommedieu, Andrea

Date
May 3, 2000

Place
Farmington, Maine

ID Number
MOH 173

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Biographical Note

Paul Harland Mills was born in Farmington, Maine to Katherine (Coffin) Mills and S. Peter Mills, II. In 1953, he moved to Gorham with his family so his father could take a position as U.S. Attorney. He returned to Farmington at the age of ten, and continued his schooling in the Farmington public schools. He graduated from Mount Blue High School in 1970. He attended Harvard for his undergraduate education, then the University of Maine School of Law. In high school, he worked for a Farmington radio station and at Harvard, worked for three radio stations. When he returned to Maine, he worked at WGAN in Portland writing feature stories and news copy. He also hosted a political talk radio show on WLOB. Mills returned to Farmington in 1977 to practice law with his father. In the late 1980s, he joined WGME TV in Portland as a guest political commentator. He has also written monthly columns for the Lewiston Sunday Journal.

Scope and Content Note

Interview includes discussions of: Portland radio and TV broadcast journalism; law profession; Farmington 1962-1970; shoe industry in Farmington; waiting for Kennedy in 1960; support of Margaret Chase Smith; Margaret Chase Smith's relationship with the Mills family; Cormier vs.

Smith Senate Race; Peter Mills II political affiliations; Peter Mills significant rulings as judge; Katherine (Coffin) Mills as a distant relative of Frank Coffin; political talk in the Mills home; Margaret Chase Smith and Bill Lewis; Gwil Roberts; Severin Beliveau's relationship with the Mills family; Margaret Chase Smith personal information; Smith's moderate political views, but conservative military views; Smith's influence on Janet and Dora Ann Mills; Smith's relationship with Democrats; Janet Mills; Gwil Roberts' political career; Currier Holman; Holman family; relationship between the Holmans and the Millses; Agnes Mantor; meeting Ed Muskie; Paul Mills' impression of Ed Muskie; Peter Mills II's political involvement after appointment to the bench; 1964 election; Big Box; newspaper columns; working with Christian Potholm on The Insider's Guide; Muskie's legislation and its effect on Nixon's policies; and Muskie as being underestimated in Maine history.

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Transcript

Andrea L'Hommedieu: This is an interview on May the 3rd, the year 2000 at the law office of Mills. I'm interviewing Paul Mills at 1:00 P.M., this is Andrea L'Hommedieu. I'd just like to start by having you state and spell your full name.

Paul Mills: Okay, Paul H. Mills, that's P-A-U-L, and then H, the middle initial, as in Harland, and then M-I-L-L-S.

AL: And where and when were you born?

PM: In Farmington, Maine, in 1952.

AL: And where did you, you grew up in Farmington or . . .?

PM: Not quite, really. We lived here about a year and a half and then due to my father's first appointment as U.S. attorney, meaning that his professional commitments were in Portland, we lived in Gorham. And he was a U.S. attorney the first time around for eight years, largely under the Eisenhower administration, and then we actually, the family stayed there for about a year after that. So until I was about a year and a half until I was ten, lived in Gorham, Maine, a suburb of Portland. And then we returned to Farmington when I was ten and went through the public school system here, graduating from Mt. Blue High School in 1970.

AL: And where did you go to college?

PM: I went to Harvard College, Cambridge, Massachusetts.

AL: And law school?

PM: I went to the University of Maine Law School in Portland.

AL: And did you come from there back to Farmington to practice?

PM: Yes, that's right. Although along the way, I will say that I had some fascinating experiences in broadcast journalism starting out when I was a sophomore in high school here in Farmington under Denny Shute, or Elden H.. His nickname was Denny, who himself actually by, as an aside, was the Republican nominee for U.S. congress in 1968 against Bill Hathaway. That wasn't my occasion for being associated with Mr. Shute, however, that's S-H-U-T-E. He died only about two years ago in Florida, he was a semi-retired minister by that time. And I did freelance as well as feature interviews, as well as some broadcasting, some announcing, even disc jockey work for the local station here in Farmington my last three years in high school, interviewed a number of political figures even at that time, covered a number of political events.

And then when I was, I worked for a number of summers as well as part-time occasionally during the year for Channel 13 in Portland, WGAN radio and broadcast journalism work, doing some feature stories as well as just hot wire kind of stories. I also did work for three different radio stations in the Boston/Cambridge area when I was in college doing similar types of broadcasting work, some feature work as well as some just regular announcing work. And then when I came back to Maine to go to law school, also continued to do some of that work in the Portland area. It was a lot of fun, for example, hosting a talk, call-in talk show on WLOB, one of the Portland radio stations when I was there, and I would be host to some local political figures. Matt Barron, for example, for whom the Barron Center is named in Portland, Popkins Zakarian, a Portland city councilor, Don MacWilliams and Bill Troubh.

And it was, in any event during the course of most of my high school education as well as college and law school education, spent a lot of time in that kind of broadcast journalistic work where I had a chance to pursue coverage of a number of political matters. And then, of course, I majored in history when I was in college, and still have an abiding relationship with some people from there, particularly Jim Baughman who is a, written about three books on the media, mass media and television. In recent years he's, in the last fifteen years been a professor of history at the University of Wisconsin Graduate School of Journalism and we communicate usually about once a month or so, sometimes swapping ideas for different things to research and this type of thing.

AL: So you had a great interest in politics from a young age.

PM: Yes.

AL: And journalism.

PM: Right.

AL: What led you to law school?

PM: Well, when I was about a, the last part of my junior year in college we went down to an orientation meeting for certain graduate schools, and there was a, the people basically, ninety-five percent of the people I knew were going to sign up for some type of post-graduate education. It was just assumed you were going to go to some type of graduate school among my peers. And so I looked around; there were some people going to graduate school in their own major. I wasn't interested in that. Some people going to medical school; I wasn't pre-med. Some people were going to business school and some people were going to law school, and I wasn't quite sure whether I wanted to go, to business school or law school. But I assumed that if I went to law school I could always be a businessman, and if I went to business school I couldn't be a lawyer. Plus there were, of course, some family influences because a number of people in my family, including father, grandfather, uncles on both sides of my family. And even by that time I think my oldest brother had started law school, he'd been in the Navy for five years after college himself. And so between those things there was certainly a great expectation among people that I was in college with, that you were going to school after you went to college. It was just a question of which school you were going to go to and law school seemed to be the closest fit, you know?

AL: And you came back to Farmington in what year?

PM: Nineteen seventy-seven.

AL: I mean when you went to high school.

PM: Oh, I was ten years old when we came back from Gorham, yeah.

AL: Okay, so that was 1962?

PM: Right, that's right.

AL: So you were here from '62 to '70?

PM: Right.

AL: What was Farmington like during those years?

PM: Well, I think it was not quite as either commercial or quite as institutional as it is today. The, for example, the Mt. Blue shopping center didn't exist at that time, nor, of course, for that matter did Wal-Mart. I grew up from the time I was ten until I went away to college, and of course coming back for vacations, in a place which has partially been torn down, but it's, much of it's still there. It's 62 High Street, the corner of High and Lincoln Street, which is now in recent years the psychology department offices of the University of Maine at Farmington. Even in the 1960s that was certainly close to about the center of the university, or at that time Farmington State Teacher's College, or Farmington State College if you will, as you could possibly get. I spent many evenings and weekends across, directly across the street at the Mantor, or it was called the college library because they hadn't named it for Agnes Mantor until a little bit into that time, and so had a great feel for the local college campus and certainly felt part of it. And certainly you could hear the many people, the university, Mallett Hall was right across Lincoln Street from us and you could look right into their dining hall, which is what they had at one time.

And so what was Farmington like at that time? It was somewhat more agricultural. It wasn't quite as suburban as it is now, that is, you didn't have quite as many people from, say, International Paper Company or places like that, wasn't, didn't have quite as large a medical community. Although in an embryonic fashion it certainly had many of the things it has today. It had certainly more of a canning industry at that time, like the corn shop, and the bean canning, the Franklin Farm Products and the Collins Farm Products Company as an example of one of those industries, which has now sort of gone by the wayside. More dairy farms. But you still had a hospital, you had a university, and it certainly was the commercial hub of the Franklin county area. So in somewhat a smaller dimension it was similar to what it is today.

AL: And the shoe shops, did they employ a lot of people?

PM: Yeah, Farmington Shoe, of course the shoe shops coming in actually was something in the mid-fifties, a little bit before my recollection when FrankC, Farmington Shoe was opened up. And that's had its ups and downs, of course, since that time under a number of different names, I think it's called Franklin or Shaer Shoe in more recent years. Bass Shoe of course was a little bit more, obviously a much more prominent player from an employment standpoint, as was Forster Manufacturing Company then than it is today. Many people in Farmington, Chesterville or surrounding towns, you name it, worked at Bass Shoe, and so, obviously that's declined a little bit.

AL: What are your first political recollections? How old do you think you were?

PM: Well, I certainly have very dim, vague recollections in a very superficial way of, I think, a campaign button for Eisenhower in 1956, but I clearly do remember much about the 1960 campaign. Our family went to see Richard Nixon, Vice President Nixon when he flew into the Portland airport. And then went to the field out in back of the Portland Expo building in the summer of 1960 which was an observance. He was there, of course partly for political purposes, but the direct occasion for his being there was the two hundredth anniversary of Cumberland county, which was estabC, organized in 1760. And so I remember attending that and seeing Vice President Nixon speak.

I also remember seeing on television portions of the Nixon-Kennedy debates. I can remember a couple of expressions that Vice President Nixon used in those debates. I've since bought the video tapes of them and seen them, but in any event I do have some recollections. I also remember watching Lucia Cormier and Margaret Chase Smith debate on television. And I remember going with my father, we would, had come up to Farmington, even though we lived in Gorham we kept coming back to Farmington some on the weekends. And I was up here alone with my father the Sunday night, you know what I'm going to talk about next obviously, the Sunday night before the election. And that Sunday evening around suppertime there was a debate between Lucia Cormier and Margaret Chase Smith on television; I remember watching that and hearing some of the things they said.

And then I accompanied my father as we stopped on the way back to Gorham in Lewiston. I think it was called City Park at the time, about a block up from Lisbon Street in front of what was then known as the DeWitt Hotel. It's since been closed down, became a bank, and then since become an addition to the *Sun-Journal* newspapers. And we waited and we waited. And I remember actually my father shaking hands with Frank Coffin that night, earlier in the evening, Coffin didn't, I think, stay for the entire evening because he had to go down to Portland to be on TV himself, and seeing many people milling around the park in eager anticipation of the appearance of Senator John F. Kennedy only two days before the election. And even though, you know, we were Republicans and my father, I think, was in favor of Nixon, nevertheless we knew this was a major event. And at that time Kennedy appeared to be edging ahead in the polls and here was the next president, apparently, of the United States and from what we could tell, only two days before the election, making an appearance in Maine.

You also know what I'm going to say next, which is that the, I suspect that being eight years old the hour wore on and on. I remember we went to some stores in Lisbon Street and ran into one of the storekeepers there, who remembered that my father was once in the legislature a few years before. And we had, my father had a number of casual conversations with different people, merchants or other people waiting, but my bed time had long since come and gone. We went in the car and resumed our trip back to Gorham and we never saw Kennedy arrive because he didn't arrive until after midnight. So I missed that chance even though I was, and I think that's true of probably about half the people who came out that night to see him. But I remember the build-up to the event and certainly that was the first election that, 1960, I have particularly tangible recollections of.

AL: Do you have any recollections of Lucia Cormier specifically, of what impressions you had of her?

PM: Well, not a great deal. I've spoken, of course, to people who came from the Rumford area who knew her as a teacher and also because of a business, that was sort of a stationery or, yeah, I think it was books, a combination book store and stationery store, that she had in downtown Rumford later on. I knew that, you know, she had become a customs official and that she waged some very vigorous campaigns both for congress in 1950 against Robert Hale, and then she went back into the house and was a minority leader. I remember that she ran a very spirited campaign but I don't think I ever personally met her and, though I have a strong personal curiosity about her.

I also, of course, have saved and purchased second hand the *Time* magazine on which she appeared on the cover, on whose cover she appeared, along with Senator Smith. It was the first of three times in the history of the country in which two women opposed each other for the same United States senate seat. The next time was in Maryland over twenty years later, Mikulsky in Maryland was challenged by someone else. I think she had been a former labor secretary cabinet member about 1982. And then only two years ago in Washington state, Patty Murray was challenged for reelection by another woman. So it was historic and remained unprecedented for about twenty-two years, that two women would be the major contenders opposing each other for the same U.S. senate seat. From a standpoint of historic proportions, that was eventful and fascinating. But I don't have a lot of personal recollections firsthand of anything about Lucia Cormier.

AL: Can we talk a little bit about your parents, what their names were, what they did and their background?

PM: Yes, of course. My father, Peter Mills, my mother Katherine Mills, Katherine with a 'K'. My father was born in Farmington in 1911. His father was an attorney as well as had been a member of the Maine state senate and the house of representatives, although his father actually represented Hancock county, in the Ellsworth-Stonington area in the state senate for two terms, in the house of representatives for a term. And then shortly before my father was born his father and mother moved to Farmington, which was his [S. Peter Mills II] mother's [i.e. Paul's paternal grandmother's] hometown. And that's how it happened. And he relocated his practice to this community about that time.

And my father himself became a lawyer, was very enthusiastic about many political matters, a great curiosity, a liberal curiosity for the time, about many matters. He became a Republican, remained a Republican, but nevertheless had a great curiosity about many political matters across the spectrum. As an example, when he was twenty he hitchhiked to Chicago in 1932 and witnessed, and got into the convention under some very unusual circumstances, but it was through some lucky breaks was able to get onto the floor of the Democratic National Convention in 1932, which was the first one that nominated Franklin Roosevelt. Very heavily contested one involving Al Smith and some other, you know, contenders; Garner, of course, from Texas. So even though he was a Republican by instincts, he attended for example the 1932 Democratic convention, he attended a number of Republican conventions, a very strong Eisenhower supporter.

He was a member of the Maine house for three terms, the state senate for two terms, and was a municipal court judge for a few years. He's still alive. He comes into the office about every day. He'll be eighty-nine in August. He was U.S. attorney for Maine for a total of sixteen years, worked on some early environmental litigation as a U.S. attorney in the late sixties, in terms of curtailing the Kennebec River log-driving operations of the Scott Paper Company.

[He] also sponsored legislation in the Maine state senate which curtailed the racial and ethnic discrimination practices of certain private clubs, particularly in the Portland area, by making it a condition of receiving a liquor license or a victualers license in the state of Maine, that your club or organization could not discriminate against blacks, Jews, or what have you. The idea being that the Portland Club and some fairly elite organizations in the Portland area were not allowing Jews to join. He was quite offended by that.

And then the, another series of bills that he sponsored in the state senate in the late sixties were bills that curtailed some of the abusive lending practices of what were known as the small loan companies and regu-, and he was something of a consumer advocate in that regard.

That said, he also certainly had very strong roots in terms of his conservative principles on the other hand of law and order. He was a very proud military veteran of WWII. He served in combat in the Pacific, was slightly wounded by a bullet, stray bullet, that came from the first kamikaze plane ever to attack a ship in the Pacific. And at the time it happened, nobody knew what it was, thought it was an accident, realized later that it was a kamikaze attack. And when he was not involved in public affairs or in the military, was, you know, in private practice here in Farmington. I joined him in 1977 shortly after he resumed private practice when he last left the position of U.S. attorney.

My mother grew up in Ashland, Maine. She attended Colby College, Master's degree in English from the University of Maine in Orono later on, and taught for about thirty-five years high school English. Most of that time, although not all of it, in the Mt. Blue High School. And before that Wilton Academy, before the two schools, Farmington High School and Wilton Academy, had merged.

Her only brother, as with my father's only brother, was also an attorney. His name was Lewis Coffin. And Coffin was the maiden name although not closely related to Frank Coffin, but nevertheless the same spelling. You go back to Nantucket and you'll find that we are related. But in any event, her only brother went to law school and became general counsel and head of the law division, eventually, of the Library of Congress. He died about 1987.

My mother's father was a long time public official in Ashland, as her mother was too. Her mother was town clerk. Her father was on the school board, and her father was a selectman and also town clerk at different times of the town of Ashland; public-spirited people. And both my parents certainly shared an abiding interest in public affairs and frequently discussed matters involving state, local and national public affairs and the political affairs and interests. They would often attend different political conventions together, and certainly encourage those of us growing up in the family to develop a curiosity and an abiding interest in matters of that nature.

AL: What influence do you think your parents had on shaping your beliefs and your attitudes?

PM: Certainly, not being a psychologist or a psychiatrist, I suppose I can't completely answer that question. But no doubt all of us spent a lot of time with our parents, either at the dinner table or growing up or going on trips. And that they, I felt they both had fairly moderate, middle-of-the-road beliefs. They tended to avoid the political perimeter, if you will, and they were very open-minded about both, you know, political and cultural matters. And so they naturally played a very strong role in that and encouraged us to become involved, although I think they both, they both intellectually recognized and would impart to us the risks and the hazards of the people who did become involved in public affairs. That there was a downside to it, the pressures involved, the disappointments, the ups and the downs. It certainly has its share of frustrations and they were aware of that too. But they usually came down on the side of saying, on balance it's a positive thing to be involved in community affairs. So, that's how I would probably analyze it.

AL: Do you have recollections of people, political figures being at your house when you were a child? I mean, what was your house like when you were growing up?

PM: Sure, well yeah, I mean naturally I don't want to give the impression that all we ever did was talk about politics or public affairs. That was certainly a prominent feature of our discussions; we subscribed to newspapers, several magazines. But like any other family we engaged in different hobbies and, you know, whether it be, swimming was a very strong concern. And as with anybody, other families of the fifties and sixties, you know, we watched television once in a while, had some relatives and friends over.

In terms of political figures visiting the house or with whom we had contact, probably the most frequent among the prominent political figures would have to be Margaret Chase Smith. And also Bill Lewis, her administrative assistant, sometimes would accompany her, particularly in some of the later years. And then we might visit them. I mean, for example, when my younger sister and myself and my parents went to Washington, D.C. during spring break in 1966, we stayed at Senator Smith's home in Silver Spring, Maryland. She graciously offered that to us, she stayed in the house at the same time, down the hallway in the same place. And so that would be the figure with whom there would be the most, the prominent figure with whom there would be the most interplay.

My father of course, at home, might be speaking on the phone with other political figures of the time. I mean Denny Shute, whom I've alluded to that I worked for at the local Farmington radio station, was of course a person who would, my father would quite often speak to. And I remember the late Howard Kyes, for whom the Kyes Insurance Agency is named, the founder of that, was a very big Republican leader in the Franklin county area. And also my parents were good friends with Gwil Roberts and his wife Pat, and Gwil has always had interests in political affairs. He wrote a column quite regularly for the *Franklin Journal* during the, certainly the, most of the 1960s on public affairs. Gwil Roberts, did I say, he was a history professor, and still living, at University of Maine at Farmington. And he himself actually served a term in the Maine legislature.

And the late Gerhard Williams, an attorney in Farmington about my father's age but who died about twenty-five years or so ago, was a contemporary of my father's and they used to speak quite often. Although when the late Gerhard Williams, I say the late Gerhard Williams because he has a son today by the same name. So the late Gerhard Williams, though he was not politically active in Farmington when I was growing up, was nevertheless a lawyer that my father respected and whom he often communicated with. And who interestingly enough, with whom my father served in the Maine house of representatives for two terms before WWII, because Gerhard at that time was living in Bethel. And he was a representative of the Bethel area and my father was representing, you know, the Farmington area. And Severin Beliveau, even though he was a Democrat was a close associate and friend of my father's. He'd drop by the house once in a while, I mean that was only over in Rumford. He was very dynamic, energetic public figure.

AL: Severin, not Albert?

PM: Oh, Severin, not Albert. Severin was elected county attorney of Oxford county in 1964, when he was only like about twenty-eight years old. No, Albert was much older than my father. I remember Albert, who was the judge. I remember seeing him in court one day when he was sitting next to Severin, in terms of a case that came up in the late sixties. I know exactly who you're talking about. But Albert would be like twenty-five or thirty years older than my father.

Severin, of course, was much younger than my father but my father was good friends with Severin. My father was fairly decent friends with Joe Brennan when Joe Brennan was a very young member of the Maine house. You see, they were members of the house at a time when my father was in the senate. Well, actually, Severin was in the house my father's first senate term, and then Severin moved up to the senate my father's second senate term. And, of course, Severin was a very dynamic engaging person who was a, you know, a conservative Democrat. And my father was kind of a moderate Republican, so I think some of their ideology and their ways of looking at things might have merged a little bit.

But my parents didn't do a huge amount of entertaining in terms of having, you know, buffet dinners for people all the time. I mean, there are certain political figures who have these large mansions. We grew up in relatively modest circumstances. We weren't in poverty, but if anybody knows the characteristics of the house at the corner of Lincoln Street and High Street, it was by no means the Taj Mahal either. And there were five of us, although not all at home at the same time usually, because we were kind of spread out children. And, you know, we were not the kind of family that had a new car every year and didn't drive a deluxe automobile all the time or anything like that. At least when I was growing up, we were middle class people and did not have these huge entertainment situations that you might find in some of the suburbs of Portland like Falmouth and Cape Elizabeth, you know.

AL: I get the impression that your family was, that Margaret Chase Smith counted your family as very close friends.

PM: Yes, oh certainly. She was like an aunt to us in some ways, almost like a relative, almost like a member of the family. The first, I think it was, I can't remember the exact amount, but the first amount of money donated for my bank account after I was born, came from Margaret Chase Smith.[1]

And through, I will say the very first time she ran, my father actually had supported John Marshall, an attorney in Auburn. Predecessor, by the way, to the firm of Isaacson and Raymond, because the firm was Marshall, Raymond and Beliveau, you know. And John Marshall had been family friends with my grandparents because he went to the Farmington State Normal School and had lived at my grandparents' home for a little while, while he was attending school here. And so that very first special election, the Mills actually supported John Marshall. But that quickly changed and shortly thereafter we . . . Of course, my family had known Clyde Smith, my father remembers speaking with Clyde Smith a number of times and knew Margaret Chase Smith. They did not hold that as a grudge, the fact that my father and grandparents did not initially the very first time Margaret Chase Smith ran, supported her.

And, but, for example, New Year's Eve, every New Year's Eve during WWII, Margaret Chase Smith would call up my mother when she was alone at home, my father would be in the service. And they corresponded, I'm sure that the Margaret Chase Smith Library has a number of items like this, and I kept a few myself, corresponded regularly, probably at least once a month and spoke on the phone probably at least once or twice a month, sometimes more often than that.

And whenever she came to Farmington she'd drop by. I can, and as I say, as years went by you'd, more frequently would be accompanied by or driven by, of course, Bill Lewis. And after Bill Lewis died, when Margaret Chase Smith resumed living in Skowhegan, it wouldn't be unusual even a dozen years or so ago for her to call up my father and say, “Look, will you drive me to Bangor? Or will you. . . .” Not because my father was necessarily in the business of being a chauffeur, but because she enjoyed his companionship. She couldn’t drive any more, so she’d be looking for people that she’d know who could.

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[1] The narrator has further remembered, at a later date, that the amount donated to his bank account by Margaret Chase Smith was [$5.00] five dollars.

AL: And how would you characterize her? What about her made her special?

PM: Well, I’ll tell you a little story that I heard only at the hundredth birthday party of Margaret Chase Smith. She wasn’t alive at that time, but they did have an observance in Augusta at the Civic Center. There were about two hundred of us that went to Margaret Chase Smith’s one hundredth birthday party, and that was in December of 1997. Many people spoke, An---, Governor [Angus] King spoke. Governor King, who had not been a supporter of Margaret Chase Smith’s, spoke. And what he said upon interviewing Margaret Chase Smith himself, after he’d become a talk show host, as you know he’d worked for Senator Hathaway for a while, he came back and after having spent an hour or so with her, and told his wife, he says, “You know, you’d better be grateful that she’s not about forty years younger because she is such an engaging, charismatic person.”

She loved people. She took a great interest in people from all walks of life. She was independent in the best sense of the word. Although she was a Republican, she could not be ideologically stereotyped or pigeonholed into one little corner and say, “Here, you are conservative,” or “you are liberal.” She had a great dynamic mix of political views, which I admire a great deal in public figures because it shows that the public figure is thinking for him or her self on each issue and giving it independent deliberation, which she did. She was one of only five [Senate] Republicans, for example, to have voted for Medicare. She was a supporter of expanding women’s rights in the military. She was not an ardent feminist in the historic sense of the word or in the late twentieth century sense of the word, even though she supported the Equal Rights Amendment. Many women, by the way, didn’t at one time, because they felt that protectionist legislation was more important. That’s a fascinating story all in and of itself. A couple of biographies of Eleanor Roosevelt have brought that out, that it was actually respectable on the part of a number of liberal women not to support the Equal Rights Amendment when it was first proposed back in the twenties or thirties. But anyway, Margaret Chase Smith did.

And on the other hand she had what you might call somewhat conservative views when it came to military preparedness. She was a hawk on the Vietnam war, and she distrusted the Communist regimes. She was one of only about nineteen or twenty U.S. senators who, in 1963, along with Senator Goldwater, who voted against the 1963 Nuclear Test Ban Treaty, for example. She was highly perceptive and intelligent and had a fascinating memory for detail, as did Bill Lewis. They complemented each other enormously. What she couldn’t remember he could, and what he couldn’t remember she could, vice versa.

And she was a very businesslike, professional person however, in the sense that she took her work very seriously. I remember she used to, one dinnertime that I had with her one time with my fiancée at the time, we were out to dinner in Skowhegan a few years ago. And she would say, “Well you know, when I was in Washington I did not go to *parties*,” that’s the way she would say it, "I went home to work, and I worked at home at night, and I never went to *parties*." And she had a great deal of, or a moderate degree of contempt for the social life with which Washington had once become associated. The cocktail period, the cocktail party circuit was nothing of her kind at all. And that made it, in a way, all the more privileged and all the more special and all the more unique that members of our family, I think, did know her as well as we did and did get invited into her home, spent the night there at different times and what have you in that, that wasn't something that she did very frequently.

AL: What influence do you think she had on you children growing up, maybe especially your sisters?

PM: I think that's the correct question. I think she probably served as more of a courageous role model to my younger sister Dora, who's eight years younger than I am, and my older sister Janet, who is about four-and-a-half years older than I am, because of her pioneering role in establishing, helping to establish the credibility of women in politics. She was certainly a role model for the rest of us too, or all of us, in her independent way of thinking. Janet became closer to her than Dora Anne, partly because Dora Anne just moved back to Maine really in the last seven years or so, seven or eight years. And Janet became engaged in government activities much earlier, partly because she's older, and would visit with Senator Smith and take some of her stepdaughters to see her and interview her on various occasions.

And Margaret Chase Smith, particularly after Bill Lewis died, he died in 1982, became much more accessible to people in Maine, that is for the last thirteen years of her life, than she had been for the previous ten years. It can be said that after her defeat or retirement in the end of '72 and early '73, that she and Bill Lewis traveled a great deal throughout the country. And they were speaking and giving lectures and establishing themselves as mostly adjunct professors at different higher educational institutions. And they did come to Maine some, but the primary base of their operations would be their home in Silver Spring, Maryland or outside of Washington, D.C.

When he died in early 1982 the, also, of course, they spent time at Cundy's Harbor outside of Harpswell, which was a place, they both had a place there near each other. After his death in early 1982, which was a few months before the formal opening of the Margaret Chase Smith Library in the Northwood Institute there, she clearly resumed making Skowhegan her primary, and the state of Maine, her primary base of personal and professional activity, and spent a lot more time here. So that being said apropos relationship that, for example, Janet had with her, grew stronger during that period of time. Because Margaret Chase Smith was here in Maine a lot more, beginning in 1982 through the time she died in May of 1995, five years ago this month.

AL: And I understand both your sisters are Democrats.

PM: Right, that's correct.

AL: How did that relationship work in terms of Margaret Chase Smith?

PM: I don't think it was a particular impediment. Certainly it is true that during Senator

Smith's own political career that she was a reasonably partisan Republican and she could occasionally be somewhat unforgiving of people who might have supported one of her opponents. But, you know, my sisters did nothing of the kind. And when, Margaret Chase Smith and her husband Clyde Smith, for example, were fairly close personal friends of Governor Louis Brann, who was a Democrat from Lewiston. And in fact, when Governor Louis Brann traveled throughout different parts of New England, he was looking for a woman who might help give his wife certain feminine companionship on these trips, because Mr. Brann may be in a meeting and tied up speaking somewhere. And they might be going to Boston, and he would ask Mrs. Clyde Smith, that's Margaret Chase Smith, to accompany the two of them on these trips. And that's, and even though he was a Democrat. So, the prospect of associating with people who were Democrats.

And then once she retired she had uh, gracious opinions of many Democrats in conversations, or people who weren't Republicans. She certainly seemed to think, she and Bill Lewis thought a great deal of Governor Longley. They thought a great deal of George Mitchell because of the courtesies, I think, that Mitchell afforded her when she was visiting the senate on a number of occasions after George Mitchell became himself a U.S. senator. She had somewhat antagonistic opinions of many fellow Republicans, you know. So it went across party lines. The thing you had to remember with Senator Smith was that she did value loyalty very highly and, but I would say that merely because Janet and Dora Anne were Democrats, that fact in and of itself, particularly at the point in time in relation to Margaret Chase Smith's career that they became active Democrats, didn't serve as a drawback or a handicap particularly to that relationship.

AL: Did your family know Hal Gosselin?

PM: I know who you're talking about. I'm sure that my father ran into him and he was a figure. His son's an attorney in Lewiston, of course.

AL: Paul.

PM: Yeah, and I knew Paul. Paul was a year or two ahead of me in law school and I knew the family, I know what you're talking about. Don't recall either directly or indirectly any particular details that I can give you.

AL: Okay, back to your sisters. Being Democrats and you and your dad and your brother, or both brothers-?

PM: Actually they are, that's right.

AL: All Republicans.

PM: That's right.

AL: How is it, are you all pretty near the middle post, or, I'm just wondering where that came from, the men and the women differences.

PM: I think my sister became a Democrat when she first registered to vote, my oldest [***sic*** older] sister. At the time she was living in Boston, this is in the late sixties, and she registered as a Democrat. She had gone to Colby for a while and then took a year off from school and was in the Boston area. And she had had fairly [***sic*** somewhat] liberal beliefs from an early time and so. She said she once got a little bit tired of answering the question, "When did you switch over?" Because we were the Republican party. And the rejoinder to that was, "I never did." She was always a Democrat from the time she enrolled. And Dora Anne, I think, I am not as sure about her political affiliations going way back when she was much younger, but she's been a Democrat for at least a dozen years anyway. And I think it arose out of, you know, personal convictions that they had, I would say, mainly for ideological reasons, which are not always the same reasons that people have for becoming a member of a political party.

AL: Do you all get together at any times during the year and sort of talk politics at your get-togethers?

PM: When we get together certainly it's a fair bet that at least fifty percent of the conversations will be on some political issue these days, particularly since five and a half years ago Peter was elected to the state senate. And Dora Anne, since 1996, has been the public health director. Some of their goals and some of their professional objectives in that area intersect a great deal, so they find occasion to speak about many of those matters. And, yeah, for birthdays of different people in the family, or Mother's Day, Father's Day, that type of thing. And most of the time nearly all of us will be there, you know.

There are so many of us, of course, that when you, there are more likely to be two or three conversations going on at once rather than just, you know, one person talking to somebody else, you know. But I would say certainly that half of the conversations or the time they'd be going on would be concerning sometimes the nuts and bolts of particular items. I mean, Peter and Dora Anne have collaborated or have, maybe not collaborated but certainly worked toward common goals and communicated about them along the way in terms of a number of public health issues, funding of certain matters as well as the smoking in public restaurants. And there are a lot of matters on the agenda regarding public health that both of them have kind of worked on.

AL: I'm going to stop and flip the tape over.

PM: Sure, okay.

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

AL: This is side B of the interview with Paul Mills on May the 3rd, the year 2000. And you were going to tell me a little bit more about Gwil Roberts and his role.

PM: Sure, Gwil Roberts was, has always been a friend of the family. He came, he's, just recently by the way, he's eighty-three years old but within the last two years has come out with a book about, a very extensive scholarly book about some of the Welsh families, or people from Wales who came to parts of Vermont. Some of whom, I think, were related to him. Certainly for many decades he was one of the most popular professors, and for a time had been an administrator, as we know, at the University of Maine at Farmington.

He was actually a Republican until the time he was about, shortly after his fiftieth birthday. And then, but he was probably known, if you want to put it in the context of public affairs and political affairs in the community, he was a regular columnist for the *Franklin Journal,* who commented on state, local and national affairs almost every week for about ten years, from about the early sixties until about 1970. Had five daughters, his oldest daughter and I were in the same class going through the Farmington, the part of the Farmington school system that I went through anyway, and a brilliant family.

But anyway, from a public affairs standpoint he was more of a perhaps a commentator on issues, probably perhaps to some extent what I do today myself. I don't, you know, run for public office but I analyze it, I comment about it in different fashions. He was moderator of the Farmington town meeting for about eighteen, nineteen years or so. I took his place as moderator in 1985 actually, when he stepped aside because he was in the Maine legislature.

And then, he enrolled as a Democrat about 1969. And I remember he played a role in supporting a guy named Jud Strunk, who was running as a Democrat for the state senate against Joe Holman, who was the Republican nominee for a special election to take my father's place in the fall of 1969 because my father had resigned to go back to become U.S. attorney. And then Gwil, after his retirement, ran for the Maine house of representatives and, even though this is a Republican district, was elected in 1984. He was defeated for reelection in 1986, not as a result of personal unpopularity but because it's a very strongly Republican district.

And he is a person with a marvelous sense of anecdotal recollection about local history. I speak with him off and on myself. In fact, just yesterday afternoon he and I talked about fifteen minutes or so about one of the subjects you may be asking me later on in this interview. And I find him to be a person who also had a little bit to do with Margaret Chase Smith in the early part of his own career, in that he corresponded, I remember, with Senator Smith's office about certain matters over the years. And I remember when Bill Lewis and Margaret Chase Smith came to visit us one time they would ask, "Well, how is Gwil Roberts?" you know.

And so, and there is a building, justifiably the, what used to be known as the learning center which is called Roberts Learning Center now, named after him about ten years ago now. One of the largest classroom buildings at the University of Maine at Farmington. And despite the fact that he's eighty-three years old, or maybe because of it, he's still very energetic and very dynamic a figure in the community.

He helps run what I call the "Alumni Tour Programs", where the university sponsors certain trips to different parts of the country. And he would go on those. He's very well traveled, had a fascinating personal episode in 1985 when he came down with appendicitis in Russia and had to be hospitalized for it and was, had his appendix removed at that time. Pat Roberts, his wife, quite a bit younger than he is I think, had a kidney transplant in 1969 and she still has that same kidney. And I think, from a medical standpoint, she must have endured longer than almost anyone in the world with the same kidney transplanted. It's a very unusual situation. They were only transplanting kidneys for a few short years before she had one in 1969. And so that's Gwil Roberts, a person of fairly moderate Democratic political views.

I do remember that he was quite outspoken in a number of public forums in the late 1960s in favor of President Johnson's Vietnam War policy. So even though he did become a Democrat, he was at the same time more of a hawk perhaps, than he was a dove. I mean, I'm not saying that he wanted to bomb them into the Stone Age or he certainly wasn't a radical hawk, but he had a number of confrontations. In a, in forums with, for example, Mitch Goodman who was a very leading anti-war activist, almost a pacifist, although Goodman was a WWII veteran, over the Vietnam War. And Gwil was quite vigorous in his support of the Johnson policy, which was: go in to Vietnam but not necessarily try to provoke China into invading the place, you know, kind of policy.

So I certainly have recollections from the late 1960s of two or three different public forums and public presentations that Roberts had in which he would be taking the affirmative of, "Do we support President Johnson's policies in Vietnam?" And he would say, "Yes." And there might either be some college student or another professor who would take the negative of that proposition. And then a number of people who would attend that kind of a forum because it was certainly the major, most intractable public issue and public problem of a period of a good seven or eight years basically, coextensive with the time I was in high school through college basically.

AL: Currier Holman and his family.

PM: Yes, very prominent, of course. They're sometimes spoken [of] in apposition [with ourselves], although there are many differences and many contradictions and oftentimes disagreements. But when people speak of certain families, if I can be so immodest to say either, quote, unquote, and I don't know what this means, "the leading families of Farmington", they'll say, well, "the Holmans, the Butlers, the Millses", you know.

And the Holmans were a very prominent legal family, three generations of them were president of the state Bar Association; originally Joseph C. Holman who was a state senator and a member of the governor's executive council. Joseph C. Holman's father-in-law was a man named Alvin Currier who, in 1854, became one of the very first Republican state senators in America. And then Joseph C. Holman was in the state legislature, he was a county attorney, occasionally moderator of town meetings in Farmington, outgoing, affable person I am told. He died in 1917, so I don't know for sure. Currier Holman, his son. Joseph C. Holman was a member of the governor's executive council in the late 1890s, and Currier C. Holman was his son.

And Joseph F. Holman, popular Farmington attorney who is now about seventy-four years old and still in active practice, that would be the third generation of Holmans. They're very Republican. Joe Holman, the present one, served briefly in the Maine state senate for a special session, he took my father's place in late '69.

Currier C. Holman was on the governor's council under Edmund Muskie in 1957, and, even though he was about seventy-three years old at the time. And Currier Holman died when I was about twenty-nine, and he spent seventy years practicing law. The primary pursuit certainly, of his adult life, was the practice of law. He was very successful, he worked very hard at it, seldom took vacations I am told. Went into the office every day until he was about ninety. He died when he was about ninety-seven. And in some ways a patriarchal as well as a grand patriarchal figure, invested in real estate in Franklin County, also was a major stockholder in at least two of the downtown banks at the time, First National Bank as well as People's National Bank, was the president. At that time the president of the bank was not a full time position, you'd preside over the annual meeting once a year and that was it. It would be the cashier in a commercial bank who would be the full time CEO. But he was president in any event, of the People's National Bank, for over twenty years. And was in the house a term, he was in the state senate two terms way back. As with many public figures, I mean certainly occasionally controversial, people who might have disagreements with his outlook on life and on politics. He was somewhat conservative. But you can't take away from him the fact that he was an enormously successful attorney with, in some respects, a state wide reputation.

And in the context of Edmund Muskie, I believe that both Currier as well as his son Joe, partly because Currier was on the executive council at the time of Muskie's second term as governor, became personally acquainted with Muskie. And I not only believe but am aware of the fact, that they helped introduce Muskie to some of his favorite fishing spots in Franklin County. Even though they were, one was from a conservative Republican family and Muskie was a, you know, Democrat.

AL: Right. When you talked about some of the sort of, quote, unquote, prominent families in Farmington, you mentioned the Holmans as well as the Mills. Now you're both prominent lawyers, Republicans, politically active. Did you ever work together on campaigns or anything?

PM: Yes. At the time my father was a Republican state committeeman from Franklin county in the, I remember in the 1966 campaign, Joe Holman was county chairman of the Republican county committee. And I remember they worked together on that and would certainly, remember they were both, their families were very supportive of Denny Shute when Denny Shute ran for congress in 1968. Denny would have had a good chance, by the way, if it hadn't been for the fact that a fellow named Muskie was the vice presidential running mate of Hubert Humphrey for the presidency, and that it was a fairly Democratic year in many areas. And Hathaway being the incumbent, you know, Shute cut into Hathaway's majority more than any other Republican opponent he had when Hathaway, in any of the four times Hathaway ran for the U.S., ran successfully for the U.S. house. So there's certainly some common interest.

There were some divergences of opinions at times, I think, within the Republican party because the Republican party primary, for example, would be tantamount to election so there would be in many situations in Franklin county as well as throughout the state divergences at times among Republicans as to, you know, "Who do we support for governor?" You know, there were, when Cross first ran there were three people in the primary, you know, Hussey, Bishop, and Cross, and different people may support different candidates.

AL: I wanted to ask you of someone you mentioned, Agnes Mantor. Was that someone, I don't recall when she passed away.

PM: Nineteen seventy.

AL: So you did know her?

PM: Yes, she was living in a house my father owned at the time she died, she was a tenant of my father's actually. And I knew her, she was, of course, a Democrat. She ran as the Democratic nominee for the Maine house of representatives from Farmington in 1934, was not successful. And she was a librarian of course, as well as, I believe, a dean of women or something else, and did know her, did, remembered as a teenager having conversations with her about partisan political events. Her father, I believe, was the postmaster of Skowhegan, Democratic postmaster. At that time, by the way, until only about thirty years ago, postmasters were political appointments. And she was also a friend of Margaret Chase Smith's, even though she was a Democrat.

And she worked on the board, when I knew Agnes Mantor, of course she was the librarian across the street from our house at the library, which was subsequently named for her. And I would encounter her there as a junior high school student doing research or looking up things or just simply doing recreational reading, you know, the newspapers or what have you, old *Time* magazines for example. And so I used to encounter her frequently. And then after she retired, they named the building for her in 1965, after she retired she was, among other things, a member of the board of voter registration for the town of Farmington, which is a three person board that supervised voter registration.

And I remember she remarked to me one time, this is in about June of 1970, it was shortly before she died. I was at the polls I think just observing, and she said, "Now look, the enrollment figures . . ." I don't know the exact figures, but let's just say in Farmington at that time might have shown something in the order of approximately fifteen hundred Republicans and maybe four hundred Democrats. But she says, "It will be interesting to compare the enrollment figures with the election figures this fall." The implication being that the figures, there'd be a little bit more compression between the two figures, that many people enrolled as Republicans so that they could have a vote in the primary maybe, not because they would vote in the fall for the Republican candidate. So I remember that was a comment that, or an observation that she made, and that type of thing.

AL: When did you first meet Ed Muskie?

PM: The first time that I met him, in a way in which I had any conversation with him face-to-face and spent more than a second with him, would have been July 21st [***sic*** 22nd], 1969, a Monday [***sic*** Tuesday] morning in Washington, D.C.. Jeffrey Hollingsworth, then from Belfast, who has since actually written a book called Magnificent Mainers, a bunch of biographies, and who has in the last eighteen or twenty years lived in the Washington, D. C. area, and myself, were the two delegates to the American Legion Boy's Nation at American University. The two delegates from each state would be afforded, among other things, the opportunity to meet with one or both of the U.S. senators from the state. Jeff and I met with Ed Muskie. I think his press secretary was a guy named Shepherd at the time, who took us out to lunch, a younger guy than Muskie. Is he still living, by the way?

AL: Yes, he is. Robert Shepherd, Bob Shepherd.

PM: Sure, I remember him. He spent a lot of time with us that day, about an hour or so, Shepherd did. Muskie had only a few minutes. There's a picture that, of, that Muskie gave both Jeff and I with us in it. And the picture isn't anything particularly eventful because I'm sure there are many pictures like it of other obscure people meeting with their U.S. senator. But the fascinating thing to me was that when I did see Senator Muskie that day, it was not only twelve hours, about twelve hours [***sic*** just over a day (24+ hours)] after Neil Armstrong became the first person to work, to walk on the moon, and it was thirty-six hours [***sic*** actually 2 2 days or 60 hours] after Chappaquidick as the result of which Muskie had become the undisputed front runner for the 1972 Democratic presidential nomination.

I remember, what I do remember at that time as many people, as a seventeen-year-old teenager I was somewhat on the liberal side of things ideologically, more so than I think I am today. And I remember one of the big congressional issues of the time was the anti-ballistic missile system vote. President Nixon had proposed what was known as the ABM; it may even have begun under Johnson because this was early in the Nixon administration. And I remember feeling at the time that supporting the ABM was not necessary to the nation's defense, and I didn't feel that it was a high priority.

Just a few weeks, I think, before this picture was taken, Muskie had announced that he was going to vote against the ABM, and so I remember telling him at that time that I was pleased to learn of his position against the ABM. And he said, "Thank you." And then I think Shepherd or someone else walked into the room, and he had an unusual looking tie, and Muskie said, "Well where the hell did you get that?" to the person. And I think one thing that's difficult for even a seventeen-year-old teenager to become accustomed to is the somewhat loose, casual way that many of your respected political figures have a way of using the English language.

And I remember that about a number of . . . It's certainly not true of Margaret Chase Smith, by the way. She was quite, even as informal as we could be with her and even as much as we got to know her, she didn't swear. I mean, she may have, but I, certainly not in, bandied about the way that I think you see some other public figures do. And I guess when you're seventeen years old that makes more of an impression upon you because you're not, you're accustomed to seeing these people behave very properly on television at the time, and in public affairs. And you see him speaking informally with somebody and using even a word that really isn't all that over the bay, but nevertheless not something at least at that time that you'd hear in a normal public discourse. It kind of, your antenna went up and said, 'gee, this guy swears', you know?

AL: 'Is he cool?'

PM: Right. Whatever. So that's essentially in a capsulated form what I remember the first occasion that I met, you know, Ed Muskie, was that time in 1969 in which he emerged as a front runner for the '72 nomination. Very hot, you needed air conditioning of course in July, it was a terrible time to be in Washington from the standpoint of the weather.

AL: Now you were born in 1952, so you certainly wouldn't have been aware of the '54 campaign when he first became governor, but in later years did your family, your parents, you dad, talk about that campaign? If so, what do you recollect of those . . . ?

PM: I would say that my father did not talk much about that campaign and I did not ask him too much about it, except that my father like many Republicans I believe felt disaffected by Cross. My father did not play a very active, could not and did not play an active role in that campaign at all because by that time he was the U.S. attorney for Maine and under that, the laws in effect at that time, namely the Hatch Act, he was prohibited from having partisan political involvement. He couldn't make speeches on behalf of candidates and could not run for partisan political office himself, and therefore he did not play much of a role.

However, he had been a seat mate of Burton Cross in the 1941 session of the Maine legislature, Maine house of representatives, and had known Cross. And he felt that Cross was in over his head as governor, felt that Cross was inept in terms of his political relationships with other Republicans, that Cross was a somewhat vindictive and unforgiving kind of person with respect to Republicans that might not have rubber stamped all of Cross' viewpoints and all of Cross' accomplishments. And probably, even though my father was a Republican and even though I don't know how he voted, he may not even have remembered perhaps himself, my father was probably one of many Republicans in the state who felt that the election of Ed Muskie as governor in 1954 was not the worst thing that could have happened.

AL: We talked a little bit about 1964? Did we talk about 1964?

PM: No, before the tape went on we talked briefly about it but you just asked me about '54 and Burton Cross. We haven't really talked about '64.

AL: Now let's go to '64 when your father ran for the state senate and for some reason lost. I mean, more of my question isn't about him losing as to what was going on at that time, what role did the presidential election play in his election?

PM: Yes. The 1964 election I do remember. I was twelve years old and remember a number of the presentations made at that time. One begins with the notion that the people at the Muskie Oral History Project no doubt by now are extremely familiar with, which is that the structure of the ballot for Maine voting up until and just before the 1972 election, was what is known as a straight ticket or big box system. In other words, at the top of the Republican column on the ballot would be a big box and which you could check that box and without the necessity of going through the ten, eleven or twelve different positions below that box, in one fell swoop vote for all candidates of a single party at once and then be done with it.

It tended to, it's also a premise that's well established that the public pays much closer attention to the presidential race than they do the local races. Even today and also back then, no doubt a majority of citizens in this country could not even begin to tell you the name of their local state representative or local state senator, but they can tell you who the president of the United States is. As a consequence, there is a tendency for the presidential election to influence the voting that occurs further down on the ballot.

Nowhere was that tendency in the last fifty years any more pronounced than in the 1964 election, and I will tell you a couple of things that you may not have heard before. One of the reasons why that was most pronounced in 1964 than other elections is because, according to information I've just recently been reresearching, Maine voters had one of the longest series of ballots they had ever been given, that year. There were ten Constitutional amendments on one sheet, six local optional liquor questions on another sheet. There was in addition a proposed twenty-five million dollar state bond issue on ending pollution in Maine over a twenty year period. Of course, that wasn't successful in the sense of accomplishing its objective.

Maine Sunday Telegram, November 1st, 1964, two days before the election, "Because of the four lengthy ballots, election division chief Edgar has suggested to local election officials it would be very helpful in securing the candidates' tabulations if the candidates' ballots are counted first." The *Sunday Telegram* noted that it would be a very long series of ballots that people would be given. This, I think, helps establish why there was so much straight party voting in 1964. It was a burdensome process to wade through all this paperwork. And if you're on your way home from work, trying to get to supper or whatever, and you're going in and you're confronted with all this paperwork, the candidates' ballot was only one of them. You could probably care less what happened to the bottom half of the ballot for local state representative or local legislative seats, or county commissioner, and get it over with in one fell swoop marking at the top. That explains, I think to some extent, why there was perhaps more straight ticket voting than I think in a lot of other elections.

No doubt as your records and archives have disclosed, it was a rout of almost unprecedented proportions of the Republican Party. The state senate alone went from twenty-nine to five, and it stayed at twenty-nine to five after the election. However, the numbers were the same, the party identification was different. It completely flipped just in the state senate. My father was one of the, you know, twenty-nine Republicans to lose to the twenty-nine Democrats. And for the first time in fifty-four years the Democrats took control of the senate; the first time in fifty years they took control of the house; the first time in fifty-two years that the Maine voters voted in favor of a Democratic president, though actually forty-nine percent of them had voted for Roosevelt in 1940 against Willkie, came close.

Another feature I just mentioned, I hope somebody does some more research on. In 1960 Maine cast the sixth highest vote total percentage-wise for the Republican candidate for president. In 1964 Maine cast the fourth highest among the states, not counting District of Columbia, the fourth highest state voting total percentage-wise for the Democrat. How this transformation occurred, it was not a permanent transformation because there was a, relatively speaking, a restoration of Republican Party success in the legislative elections in 1966. So one might say it was somewhat isolated. But Maine cast about sixty-nine percent for President Johnson, and only Rhode Island, Massachusetts and Hawaii among the states was any higher than that. And to think that those other states had voted Democratic in 1960 anyway, and so that's to be understood.

Why Maine stood out so much, I think to some extent we had a higher percentage of retired people. They were concerned about a perception that Barry Goldwater might advance some policies that would weaken the Social Security system. That might be one explanation. I think there are others, it would be interesting to see what they are. But anyway, the presidential race had enormous implications right up and down the ticket and interestingly enough, as you know, Johnson actually ran somewhat ahead of Muskie in the sixty-f--- [sixty-four], percentage-wise. That wasn't true in 1960 in the senate situation; Margaret Chase Smith actually ran ahead of Nixon.

But in one of those elections, it's sometimes known not for the person who won but for the person who lost. After all, we remember Waterloo not because Wellington won but because Napoleon lost. We sometimes remember 1964 because the Republicans lost so badly and because Barry Goldwater lost, and because of some of his somewhat independent, outspoken and occasional clumsy views, or the way they were expressed were perhaps idiosyncratic, than we do for Johnson, who was more of a mainstream figure who didn't leave us as much to remember him by in some ways as Goldwater's rhetoric did, because Goldwater's rhetoric was somewhat unusual and not particularly accommodating to moderate or liberal Republicans. I remember that my father was concerned about Goldwater's acceptance speech and there was . . .

By the way, the fact that Johnson won so big in Maine as well as throughout the rest of the country didn't take people by surprise. It was fully anticipated by the polls that had been done by the *Sunday Telegram* as well as by the National Gallup polls that this would be a landslide election and that Johnson was going to win. It wasn't an upset. And the dimensions of that victory were not a surprise. What was certainly a surprise, partly because it had not been very carefully examined, was how much the implications would be for the lower part of the ticket in the state of Maine. You had clerks of courts, county commissioners, sheriffs, state representatives who were routed out of office.

My father wasn't an incumbent that year, he'd actually defeated an incumbent in the primary, so he had good reason to actually be somewhat apprehensive in his own race anyway. There was a recount and he lost by only about eighty-five or ninety votes, it was a very close election nevertheless. I don't think he, he didn't expect to lose because it had been a Republican district, but had reasons to be concerned, but nobody seemed to, I think, ahead of time, anticipate how overwhelmingly Democratic the lower part of the ballot was going to become that year. Keep in mind that in 1960 and '62 the Republicans had done well in the legislature and they had tended to reverse the Democratic advancement that had begun in 1954. And all of a sudden it sort of had gone back very Democratic in '64 in a way that caught a lot of people by surprise.

AL: You said you'd never run for public office yourself.

PM: I've not run for partisan political office. I have been a moderator at town meetings. You don't have to be a resident of a town to be the moderator of it, so I'm oftentimes asked at different towns in the area, as well as the school district SAD 58 up in the Mt. Abram area, to preside over these kinds of meetings. And I've done that about seventy-five different times.

AL: Now, what kind of meetings? I'm sorry.

PM: Town meetings.

AL: Town meetings, okay.

PM: Farmington, New Portland, Kingfield different years sometimes, a couple of special ones in Skowhegan, Strong, New Vineyard, some big special ones that they've had, and SAD 58. That, in a way you become more of a spectator than a participant, but you do control or shape or direct the course of the debate in some ways when you're occupying that position. But not run for partisan political office like the legislature or county commissioner or anything like that.

AL: You're very interested in history. Have, I know you have a column, also. In what other ways have you expressed your interest in history, and what areas specifically have you really put a lot of effort in?

PM: Okay, both political as well as some Maine and local history. Naturally I spend most of my time and my professional endeavors practicing law, which I enjoy a great deal. I've been doing that for about twenty-two and a half years. However, certainly a leading avocation of mine is both historical and some political analysis. I have frequently been called upon to do some commentary work with respect to both election night, primary night, as well as special event feature story nights on Channel 13 in Portland, with whom I resumed my affiliation in 1988. I was with them actually in the early seventies, and then about fifteen years which I was sort of out of touch with them, and then I got brought back there to do a lot of that work. So, for example, the night that they had a feature on Muskie the day after his death, I was asked to come down and provide some commentary on that, in 1996. Same way with Margaret Chase Smith; same way when George Mitchell and Cohen decided they weren't going to run again. I would go down there and do some commentary work. So that's one way.

Another way is the column that I have, "Past and Prologue", comes out once a month in the "Perspective" section of the *Sunday Sun-Journal*, do biographical as well as other historical and topic researches. I mean, one of my favorite columns is one on the death penalty I think I did, for example, you know, the history of that in Maine and what the future might hold.

And then I have contributed to work that other people have done. If you know anything about what it's like to write a book, you probably realize that it's usually a collaborative effort in which many people contribute ideas, rework what has been done and try to furnish suggestions and the like. I worked about three years ago closely with Professor Chris Potholm of Bowdoin in his book 1946 -1996 -

AL: Maine Politics.

PM: Maine Politics, during that period of time, basically post WWII Maine politics through 1996. There are other people like Mert Henry, for example, an attorney in Portland who was close to Margaret Chase Smith, Barry Hobbins who also made contributions to the book. I've also worked closely with Professor Dick Mallett, a retired professor who in the last ten years has written three books of, they're shorter books than Professor Potholms' books, on historical topics in the Farmington area and helped him research and contributed some chapters to those books. So that's the way my interest has perhaps tangibly manifested itself.

AL: What's one of the most interesting pieces of history in Farmington?

PM: Well, certainly the most outstanding one would be our contribution to the culture and history of music in this country in that Madame Lillian Nordica, whose homestead is on the Holley Road, was probably the leading mezzo soprano singer in the world at her time from about the 18-, late 1880s until the time of her death about 1914. The fact that Farmington has had a preeminent role in the area of, you know, education, with the university. We're the oldest, University of Maine at Farmington is the oldest public institution of higher learning in Maine, even about a year older than Orono. And the number of prominent people who have come from or been affiliated with that university, or that college, has been a subject of some fascination. And then the fact that geographically I like to think of Farmington, and I sometimes identify this when you're going out of state and people want to know where you are, well, we are just halfway between the birthplaces of two outstanding U.S. senators, Edmund Muskie in Rumford and Margaret Chase Smith in Skowhegan. That's where Farmington is.

AL: What other connections have you had with Muskie over the years, besides your first meeting?

PM: Good question. I interviewed him a few other times, a few times. I remember when I was working for WLOB in Portland in 1970 I interviewed him at the Thomas Point Democratic clam bake picnic, asked him about the progress of his 1972 campaign two years off. I remember he graciously kind of tried to avoid that question and say, "Well, that was two years from now, I'm not going to be thinking too much of that," and besides, he had a senate race to contend with.

The most memorable interview I had with him without doubt, and I won't tell you about any of the others, but I'll just focus briefly on this one. It was an exhilarating time for me because I felt privileged at such a young age, I was only twenty years old, to be covering such an important story at the time. McGovern was nominated ultimately as we know in 1972. Eagleton went on the ticket for a couple of weeks, was asked to step aside after a while because of some disclosures about his mental history. And so McGovern needed a new running mate. And as it's been well documented, he asked Teddy Kennedy, he asked Humphrey, he asked Reubin Askew and some others quite quickly, and he got turned down quite quickly in terms that he had to fill this vacancy on the ticket. And it was getting to be early August here and the Democratic

National Committee had to meet to fill this vacancy.

And so then finally about Thursday night, August 3rd, 1972, he went to Muskie's home. I'm not, I'm just giving you this little bit of background to show you where I fit into this. And he spent a long time with Muskie that night at his home, I think that was in Bethesda, whatever, and asked him to consider it. Muskie said that he would. Muskie then decided to fly up to Maine to see Jane and also discuss with her this situation. This, and finally by Saturday morning, after about thirty-six hours of consideration, he turned down McGovern and said he couldn't quite do it. And, but for thirty-six hours this was probably the most suspenseful, significant national political story.

Now, there was an Associated Press correspondent in Portland who was also about twenty years old, and he was a student at the University of Massachusetts at Amherst, and myself. We were sent independently, we just happened to show up at the same time, to the Sanford airport late Friday afternoon, August 4th, 1972 when the, certainly the political eyes of the nation were on Muskie because it was, had been disclosed that he had been asked to consider becoming the vice presidential running mate once again, only this time with McGovern. And so we were waiting there at the airport, and Muskie gets off the plane. There were only maybe a couple of other people with him, it was a private plane, and I interviewed him for Channel 13 about the fact that he was considering this.

I remember asking him, "Well, Senator Muskie, do you think you're compatible with McGovern?" Because they did have ideological differences and that kind of thing. And I remember he gave a reply that said, well, that's one of the things he'd be thinking over and that type of thing. And it was a period of some suspense in the nation at the time, and I just happened to be really one of two people sent to cover it. The other person, ironically, was also a college student. Of course, reporters take vacations like anything else and they're going to have other people to fill in for them, and I'd be one of them, and, to determine what his frame of mind and viewpoint was. So that was the most significant journalistic occasion in which I interviewed him, was in the course of a breaking story in which he was the center of a lot of national attention at that particular time. There had been some other times it was just more of an incidental encounter where I might interview him about what was going on at the time, but it wasn't anything that, which he was the center of any particular attention.

AL: What were your impressions of him, viewing him over the years?

PM: I think he came across as well-reasoned, cautious and cool headed. I think it's a supreme tragedy that some of the obituaries focused so much upon the unfortunate loss of control that he had on the back of the flatbed truck at Manchester, New Hampshire, when in fact he ought to be known as the person who called Rick Broady up to the stage in 1968 and quelled a[n] audience in the course of unrest, and who was a palliative, that's P-A-L-L-I-A-T-I-V-E, palliative in the 1968 presidential election at a time when this country was beginning to politically come apart at the seams.

I mean you had George Wallace at the extreme right, and you had the situation on the left like the

H. Rap Brown, who's back in the news again, literally exhorting people to burn down their cities, on the left hand side. You had a lot of shrill political rhetoric with both Wallace and to some extent Humphrey. And he came across as one of the most well-reasoned, balanced, cool headed public figures of that entire tumultuous year, and one of the years in which the country certainly was perhaps on the brink of considerable political imbalance. And if we follow, you know, what was happening in France and Germany at the time and throughout the world, I think he was one of the persons that helped maintain the balance of the nation and kept its political consciousness in perspective.

AL: I need to stop right there.

PM: Sure.

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

AL: We are now on tape two, side A of the interview with Paul Mills on May the 3rd, the year 2000. And we were talking about Senator Muskie, and the question I have is what you felt his major strengths were.

PM: I think, continuing along some of the same theme that I expressed about his well reasoned, balanced temperament in the 1968 campaign, illustrated by that. I think, even though he certainly developed a reputation at different times as having something of a temper, I think ironically that it is his ability also to realize that power to be exercised has to be shared and to bring in people of all kinds of different viewpoints is certainly important. That is something he had to do as governor, for example, in a Republican state. And so, the ability to work well with others. Of course, we're all familiar with the fact that he was the first chairman of the senate budget committee, the budget process that had been started in the mid-seventies, and that was a great accomplishment. And the strengths there were in the environmental legislation, in Clean Air, Clean Water.

Also, I think, you know, an enduring legacy was the leadership role he played in the Democratic Party while for almost three years he was the prohibitive favorite for the Democratic nomination. And as a consequence, had, and I think this is his most lasting impact even though it's hard to measure, you can't quite put your finger on it, and it's a little bit intangible, but there's no question that his most enduring impact was on, and you may think it's good or it's bad, but the impact was clearly there in acting as a very strong catalyst for promotion of moderate political policies on the part of the Nixon administration. When you've just been through a very close election, which '68 was for Nixon, and you know you're facing, or feel that you're facing an opponent who is likely to, if not defeat you, come close to it, then you tend to undertake a preemptive strategy.

The Lippman book, which certainly is a great book in many ways, although it's got a few factual errors in it. But the Lippman-Hansen book points out the fact that there might not have been an environmental protection agency established by Nixon in 1970, had it not been for the fact that they were foreseeing criticism by Muskie in an upcoming presidential campaign of environmental policies. The Nixon administration actually by contrast to, for example, the Gingrich revolution or the, even the subsequent Reagan administration, was a very moderate administration. One of the reasons for that was because there was a Democratic congress but also, but you know, Reagan had Democratic congresses, too, some of the time. But another reason was because I think that aside from the fact that Nixon himself, actually despite his obvious ethical flaws that we later discovered, was a person that could comprehend a great deal of balance in his own political mind, that they were being pulled back toward the center, or even toward the left by the Muskie leadership in the Democratic Party.

Affirmative action, for example, first took root in the Nixon administration interestingly enough, the HEW policies. Nixon, as we all know, for the first time in nearly twenty-five years, established relations with the largest, population wise, country in the world, on this planet, Red China. That's not something, ordinarily, a conservative Republican would have done, but a Republican who is trying to preempt the political landscape, knowing who's around the corner, and having a very formidable possible candidacy on the part of Muskie's, which the polls seemed to show was going to be. Until obviously, you know, the spring of '72.

That's what he did, I mean, reestablishing relationships, better relationships with the Soviet Union, the detente, the negotiations with Brezhnev, SALT 1, SALT 2, that's capital S-A-L-T, by the way. Those kinds of policies, I think, were clearly influenced by Muskie's formidable presence on the political scene over the three year period that went from July 19th, 1972 until somewhere around April 15th, you know, he came in fourth as we know in Florida, Pennsylvania and Wisconsin, 1972. And that's where I think the biggest, you know, most enduring strength or legacy that he had. And clearly there are many who, of course, would submit that regardless of what had happened in front of William Loeb's newspaper that there were certain weaknesses in the Muskie campaign, he was probably perhaps going to lose anyway. But nevertheless I think it is sad that he is remembered almost as much for that. But I think that, that's unfortunate and not representative of his career.

AL: What have I not asked you about that you've thought about that's important to talk about today regarding your family, the Farmington area, or Ed Muskie's career?

PM: Well, you've done a good job asking about many things. I think that it just, I take it, in perhaps capsulating a couple of things. I think that Muskie is underestimated in Maine today for what he accomplished on the national scene, which obviously had some ramifications at the state level as well. I've alluded to the fact that we think very little now, and don't seem to remember much, about this three year sustained period in which he was the head of the leadership.

If I could say where in some minor ways his role is perhaps overestimated or over played up, it might be, I think, exaggerated somewhat to say that he was for example the first Democratic governor. I mean he wasn't. He was the sixth Democratic governor since the Civil War in the state of Maine. The Lippman book, for example, states that he was the first person to deny a sitting governor of Maine a second term. Well, that had actually happened eight times before. It's true that the Democratic party had been largely moribund on a statewide basis for about eighteen years, you know, since Brann left office, but eighteen years is a little bit different than, say, seventy-five years or a hundred years. He was the first elected U.S. senator as a Democrat in Maine, but that's only because popular election didn't come in until 1916. We actually had two Democratic U.S. senators back in 1911, '12, '13, in that period of time but, of course, they were elected by the legislature.

So, I think that his role among Maine people, or his memory among Maine people is perhaps understated in terms of what he did and the enduring and sustained nature of his leadership in the country as a whole. That isn't appreciated, I think, the way it should be, or understood. Some people, of course, might ridicule it and say, 'well, he was trying to take the country in a direction it shouldn't go'. But whether you agree from a value standpoint as to where it was going or not, it still had a big impact. And that's enormous and nothing can be taken away from what that impact is. Even though, as I've mentioned, I think at the state level in the early fifties, there's a bit of hyperbole I think, as to what the historic context of his election of governor was. It's naturally a formidable thing to be taking on an incumbent. Well, television of course was kind of important at that time, and you can go into some detail about that election in and of itself, but that wasn't quite the watershed I think as it's sometimes portrayed to be.

AL: Any other recollections of Muskie that you wanted to add?

PM: No, I think he had only one, only this, that I think he had an enormous affinity for what it was like to live in Maine. And even though he'd clearly spent the last thirty-five years or so of his life outside Maine to a great extent, I still think he had a great appreciation for the state. He liked to hunt and fish, liked the outdoors, a person I think who valued his own privacy and probably had times when he did not like the limelight or the pressure of being in public life, as many people would under those circumstances. But I think he had a certainly a very Maine, M-A-I-N-E, Maine way about his personality and about his demeanor that was very attractive to the rest of the country and helped give Maine a good name.

AL: You ever happen to see him stop in to get his fishing gear on his way up? I know, to tell people on the tape, the Mills law office is just sitting about, what, two doors down from Currier Holman -?

PM: That's correct, yes, I did, I did run, in 1987 right after he became, I did exactly that. I saw him walk across the street in the summer of 1987, without a tie on, I didn't quite recognize him himself. But I did stop, talked with him for a couple of minutes as he was going with Joe Holman to find a couple of fishing places and saw him in Farmington at that time. I thought it was a bit unusual in that Holman was a Republican and Muskie was a Democrat. But clearly Holman was quite an authority on fishing locations throughout the state of Maine, or particularly this part of Maine in the Rangeley area especially, and so I did encounter both of them on their way to find some fishing spots. One time, it was right after Muskie had gotten through as being chairman of the Iran Contra panel, that Senator Tower was also on at that time, and I think it was called the Tower Commission, too, by some people.

AL: The Tower Commission Report was the large book that came out after?

PM: Yeah, so I do have a recollection of that, and saw him at that time when he was on his way to fishing. And although he was certainly respectably attired, but he didn't have a tie on. And so certainly those of us who were living in Franklin county might well realize and appreciate the fact that Senator Muskie, even from his boyhood days as I understand it, would go perhaps to the Rangeley area, which wasn't that far from Rumford, and showed that he had genuine interest in what the outdoors of Maine had to offer.

AL: I have one more question. You did, you spoke about interviewing quite a few people in the Rumford area who knew Muskie or Lucia Cormier? That generation of people?

PM: I've talked to such people. I can't say that I have formally interviewed them on tape. Bob Chassie, for example. We're not far from Rumford of course, and because of my political curiosity, Mrs. Jean Noyes, Shelton [C.} Noyes' widow, for example, grew up in Rumford and she is an acquaintance of mine with whom I speak often. And I've, she's a woman much older than myself, and she has related to me various anecdotes I think about Muskie as well as Lucia Cormier, in Rumford. Bob Chassie, who's lived in Farmington for many years [but was originally from Rumford], has done the same thing. And Shelton Noyes, when he was alive, he was a friend of mine, he was a lawyer in Rangeley [and earlier in his career in Rumford], he died about five years ago, has also offered recollections that he know of both Lucia Cormier and Ed Muskie and, you know, the Muskie family and what have you.

And I'm sure there are other people I've run into, older people over the years who have, simply because I found out they were from Rumford and lived there a number of years ago, who would in an offhand way just tell me different kind of anecdotes about what Mrs. Muskie, Muskie's father, excuse me, mother was saying at one time or another and this kind of thing, you know. Because Muskie's mother lived well into the seventies, wasn't it? 1970s. And she would occasionally offer comments about her son's career which were quite candid, and that would be the subject of occasional innuendo and gossip even here in the Farmington area, you know.

AL: Great, thank you so much.

PM: Okay, all right.

End of Interview