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## Mitchell, Paul oral history interview

Andrea L'Hommedieu

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## **Interview with Paul Mitchell by Andrea L’Hommedieu**

*Summary Sheet and Transcript*

### **Interviewee**

Mitchell, Paul

### **Interviewer**

L’Hommedieu, Andrea

### **Date**

May 25, 1999

### **Place**

Lewiston, Maine

### **ID Number**

MOH 094

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### **Biographical Note**

Paul Mitchell was born in Westfield, Massachusetts on January 20, 1926 to Mintaha “Mary” Saad and George John Mitchell. His father was Irish, but adopted by a Lebanese family. His mother was also Lebanese. In 1930, his family moved to Waterville to care for George’s mother.

Paul’s father worked for Central Maine Power in the Waterville gas operation. His mother worked at various textile mills. There are five children in Paul’s family, including Senator George Mitchell, Jr. They grew up at first in the King’s Court neighborhood of Waterville in a predominantly Lebanese community. They then moved to a home on Front Street in Waterville. Paul attended the Waterville public schools through high school, graduating in 1944. He was able to complete his high school education by enrolling in the Navy V-12 Program, which brought him to Bates College for three semesters after graduation. He opted out of a military career in 1946, and returned to Maine to complete his education at the University of Maine at Orono, graduating in 1949. He next received a Master’s in Education at Columbia University.

He began a career in the Insurance industry, working in New York and Boston before moving back to Waterville in 1959. There he worked for Paul Jullien at the J.B. Freel Insurance Agency.

He served two terms as Alderman in Waterville from 1959 to 1962, and served as the Executive Director of the Waterville Urban Renewal Program from 1962 to the late 1970s. At the time of

the interview, he owned the GHM Insurance Agency in Waterville, the successor firm to the J.B. Freel Company.

### **Scope and Content Note**

Interview includes discussions of: Mitchell family history; the Lebanese community of Waterville; ethnic diversity of Waterville; Waterville in the 1940s and 1950s; George Mitchell, Sr.'s advice; families in small Waterville neighborhoods; talents of the Mitchell children; Waterville public Schools; serving out of high school in World War II; Bates College V-12 Unit; prejudice in schools and the Waterville community; importance of education; churches in Waterville; and Waterville's economic decline.

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### **Transcript**

**Andrea L'Hommedieu:** This is an interview with Paul Mitchell on May 25th, 1999, 11:00 A.M. in the Muskie Archives office at Bates College. Mr. Mitchell, would you start by stating your full name and spelling it?

**Paul Mitchell:** Yes, my full name is Paul Joseph Mitchell, P-A-U-L, J-O-S-E-P-H, M-I-T-C-H-E-L-L.

**AL:** And where and when were you born?

**PM:** I was born in Westfield, Massachusetts, January 20th, 1926.

**AL:** And what are the names of your parents?

**PM:** My parents were George John Mitchell and Mary Saad Mitchell, Mary the English translation for her name in, my mother was born in Lebanon, Mintaha, M-I-N-T-A-H-A, Mintaha Saad Mitchell.

**AL:** And how many children did they have? What are their names and what is your place in the family?

**PM:** They had five children and I'm the oldest. Then I'm followed by John who was also born in Massachusetts in 1927, then Robert who was born in Waterville, they'd returned to Waterville by then, in 1931, December [of] '31; George who was born in August of 1933 and Barbara who was born in Waterville July 1935.

**AL:** And when you say they returned to Waterville, they left Maine for a while?

**PM:** Yes, they were from Waterville. My mother and father met in Waterville, got married and went to Massachusetts to live in a little town outside of Westfield called Huntington, Massachusetts. And I was born in Westfield but we lived in Huntington. And John was born in Westfield, in, actually his birthday was March 1927. And then they returned to Waterville in 1930.

**AL:** And their reason for going to Massachusetts, was it economic?

**PM:** Primarily. I think they both had secured jobs in the western Massachusetts area and they returned to Maine when my grandfather passed away and my father went back to take care of his mother.

**AL:** And what were your parents' occupations?

**PM:** My father was a laborer for the Central Maine Power Company when he first came, or returned to Waterville. He was that when he left the Central Maine Power when he went to Massachusetts. My mother worked in a textile factory, a number of them, not just one. She worked in probably half a dozen in the Waterville area while we were growing up. And she was a weaver in a woolen mill. My father was a laborer when, Central Maine Power at that time had what they called the 'gas division'. They had gas in the ground but they manufactured it in the communities, and Waterville was one of the communities; Lewiston was another. And he worked on the installation of gas lines on a jackhammer and whatever was required to get the lines in and serviced.

**AL:** What were your parents' religious backgrounds and beliefs?

**PM:** Both my parents, they were Catholic and we were raised in a Catholic family. They were politically, my father was a Democrat. I think he occasionally, maybe occasionally strayed to the Republican side if he saw a candidate that was really an outstanding candidate, but for the most part they were Democrats. I think the social circumstances were such that in the laboring

class that they were in, they would be inclined probably to be in the Democratic Party. They never needed any social welfare assistance because they always worked, but it was not the kind of work that was highly remunerative so that they still, but they were in the circumstances that millions of other people were in, in any event. But my father, probably, predominantly Democratic.

He was a very strong Roosevelt supporter in the period of time that I was growing up and followed it along with him. And from 1932 on, when I really was aware of politics to a much fuller extent than I was when I was really young, but, although that was kind of young also, but I'm aware of the fact that he discussed Roosevelt significantly and often and felt very strongly towards him. We never really had politics discussed at the dinner table to any great extent. He didn't. We were all kind of young at that point in any event. By the time I left home when I was eighteen, I was in the service, so that I was still not really what you might call politically active, and the rest of the family, they were kind of young. John was only sixteen and George was probably ten at the time and Barbara eight, so I don't think that we had much in the way of political discussions within the family. Now he had political discussions from time to time with friends of his, contemporaries of his, and most of those people I came to find later on were also let's say Democratic, they belonged to the Democratic Party.

**AL:** What was your parents' relationships to different groups in the community?

**PM:** Well they were raised, my mother was Lebanese. My father was Irish adopted by a Lebanese family. So he was raised, the culture really was Lebanese, he was adopted when he was about three years of age, and so his total culture at that point, from that moment on was a Lebanese culture, Lebanese foods. We went to the Catholic Maronite, the Lebanese Maronite church, which was Catholic, and we lived in the Lebanese community. Although my father was a strange looking Lebanese person when people thought he was Lebanese, he was blond and blue eyed. And people used to ask him, "Are you sure that's your father?" And I said, "Oh yeah, he's my father." "Well gee, you don't look alike at all." Well none of us looked alike, not any of the children took after my father as far as skin texture was, or color was concerned, or color of the hair or the eyes. We all took after my mother.

And they, his relationship primarily was within the Lebanese community and he had close relationships with a number of people. But you know, they were so busy working that they really didn't have an awful lot of time to socialize outside of the church and their friends in the area they were in. We never owned a car at that point in time so you really are limited in how far you can travel. But our circumstances were no different than most of the people around us.

**AL:** How large was the Lebanese community?

**PM:** Well I think at that time it was a very, it was much larger than it is now. Probably not much larger but there were more people who were Lebanese married to Lebanese. Now you find a great mixture. Most people my age they married, they may be married to a Lebanese lady (I'm talking about a man now), but many of them are married to people of French background. I am.

My brother John's wife is part Italian and part English. My brother Robert's wife was, Janet is Scottish. So we have a great mixture all across. Now the community itself in numbers may be as large as it was, but it isn't quite as focused on being Lebanese as it was then when most of the people, the husbands and wives were Lebanese and, had come directly over from Lebanon. So it's a little bit more fractured, you might say, now than it was then.

**AL:** Is the culture, do you believe the culture is less strong?

**PM:** I think it's less strong, yeah.

**AL:** In traditions such as cooking and . . . ?

**PM:** Oh yeah. I think the cooking maybe not, because I think many of the ladies who, like my wife for instance, she has learned to cook many Lebanese dishes. And I think most of the people, the cooking was the easiest thing to get. I think the loss of the language really diminishes the culture to some extent. And I think with the advent of the automobile, that the community itself is somewhat spread throughout the entire Waterville area rather than more or less segregated in one spot surrounding the church. But now it's every place. And, but I think that's not unusual, I think that happens to a lot of cultures that they don't live in the areas that they started out from when they first settled here. But rather, when the children grow up and do whatever they're going to do, they move out into outlying areas maybe even away from the community. I think the automobile had a lot to do with that. You don't know many people without automobiles today.

**AL:** Where was the geographical location of the Lebanese community when you were growing up?

**PM:** It was right in the center of Waterville, right in the center of Waterville, right, very close to the downtown area. It was only a block away from downtown along the Kennebec River. And it was, you know, within walking, the church was right there on the street that, it's, one minute off Main Street. And the community was located predominantly in that area. Now there were some people who had moved away at that point in time into other communities, but for the most part they were located in that particular area right in close to downtown. You could, back then of course, as you know, the downtown is where all the activity took place. The stores were there, the grocery stores, the supermarkets as such, they weren't supermarkets like they are today; the department stores. So you could walk to every place you were going. You're hard pressed to walk to all the places you want to go to today, especially if there are shopping centers which there are, of course, in Waterville at this present time, surrounding the community.

**AL:** Now you said your grandparents also lived in Waterville. Were they the first generation to come there?

**PM:** Yeah, they were the first generation but they didn't, they didn't originally settle in Waterville, they settled in Bangor. And that's where my father was adopted, in Bangor. They

moved to Waterville and they ran a little grocery store in the community. And part of the reason my father returned to Waterville is that when his father passed away, the mother was unable to communicate in English to any extent. And she refused to leave Waterville, so he returned to Waterville to take care of her and brought the family with him. And he was able to, as I said, I think he had, I don't recall the details now, but he made arrangements so that he was able to secure the job that he had before. Because you know, you're at the point now where the great Depression was almost ready to start, if it hadn't already started, and he wanted to be certain he had something that he would be able to be earning some money at. Now my mother knew how to weave so she could go right into the mills as soon as she could secure a position there, and start working as a weaver. She didn't start right away because she had three more children, but she started shortly thereafter.

**AL:** Could you give me some recollections of your family?

**PM:** Well, we were a very close family. As I said, we really didn't, we didn't do a lot of things away from the home other than school activities or sports, as such. John and I of course were kind of like a, we were a little older and we really didn't see too much, we saw the children, Robert, George and Barbara. But we really didn't have an awful lot going with them, as young people, because they were really young when we were beginning to get involved in sporting activities. John and I were much closer probably, I was much closer to John probably, than anyone else in the family, myself personally, than anyone else, any of the other children in the family. We had great times. We never had a problem with the parents and we never had a problem, I don't believe we ever had a problem anyplace.

When, we had two locations when we lived in Waterville. One was right along the riverbank. I wouldn't suggest that it was the area that anyone would really want to go looking for, to live at that time. Well, at that time it didn't make much difference. As I said, there were a lot of families living there, so it wasn't unusual but it wasn't exactly the high rent district of Waterville. And, but we never had a problem. And I always take pride in the fact that in the neighborhood we were in which was really, at this point in time, only about two acres in size. I believe there were, and this is part of a program, part of the project that I did for the city forty years later when I did the urban renewal program for the city of Waterville, there were nineteen homes, probably a hundred children growing up in that two acre area.

And I look back now when I think about it, from there came doctors, physicians, dentists, lawyers, a U.S. senator, priests, accountants, businesspeople. And to my knowledge not a single person ever went to jail for anything. Now that's not to say there weren't some difficulties from time to time. I mean, but the only kind of difficulties might be a little shoving match between ten, eleven, twelve-year-old boys who were contending with one another.

**AL:** What do you attribute to the high success?

**PM:** Well I think a lot of it was that not only did your own family look after you, but I think the rest of the families looked after you, as well. And there was a, I guess it was really, I always

remember my father telling me one thing. And this comes later on, I don't know, maybe he told me this earlier, "You know, there's a lot of things in life that cost money but there are some things, invaluable things, that don't cost any money. Your reputation for one: Do you have a reputation for integrity? And if you lose that reputation, no matter how much money you make later on, it's virtually impossible to buy it back. You earn that and it doesn't cost you anything. If you earn the respect and confidence of the people that you deal with, you don't have to worry too much about how much money you have. They will always have that respect for you. But if you lose that, it's extremely difficult to ever get it back again. So the only thing I can ever tell you that I'm going to leave you, is hopefully my good name. And as far as money is concerned, not any money to speak of so do what you can with the name."

And we've always, I think we always felt that way. We always made certain we did not, I think we did at least, I did and I know John did and I'm sure the rest of them did, that we didn't embarrass the family in any way, shape or manner. If we had problem, you'd go home and talk about it, and I'd tell my father I had a problem. Or if he thought I had a problem he'd ask me, "What's your problem?" you know. And we'd sit down and discuss the problem if there was a problem. But we never had a family where there was any shouting or screaming or hollering or hitting or anything of that sort, you know. My father didn't have to say anything more than once. If he said it a second time, you know, the tone of his voice told you, 'Look, get yourself together here now because you don't need to have your father angry at this point in time.'

And that's the way it was with both my father and my mother. I mean, I never heard my mother raise her voice. I never heard my father curse; I never heard him swear. He just never used that kind of language. And he was a super guy that way. And he was, I think, a great example, one that we all tried to follow. You know, you talked about the problems we have today or the things that are occurring today, and of course it's a different society today. I have four children of my own at this time here now, and it's difficult for me to relate to them sometimes some of the things that I went through when I was young. But you still have to have, you still have to have some, you have to set some kind of an example, I think, for your children. If you want them to do the right thing, I think you have to do the right thing yourself to make, at least impress upon them that doing the right thing may not always be what you want to do, but it is still the right thing to do.

So that, in that regard, one thing my father and mother both had was a very strong work ethic. They didn't believe you get anything for nothing, you just work for what you want to get. And if you work hard enough and you persevere. And I think, as far as I'm concerned and I know my brothers and my sister, we've always followed that example. And I'm very proud to think that my four children are the same way, as a matter of fact sometimes I think too much so, that they believe, you know, you have to work for everything you get and no matter how long or hard it takes you to attain the goal that you're after, you stay with it.

When I say too much, sometimes you don't want to be away from your family. Today there are so many demands on a person's family, from the family. We didn't have all the distractions that there are today. There was no TV. So all of our problems, all of our activities took place



outdoors with other children. There was an awful lot of interaction between children. I think that's one of the things that children miss today, is they don't know how to settle their differences verbally, and maybe even, as I said, occasionally pushing or shoving. But they settle, they just get angry and they settle their difference in a much more deadly way sometimes. Because I don't think they can handle the rejection, so to speak.

If you grow up with nothing to do but play with other children, you'll learn eventually to get along with these children. And if you don't have that kind of experience, you sit by a TV, I don't know how many hours they sit but some children I guess sit for hours at a time each day, there's no reac-, there's no interaction. You can't interact with the TV, but you can interact with other children. And I think they really, really miss that kind of thing. So we had a lot of that. As I said, there were over one hundred children living in this two acre site. Boys and girls, varying ages obviously, but plenty of them your own age so that you always had something going on.

And you had a lot of parents supervising you, not just your own parents. You had an awful lot of parents supervising you. And you, you know, you'd hear from other parents and you never ever, ever, ever would say anything back to anyone. That would get you into more trouble than anything else, if you became sassy or if you responded in a very negative way to an elder, that got you into more difficulty with my parents than anything else. And so we never, to my knowledge I don't think anybody in the family ever got themselves in difficulty that way.

My father had a rule, when we were going to school later on, in high school: If you come home with a big problem at school, you're likely to be in more trouble here than you are at school, so my suggestion is: don't have a big problem in school. And you can avoid that by doing the work you have to do and required to do at school, get it done and take it in. That, again, is not to say that you're going to get a perfect mark or a high mark even, but at least you got it in. But if you come home and you have a, or I hear you have a problem with a teacher and you've sassed the teacher or anything along that line, and you come and tell me about it, I'm going to tell you now, you're going to be in more trouble with me than you are with them. They're likely to be right, you're likely to be wrong, so. And he never was the kind who would run up to the school, you know, demand that, 'my child is such a wonderful child, you have to give him all the attention' and, that wasn't his style at all, see. So we kind of, I think, lived that way, you know, as we were growing up.

**AL:** Were your parents visible in school at all in terms of overseeing your education or being on any committees or . . .?

**PM:** No, not really. You have to understand, my mother obviously didn't handle English very well so. But she joined the PTA when I was in grammar school. I mean, I don't think she really understood to a considerable extent all the things that were going on. But, they measured your performance in school by not hearing from anybody at school that you were a problem child, number one, and by the ranks that you brought home, number two. You know, they could tell. My father was capable enough of determining if we were intelligent enough to be able to do the

work that was required of us. And if someone other, some other child, and as I said there were a lot of children the same age as we were growing up, and he was I'm sure aware of how well or how not well they were doing, and could measure pretty much.

My father went to the fifth grade so he really didn't have any formal, no significant formal education himself. And my mother was educated as little as she was, in Lebanon, so there wasn't the same kind of standard. But he could tell and he had a pretty good idea where we were and if we started getting, let's say if we were getting excellent marks or reasonably excellent marks and suddenly we weren't getting them. He'd obviously want to know what the problem was. And if you can't do the work, that's one thing, but my father had a rule also: If you can do the work, I expect you to do the best work you can do. I don't expect you just to get by, I expect you to do the best work you're capable of doing at all times. You have no reason not to.

When we were in high school playing in sports, and John and I were, he was a year behind me in school. We both played football, baseball and basketball at Waterville High. If you were capable of getting an A and you got a B, you had a real problem with my father about continuing to play. Because while he liked sports, it took a real far back position, in his mind, as to what you were going to school for. It was an education and if you don't pick this mark up, I don't care whether the coach thinks you're good, you're not going to be playing. So you were always striving to maintain decent marks in school at all times, see. That's how he kept track of what we were doing. Now he didn't get too involved in school, you know, no more than visit the schools and visit the teachers and, not, not at my time at least. And part of that reason is the fact that he worked six days a week, probably ten hours a day, and he really didn't have that kind of time to do that kind of thing.

**AL:** You as children, you and your siblings, did you have responsibilities or certain chores around the house to kind of build that work ethic?

**PM:** Yeah, well let me, when we lived, in the area down by the river, it was called King Court. And we burned wood in the furnace, we actually had central heat in the hot air furnace. So they would deliver four-foot lengths of wood. And then someone else would come along and, with a saw, this fellow, traveler, would go to various other homes and cut them up into one-foot pieces, which were then split. Now when we were young we probably didn't do too much splitting. But we moved from there when I was going on thirteen, so I was old enough at that point to split wood. So I, to this day I love to split wood, and I still split wood pretty good. But we didn't, you know, and so we would, but early on my father would do the splitting.

We would then throw it, the homes were three feet apart, four feet apart, and all this had to go into the cellar. So we, John and I . . . He [father] would split, when he'd come home and he, after work, and this would run into the evenings and it's dark then. So in the morning he, John and I would go out and we'd throw the wood down. This would be done let's say in August, just before the cold season starts. We'd throw it down in between the homes right by a window, throw it in from the window, through the window into the cellar, and then go into the cellar and pile it up. That was our function. Later on we split the wood, threw it down and then threw it in.

When we moved from there, golly, what a move that was. When we lived at King Court we had the river behind us and the railroad tracks right out in front of us. And so when we moved to Front Street, we moved to the other side of the track, we went into the higher rent district there. We went to the other side of the tracks up near where Colby College used to be. And at that point my father installed, my father also was a piper, he was pretty good with pipes because he, as I mentioned earlier with the gas plant, division, he installed pipes in the ground. So he, he installed a furnace, a coal fired furnace with a worm that would, you would fill the bin up and it would feed the coal in directly. So that was our next function.

We didn't throw wood in any more but we had to go in and fill up the, and I don't even remember the name, what they used to call it. But in any event it was a little bin like that, with a worm in it that the coal was fed directly into the furnace. We had to do that. And clean the ashes out. So we'd clean the ashes out and fill the hopper, it was a hopper, coal hopper, fill that up, that was a function that we had. Now that's kind of dirty function too, because you had soft coal which it was very fine and it would be blown up. It didn't blow up much, but I mean it was very loose and you'd get a lot of coal dust moving around. That's one of the functions we had.

And, of course, when we bought that house, my father bought that house, there was a lot of work to be done there. John and I had, we painted the house from time to time. Any work that was done on the inside, we helped with that. My father re-roofed the house shortly after we bought it. I remember we, probably two years after we bought it, so at that point I'm almost fifteen. So we helped, carrying the shingles up the ladder and leave them on the roof. He did all the roof work. He wouldn't let anybody on the roof, but we'd take the stuff up the ladder for him. So, yes, we had a lot of functions that way.

And my, at that point my mother was working also so we would have to clean up the dishes and wash the dishes. And, see, Barbara who, my sister, at that point she's only six years old, five or six years old. George is seven or eight years old. So John and I had the responsibility of fixing the beds, getting the house straightened out as best we could. I'm sure it wasn't the way a mother would like to do it today or even my mother wanted to do it back then, but my mother worked in the evenings back then.

She took a job, when she took a job she always managed to get on the th-, what they called the third shift, which would be eleven to seven. So she was always home to make sure everyone was home in the evening and to bed. And she got there shortly after we got up, to help get everyone ready to make sure that they're off to school. Then she'd nap and do what other things that she wanted to do and, but she always took a job eleven to seven. So she, now she had five children and my grandmother for a lot of years. And I know, I think about it today and I know there are a lot of demands on parents. And some with one or two kids are having enormous difficulties with transportation available to them and they have a couple of cars. You've got to run them here, run them there and this kind of thing. We didn't even own a car. And, but she always made sure everybody had their breakfast and was on their way to school. We lived close to the school, so we never were very far away from the school. And, but John and I had a lot of

little things to do around the house that way, see. And, you know, this was expected of us and this is what we did all the time.

**AL:** Tell me about some of the different talents and interests of each of your siblings and yourself.

**PM:** Well, I think everyone had to some extent overlapping interests. But, you know, George, George was an academic, more so than myself, John and Robert. Barbara is an academic, but she's a pretty good athlete as well. Barbara was the only girl, the youngest, and everything we did she wanted to do. We played baseball, she wanted to play baseball. And you know unfortunately, and she would have been a terrific athlete I think, and unfortunately at that time they didn't have girls sports the way they have girls sports today. And I'm not sure we treated her very well. When we would, for instance in baseball, she would run shag flies, and we would all take fifteen swings. And Barbara, we'd let Barbara go up there and take two or three swings, which was really unfair. She recalls those moments now and, you know, I have a hard time trying to remember. And she says "Well, you really don't want to remember."

But all of us really enjoyed sports tremendously. And I think Johnny probably, was probably the best individual as far as all the sports are concerned. He really didn't, to this day he's an excellent athlete and he's, what, seventy-two now but he's still an outstanding athlete. Robert was a good athlete. I guess maybe they'd say I wasn't a bad athlete. And George and I probably rank on the bottom of the scale. I have to say George was on the very bottom. But academically we all did, I think, very well in school, I think better than average but not by any means at the top of the class. George probably was closer there than anyone else. Barbara was very good that way as well.

That was another thing I might add that, to digress for a moment, that my father always used to discuss. That in spite of whatever the financial circumstances look like, everyone here is going to end up going to college. I mean, he used to preach that constantly to us. And every one of us ended up going to college, myself, John, Robert, George and Barbara, and even getting advanced degrees after college. And all of our children have pretty much gone to college. I think that was one thing he just felt, that was the great equalizer. He was a strong believer if you get a good education, whatever other prejudices some people may have, really fall by the wayside if you are in a position to do something and help them. And they, they can forget about what your name is or what your religion is or what your ethnic background is if you're able to produce. And how you produce really is, if you are well-educated and in a position to do some things that other people in their own circumstances are not able to do.

So, but as far as different activities, George probably, you know, he loved to read. I guess we all liked to read. I don't know anyone in the family that didn't like to read and to this very day reads very extensively, newspapers, books, magazines.

**AL:** Was that type of material around your home a lot or did you, was it found in school?

**PM:** No, let me tell you, my father, and this always surprises me when I thought about it later on. The National Geographic is considered to be an outstanding magazine. And as poor as we were my father was a subscriber to the National Geographic and he had, he kept the editions for years. We had *National Geographics* from, you know, for fifteen, twenty years of *National Geographic* magazines. We had more maps, they used to send you the maps, they still send you the maps. We had maps of every continent, every country, every region, every ocean, every sea. I mean, he just had all this material there. Did we look at it? Absolutely. All the time? Not necessarily so. But if you really wanted something he'd say, it's right over there, you go find it and you'll find the material you want. We didn't have encyclopedias, although we had a set of encyclopedias at the house. I mean he, this is the kind of way he tried to educate us as best he could.

But as far as, a whole slew of mag---. We got the newspaper every day. And he had only one other magazine that I can recall that he really enjoyed tremendously, my father loved the railroad. And I think what it did for him is it gave him a sense of traveling, which he wasn't able to do at that point in his life. And he had, and I don't even recall what the name of the, precise name of the magazine, but it identified the various engines, the steam engines. And then the diesels came on and then eventually the electric engines came on. And the lines, he could show you every railroad line in the country, you know. New York, New Haven, Hartford, New York Central, Pennsylvania, Norfolk and Dedham or whatever, Norfolk and, but he knew all the Union Pacific. He could tell you where the tracks ran to, which one went across the country, which went down south, which went to the southwest, he just loved that.

And he loved just geography, so to speak. And he always talked about Dawson in the Yukon. And when my son went to Alaska and drove across the country, he spent one night at Dawson in the Yukon. To, because he'd heard so many stories from my father about the Yukon and Dawson. And he, so he, he said, "I got there, I could have gone a little further on but I wanted to stay there one night just to recreate what," (in Arabic they call the grandfather *Jidu*) A what *Jidu* always talked about." So in that regard I think he gave us a very good education, because every one of us became really proficient where the countries are, where the states are.

Another problem you read about today with kids, they don't even know where the state of Maine is if they're in, some of them are in Arizona. AWhere's Maine?" "Hmm, I don't know, is Maine part of the country?" "Yeah, it's part of the country." "Where is Angola?" "Angola? Never heard of it." You know, this kind of thing. But I don't think there was a country in the world we couldn't identify, at least what, at, what continent it was on. And almost certainly put your finger on where it is in that continent. And that's pretty hard to do with a lot of kids.

But he, you know, he used to love to have us do those kinds of things. We used to write, if you wrote reports on different things, he'd tell you, you know, go get the magazine out there. You'd have to sear-, we didn't keep a card that said everything about Asia is on this edition, that edition and this edition. You had to go get the magazines one by one and run down the index to find out if there was a subject there that you were trying to cover. That's a lot of work.

**AL:** No librarians in your family.

**PM:** Yeah, that's a lot of work. You know, today you put it on the computer and you punch it up and it says, okay, get March of '92 and April of '96 and you'll find, you know. No, we went back and looked through every darn magazine. And we had them all there. But that's how he, I think those are some of the things, you know I hadn't even thought about that, but those are some of the things that he did when we were growing up. And he'd go out and play a little sports with us now and then. He wasn't really what you'd call 'athletically inclined' but he could go out and throw the ball around with you. And he enjoyed watching us play, but he really wasn't a big athlete himself.

**AL:** Now you said your mother didn't speak a lot English at least when you were younger. Did you learn to speak . . .?

**PM:** Arabic?

**AL:** Yeah.

**PM:** Oh yeah. My mother, my father spoke Arabic just as fluently as any Arab because from the age of two and a half or three that's the only language he ever heard. Of course you'd get the English if you're out there speaking to children your own age, but he s-, no, he spoke Arabic ju-. As a matter of fact my father's pretty proficient in languages because he spoke French very fluently.

**AL:** Where did he pick that up?

**PM:** Well, of course Waterville was a French community. He went to a French parochial school for the five years that he went to school, so he learned to speak French, very proficient in French. He could read a bit of French and write a little bit of French, he could not do that in Arabic. But you could not tell my father was a non-Arab by his accent in Arab, in speaking Arabic language. He was just as proficient with it as the people that grew up whose parents spoke Arabic all the time. And I'd say that he spoke probably as well as some of the people who came from Lebanon and settled in Waterville.

So, but my mother, and he, and she insisted that we speak as much English to her as we could, to get her so she'd be a little bit more proficient in English. And back then when we lived down on King Court, Colby College is just up the street. And I remember this, because at that point I was about maybe ten or eleven or twelve, she had a couple of young college students who came down and worked with her in English. Now she never learned to read and write English. She could read a little bit, she could write her name and things like that, but she, all her education was in Arabic. And she was one of the few people in Waterville of Lebanese descent that could read and write Arabic, see.

So she used to tell me when I'd say, you know, "When are you going to learn English?" She

says, "When are you going to learn Arabic?" Well, I never learned how to read and write and I could not obviously speak as well as she could speak and, but she could speak much better English than I could speak Arabic. So she always said, "Well see, I've got one up on you. You take all your college degrees and do what you want with them, but I've got one up on you."

**AL:** I'm going to stop there so we can turn the tape over.

**PM:** Okay.

*End of Side One*  
*Side Two*

**PM:** Now you were asking me where did I get my elementary and secondary education. It was all in Waterville. I attended the public schools in Waterville starting with the South Grammar School, which is now the Muskie Center in Waterville. And then from there to the junior high which is presently the Pleasant Street School in Waterville. And then senior high which is now really not necessarily totally abandoned, but the superintendent has his offices there and the kindergarten classes in Waterville are held there. But a significant part of the building is not being used at this present time because there was a new high school built about twenty-five years ago in Waterville.

So I got my elementary and secondary education right in Waterville in the public schools there. We all did. George and Robert and Barbara started at parochial schools. George and Robert went . . . . When I was growing up and Johnny was growing up there was no school at St. Joseph's church, which is where we went. When they were ready to go to school, a school had been established for the elementary grades at St. Joseph's church. So Robert and George went to St. Joseph's until the eighth grade, and then went to high school. Barbara went to Mt. Merici, which is a private girl's Catholic school in Waterville and, until the eighth grade, and then went to Waterville High School. So as far as John and I are concerned our complete education was with the public school system.

I might add, I'm a very strong advocate of the public school system everywhere. I would hate to see . . . . I think it's the greatest advance this country ever made when they established a public school system free for every child, so that everyone was offered an opportunity right through high school to go to school free of charge, to prepare for their lifelong careers in whatever they wanted to do. I think it's the greatest benefit that any child could get. And I never could understand children dropping out of school. I never gave it much thought when I was in school, and then after I got out of school I could never figure out how some children don't want to go to school and how some parents don't care whether they go or not. It just never made any sense to me, because it doesn't cost anything for the child to go to school. I, you know, it's paid for by the taxpayers' dollars, but it's just a wonderful opportunity. And you know, I just would hate to see anything happen that would diminish the effectiveness of the public schools in our country.

**AL:** And what did you do after high school?

**PM:** Well, I was in the service for one thing. When I was a senior in high school in 19-, I entered Waterville High my senior year in September of 1943 and I was seventeen at the time, that's the height of World War Two. And then in January I was turning eighteen, January 20th, and at that time when you were eighteen you didn't stay in school, they pulled you right out of school into the service. And I thought about that and I wasn't really interested in being pulled out of school to go into the Army. And there were a number of programs available. At that time during World War Two there was no separate Air Force, you either were in the Army air force or the Navy air force, and the Marine Corps was with the Navy.

Colby College had a contingent of Army air force people that were being educated at Colby. Bates College had a Naval unit. The program was called V-12 or V-5, V-12 being line officers, V-5 being air force, but you all started out in the V-12 program. So on December 17th, I remember the day so well, 1943, I went to Boston. I got a ride down with a relative to Boston and took an examination, a written exam to see if I would, if I, you know, pass the exam for the Navy V-5 program. I passed the written and the physical exam. The physical was the next day, December 18th. After I passed the written they said, "Come back tomorrow for the physical." I came back, returned the next day. The Navy building was on Causeway Street which is right where the old Boston Garden used to be. And I passed that [the physical] and was notified by the Navy. Now, this is all prior to the 20th of January, because all this ends on the 20th of January if I hadn't passed it. That I passed the examination, "You must return, you must complete your education now which would be done June 1944, and you're assigned to Bates College." So here we are today at Bates College.

I did three semesters, it was an accelerated program, in one year. July, August, September, October of 1944, and then November, December, January, February of 1945, and then March, April, May, June of 1945. And so I completed the three semesters. And from there, with a short layover at Floyd Bennett Field in Brooklyn, New York, I was sent to the University of Iowa in Iowa City and completed my pre-flight training at the University of Iowa. And from the University of Iowa, then I was sent to Glenview Naval Air Station which was outside of Chicago for my primary flight training. It now got into the, while we were into the primary flight training, the war was over at this point in time. We were in, now, it's now May of 1946 and the option was offered to most of the fellows, the cadets who were in the program that I was in. You can stay here and complete the program, if you complete it, but you must sign up for five years, or you can leave at this point in time and we will release you from active duty.

So I opted, since I was just starting out in the flight training program, I opted for release from active duty. And I went home and then entered the University of Maine in September, 1946 and completed my bachelor's degree requirements. Graduated in 1949. And then from the University of Maine I went to Columbia University to get a masters degree at Columbia, which I got in May of 1950.

**AL:** A master's in what?



**PM:** In Education. But I never taught a day of my life. Administration of Education. Dwight Eisenhower was the president of Columbia University at the time that I went through, see, he, before he became president of the United States. And it was an interesting period, I might add, and I was very fortunate. I really was extraordinarily fortunate. I did five years of college and got a subsistence from the government and my total tuition paid for by the G.I. Bill when I got out of the service, and for the four semesters I completed while I was in the service. So from my point of view, and obviously from the family's point of view, it didn't cost anyone, not any money at all.

What you had to do is you had to work your butt off to get through and to make sure you stayed ahead of whatever requirement there was there for you. So that you never got, you know, you get bounced out of these programs very rapidly if you're not maintaining a certain grade average. And so I did that at all times because I thought, 'gee, this is wonderful'. It's not costing me or my family, my folks, any money whatsoever. So I completed five years of my college education at no cost. And I always look back on that and think that was, gee, that was a wonderful opportunity for me. And I, frankly, I took advantage of every single bit of it. And, if it was there and you could do the work, you could get through the program.

A lot of nice people, a lot of very successful people, Carl Rowan, the writer, Moynihan, the senator from New York, there's a whole host of people. Johnny Carson. These people were all in the Navy, V-5, V-12 program, either the V-12 or V-5 program and it was a great program. I was the only boy from Waterville High that passed that senior year of that program, see. Now I don't know how many others tried, several did that I know of, I don't know how many others might have tried, but I got into the program. And I would have come back to Bates, but Bates had a requirement. I was starting as a junior, that I had to take a foreign language if I wanted to graduate. And I thought, 'gee, I don't want to start foreign language as a junior'. And so Maine didn't have that requirement. So I said, 'I'll go up to Maine.' And so I decided I'd complete my baccal-, my bachelor's degree requirements at Maine rather than Bates. I'd love to have come back here, though. I liked the school quite frankly. But it wasn't to be.

**AL:** How did your experiences in school, all the different schools you attended, shape or change your beliefs and attitudes that you grew up with?

**PM:** Well, I don't think they changed the basic attitudes. In, I might add in college I was lucky that way also at Bates here, I was a, on the varsity as a starter in basketball and baseball, so I continued that kind of activity. And the same thing when I went to the University of Maine. I only played baseball up there but I was a varsity player for two years at Maine, the two springs I was there, I completed. So I really enjoyed that aspect of my school career as well as the academic work. It gave me, I still had the opportunity of participating in those things that I really enjoyed.

Attitudes? You know, I think it, my attitude on a number of things changed a bit, not significantly. Certainly I came to understand that there are people who have some real significant philosophical differences than what I would have, and the group that I grew up with

had. Basically the group that I grew up with, we were all in the same economic circumstance and so we were pretty much, and we were all from the same ethnic circumstance and we were all from the same religious group. I think it strengthened my religion for one thing, my belief in Catholicism. I roomed with people who were not Catholics and couldn't understand why I was one. And I couldn't understand why they were what they were. So, but we always remained good friends.

Even to this day, my roommates at Bates here, we meet annually. One of them has just passed away. I had three roommates. There were four of us here at Bates and we meet, we have been for the past ten years after all our children grew up and gone, we've met for the past ten years every year. We were here last year, we would have all been in the class of 1948, so we came down to the class reunion. We were invited down, so we came down to the class reunion. We, and we've always remained friends. And we have, you know, somewhat different social backgrounds but that's never interfered with our friendship. You get to be a little bit more tolerant. You find out there are an awful lot of different opinions than the opinion you had, that I might have had.

And you also find out that there are some people who don't like some things and you'll never be able to change that aspect of it, you know? When you're in the service you're under a controlled environment to a significant extent, you know, you do pretty much what you're told to do. "March over there," you march over there. "Sit down," you sit down; "stand up," you stand up. And when you're in a, I think in a collegiate career, non-military, there's a lot of people who, you run into that really for whatever reason sometimes feel that they're just a little different and therefore should be treated a little different. They probably have more money or they have, they come from families that are better off, and. But for the most part most of the people I've met, certainly in the last twenty-five years of my life, don't have that, don't try to distinguish quite as fine as they did when they were younger.

I mean if, you know, I read the stories about the kids and the problems they're having in schools today about dress codes. I had, when I went to the University of Maine, I had Marine Corps greens, trousers. I think I wore those trousers for the two years, yeah? I never, I don't remember, now maybe somebody might have commented about my clothes but if they did it never bothered me any. And I don't even recall anybody comm-, because most of the fellows that I was with were fellows who had been in the service themselves. And so in those times the prejudices did not, I didn't encounter an awful lot of prejudice. Frankly, I encountered more prejudice in Waterville growing up as I, when I look back now, and I didn't recognize it as such back then. But I, as I look back now I understand some of the things that I was told when I was younger that I really didn't understand what I was being told. And, but . . .

**AL:** Like what?

**PM:** Well, you know, I can recall being told 'what am I wasting my time in the college course for', see? "Well," I said, "that's where my father wants me to be. I can do the work, he wants me there, that's where I'm going to be." You know? I had a teacher when I passed the Navy

exam, [who said,] “They must have made a mistake.” I said, “I don’t think so, they got my name right.” And so, you know, little things like that, see. And you look back on it now, and even some of the kids that you knew in school that, they, from a financial point of view they were much better off, you know, “Well, I feel sorry for guys like you.” I said, “Gee, what for?” I mean, I think I live a pretty good life. I’ve got great parents and we, you know, I’ve got a nice warm house and we eat every day. I mean, I think about that now and I think to myself ‘I really didn’t pay much attention to it back then’. It never bothered me any, and I never bothered with them very much.

So I figure, the people I really chummed around with, for the most part, were people in the same kind of circumstance I was in so I never recognized any kind of difference between us, even though there might have been some differences between us. And most of them were fellows who were, I guess they say today, you’re a jock. But most of the jocks that I knew were excellent students as well. So I think probably they were under the same kind of pressure, if you call it pressure, that we were under at home in that you have to do well at this other thing, which is not the sports. You aren’t going to play football later on for a living. And when I was old enough to understand that, my father made sure I understood that, you’re never going to be a football player to make any money, so. But this book here will teach you something that will help you earn a living later on. But you can play and have a good time as long as you never lose sight of the fact that you’re there to get an education, so.

When I was at college, maybe it’s because I was a little older and I didn’t pay much attention to it. I mean, if somebody, if I found that somebody really didn’t want to be, didn’t find me interesting enough to want to talk to me, I wouldn’t waste my time trying to figure out how to get to them, you know. I wasn’t going to try to break down someone’s prejudice, it’s too ingrained at that point. And if they can’t find their way themselves, to get rid of that kind of feeling, far be it from me to try to change their attitude.

So as far as, you know, like, there were, I never really encountered any significant religious prejudice but. There might have been some but I never, I never really had anyone come right out and tell me, you know, ‘You’re doing the wrong thing.’ I would have probably told them, “Well, maybe that’s so but I think I’m going to continue doing it until my parents tell me it’s the wrong thing because I get most of my direction from my parents, not from some total stranger.” I never, so, I would guess that my beliefs and my attitudes and my interests all developed when I was very young.

We still have a very strong interest in reading, in geography, in what’s happening today. My major was history, by the way. So, I loved history, I loved to read where we came from, how we got to where we were, where we are and how we developed all over, in not just this country but a lot of countries. I mean, I think history’s so fascinating and I’ve always believed if you don’t know where you’ve been, you’re not going to know where you’re going, see. So, and I love to travel, I always loved to travel, like I said, that came from reading all the maps that my father had, talking about all the states. I never went any further than Boston when I was in high school, in Waterville up to the high school level, until I got into the service when I ended up in New

York and Iowa and Chicago, I had never done any of that before.

Since then I've traveled through the entire country, to Europe, to Africa, to Asia, to South America. And I find it fascinating, you know, to see all the various cultures and meet people and talk to people. And I find people for the most part pretty nice, you know, I find, you know, pretty nice. I'm sure not everybody is nice, but I'm not going to try to be judgmental on anyone over whether they're nice or not. I find for the most part, I've, I always had a good relationship most every place I've ever been. So, I guess I grew up with an interest in that kind of thing and I still have it. And I've always had an interest in learning and I read voraciously, I read every night of the week before I go to bed for at least an hour to two. Not just history, I love novels. Tom Clancy, LeCarre, you know, so I stay interested that way.

**AL:** We've talked somewhat about the Waterville community when you were growing up . . .

**PM:** Well, the Waterville community when I was growing was a diverse community. There was a significant Lebanese population there, the only one in the state of Maine that has its own church. In fact it's one of the only, at one time it was one of only three, I think, churches in the nation that had its own school. It had a very significant Franco-American population, very significant. It had, it didn't have much of an Italian population, a very small Italian population. It had a relatively significant Irish Scottish population. It had a very, it had a very strong Jewish population, not a large but comparable to the Lebanese population. It had a very significant Yankee population.

It was a community when I was in high school, let's say, because that's when I remember most, when I was in high school, all the businesses for the most part in Waterville were probably owned by Yankees. And that comes from their being there much longer than anyone else. If you go down the street today, there aren't any owned by Yankees. There's an awful lot of them owned by Jewish families, by Lebanese families, by French families, and so they have really moved up the economic ladder so to speak.

The churches, there were in Waterville four Catholic churches, which attest to a very large Catholic population in Waterville, aside from the surrounding communities. There's a significant number of Protestant denominations in Waterville, the Baptist church, the Methodist church, the Congregational Church of Christ, and a significant number today especially of Evangelical churches. There's a Jewish synagogue there that is very active and very successful. And there's a Christian Science church and Universalist Unitarian. So you have virtually every Protestant denomination covered in Waterville. I might add that the Congregational Church of Christ is probably, I live across the street from one, they have the biggest, biggest attendance of any church in the community now, they are absolutely incredibly busy. And religiously, I think churches today are suffering from attendance, I don't think many of them have the kind of attendance they had. I know they don't at St. Joseph's or even some of the other Catholic churches.

And one of my roommates that I was mentioning to you here at Bates is a, when he left Bates he

went to Harvard while he was in the Navy, and then finished up at Harvard after he got out of the Navy, and went to Yale divinity school for his masters and doctorate and became a minister at the Congregational Church of Christ denomination. And he's one of the fellows I get tog-, I get together with him two or three times a year. He lives in Florida, I see him in the winter time in Florida and then I see him in the summer time. He has a home in Vermont and we get together. And he's mentioned on numerous occasions to me that they have the same problem, they don't get the attendance that they used to get fifty, forty, thirty years ago.

I don't know what the answer is to that. I guess I'm still old-fashioned, we pretty much go to mass every Sunday. So the, I guess I would have to say that the Evangelical churches probably do, get a bigger attendance. They have smaller groups and they only have one service, so maybe that might be one of the explanations. But in any event, they seem to get, but they, they seem to get significant attendance at most of their services. So I guess the Protestant, the mainline Protestant denominations are having the same problem that the Catholics are having, in trying to get their parishioners into the church. If you ask me what the answer to that is, I wouldn't even try to tell you because I don't know. If I knew, I guess I'd be in demand at every parish, Protestant, Catholic, to explain to them what you have to do to get your parishioners in there. So I don't know. But I think we're basically a religious community I guess is what I'm driving at.

We, I think it's a very religious community with a diverse group with, obviously heavily Christian. No Muslim mosques in, I don't think, I don't know if there's any in Maine, but maybe in Portland, but there's certainly not, never, not in Waterville or in the central Maine area. And it's, the only Jewish synagogue in the central Maine area is the one in Waterville. So you'd have to say probably they're a, it's a significant Christian community but that's not unusual, I don't think there are very many communities in the country that are not basically Christian. But I think the Jewish community has always gotten along very well in Waterville, as has the Lebanese community.

I think one of the reasons, too, is, and I think about this from time to time, the Jewish community is a highly educated community, I don't care where anyone goes, they're a very highly educated and a very successful community. They bring a lot to a community. They bring a great deal to a community in the arts, in the sciences, in the professions. They're a very, very successful group. I think right along with them, in the generation I grew up with, the Lebanese are in the same kind of category at this point in time. Most of the Lebanese children I grew up with, not all of them but most of them, are very well educated and are pretty, are reasonably successful in everything they're doing, and have done extraordinarily well in many respects.

I mentioned to you earlier about the number of children that grew up in this area, basically almost one hundred percent Lebanese, doctors, lawyers, dentists, professional people, business people. They've done an outstanding job. And I think on the strength of that, their acceptance into the social structure of Waterville is far easier today than fifty, sixty or seventy years ago when they were really just struggling to get going. And to their credit, to the parents, the credit to the parents of my generation. They pushed them hard, their children, to get an education. That's where you equal the other person who may have a better start than you have. But in the

final analysis, if you can produce, there's no end to what you can do, but you have to be on an equal footing. And if you can do it with an education, you get that education and you'll find that doors will open to you for the most part no matter what you, what your name is, no matter if you're a little darker or a little whiter or you have brown eyes or blue eyes. They don't care. You are doing something that is productive and assisting them, and that really makes a lot of doors open.

**AL:** Do you find that a college education today opens as many doors as it did during your generation?

**PM:** Well, that's a good question. I would say yes, I think it does. I know of a circumstance right now. A very good friend of mine who has a daughter who did not go to college, but had a very successful career up to a point. And she's now about forty years old and she, she stepped right out of high school and started out in the law office as a law secretary. But then she really, she got into lobbying, I don't know how she got into it, but she got into lobbying. She did, was really very successful at it. And now that has dried up and, it lasted for fifteen, eighteen years. It's dried up. And she's had several opportunities at some really nice positions but the lack of a college education, because that's one of the primary considerations that they had established, that you have to have a college education, she can't get in. And, you know, to me that's a little unusual, but.

I deal with a lot of insurance guys, I own an insurance agency, and I, over the years at this point in my life I've met a lot of the people who are at top management in some of the companies. And they in many instances, you know, if they're going to hire an underwriter for instance, they'll state college degree necessary. Now they might find, there might be someone else out there who doesn't have a college degree who could do the job as good if not better, but they're not going to take the chance of hiring someone and not, at least when you've got a college education I guess the theory must be you've indicated a capability of finishing four years of requirements to get the degree. So we know we can give you this book and say, "Okay, here's the book and this is what we expect you to learn." If you haven't done that, I guess the indication is that, well, you haven't proven to us that you can do it and we don't have time to devote to teaching you how to do it. I'm not saying it's fair, but I think that the reality is that's exactly what happens. So, four people walk in, one's got a college degree and the other three don't. I'm certain for the most part you're going to look at the person with the college degree and say, all things being equal, we'll take you. And I, as I said, I'm not sure that's fair but I think that is the reality of the situation.

You know, we think about what was life like in the Lebanese community, frankly I got, some of my best friends are my Lebanese friends. You know, we don't see each other as often as we used to see each other but we greet each other, talk a little Arabic, you know, we don't talk very much, mostly hello and how are you and how's your family. And just, just try to keep the flow going so you don't forget everything. And these are fellows that I, I've never, I wouldn't hesitate a minute if I had a problem. I've got a couple of lawyer friends, I don't, it wouldn't, doesn't bother me a second to call them up and ask them, "What do you think I should do in a

situation like this?" You know? And they don't say, "Come on in, I'll charge you two hundred bucks an hour." They listen. Or, and the same thing, they'll call me up on insurance, you know, 'what do you think about this? Now tell me.' I think, and they're not necessarily customers of mine, but I don't have a problem with that.

You know, we, you know someone for sixty-five, seventy years, it's pretty hard to say, "Well listen, we've been friends all these years but I'm not going to give you any information unless you want to come in here and do business with me." That's, I mean that's . . . . They have their reasons for doing what they're doing and I have my reasons for doing what I'm doing, but that should not, and it certainly has never altered my relationship with them and my friendship with them, see. And I think most of them feel the same way. We grew up in a group that, we always felt we were strong together and if we were not accepted someplace else we'd always be accepted here, so.

And thinking of the Lebanese community, how did it get along, sometimes you wonder how it got along with everybody else. I guess it got along pretty well. There was always differences, you know. When you're a new immigrant on the block, the last immigrant feels threatened by your being now on the block and maybe contending with them for the positions and the jobs that are available. And at that time, when I was young, as I said, you know, that was the period of time when you had the Depression going. There was a lot of competition for whatever little work there was available. I think they got along pretty well. I mean, the fact that nobody got killed, you have to say at least that much happened.

I think there was a lot of, there was not a lot but there was some friction between the various nationalities, I think. Early on maybe, there might have been some friction between the Franco-Americans and the Lebanese, and there might have been some social friction between the Lebanese and say the Yankees, but I think all that's been overcome over, as time goes on. As they develop their own, the generation that I grew up with and just before me, some, there were some older, people who are older than I am, who are second generation Lebanese, were very successful as well. I think they broke the ground. And I think as time has gone on a lot of that has kind of washed away. I'm sure there are still people who don't like someone because he's this or that or she's this or that, but I think for the most part people pretty much accept you.

My customers are across the whole spectrum. I have Jewish customers, I have French customers, I have Yankee customers, I have Italian customers, I have every nationality that's represented in Waterville and the Waterville area as customers. Catholics, Protestants, of every denomination, non-religious people. We never get into a, "By the way, if you're not a Catholic I'm not going to write you insurance." Or somebody saying, "Well you're not, you don't belong to my church." I've never had that question asked of me and I've never had anyone say, "I'm not going to do business with you because you're this, that or something else."

I always liked the answer my brother George gave when he was over in North Ireland and, of course the controversy that was occurring over there between the Catholics and the Protestants. And he said, "You know I ran for the senate and I served for a long time and I was the majority

leader, and I never once was asked, "What's your religion?" In this country here you don't, generally don't really care. Your first motivation is what are you going to do to help me. If you're going to do something that's going to help me, I really don't care where you're from or who you are, as long as you're a nice person. I'm assuming that those things are there. You're basically honest and you're a nice decent person. And so I think pretty much you hung around with your Lebanese friends more when you were younger, but that didn't stop you from having lots of other friends.

**AL:** Are there others in the Waterville community that you can think of that would be good sources for this project?

**PM:** Say that again now?

**AL:** Are there other people in the Waterville community that you've known and grown up with who would also be good sources for this project?

**PM:** Well, you know, you were asking how has Waterville changed over the years. I guess it's changed like every other community has changed, the structure of the city is somewhat changed from, there used to be a shopping area, a very significant shopping area, especially in the downtown. It's no longer that, and that's because of obviously the advent or the proliferation of the cars and the shopping centers. You get in the car today, you want to go to Portland it's no big deal. You jump in the car and you whip on down there and you're there in an hour and fifteen minutes, and you've got a million square feet of shopping space with all these various big stores. Well, that's pretty much decimated the downtown of Waterville as far as being a shopping center is concerned. You know, when I was growing up Friday evenings was a big night downtown and Saturday was a big day and you always had traffic downtown. You go downtown now, if I go down in the evening to my office to do a little work, and I'm right on Main Street, I'm the only car parked on the street at times. So it's changed in that regard. And I'm not sure how else it's changed.

I think it's, it's probably changed in that there is not as much resentment, let's say, over ethnic groups as there was, because there's so much intermarrying now. And, you know frankly, not just between the Lebanese and French or French or Italian, but even religious intermarrying. It's not unusual for Catholics to marry Protestants or even Jewish people, and you know, it's not, that's not unusual. I know several people that have gone in that direction and it doesn't bother anyone, I don't think it does at least. I haven't known that it bothers anyone. So I think in that regard, the city is a much richer city, see.

And, but you know physically the city has changed and it's changed rather significantly, I think. And I don't know what the future holds for it as a shopping area or even as a manufacturing center, because we had a whole bunch of industries that no longer exist in Waterville. You know, Scott Paper Company, well, it really wasn't in Waterville, it was in Winslow but right across the bridge. A significant part of the employees were from Waterville, but certainly from the greater Waterville area. That's gone. The Lockwood Duchess which is part of the Deering



Milliken Company closed up its textile operations around 1940 in Waterville. There was a Wyandotte Worsted, which was a woolen mill, Deering Milliken was a cotton plant, cotton factory. Wyandotte Worsted closed up twenty years ago, that was a woolen company. As did a company in Oakland right adjacent to Waterville, close up.

It is a, I think, a changing kind of economic situation in Waterville. It used to be very heavy manufacturing and today it's becoming a service area as opposed to . . . . You still have Cianchette which is a significant employer. And you have SAPPI right up the river in Fairfield and Skowhegan, which is obviously a very significant employer. But you don't have the numbers proportionate to the population, as you did prior to this, employed in manufacturing. It just isn't there and I don't believe it's going to come back that way for a long time, if ever. I just don't think so. And this isn't unique to Waterville. I mean, I've had a lot of people say, I was very much involved in the renewal project as we discussed earlier, and part of it was to, we redeveloped downtown Waterville. This was back in the early 1960s. And people have now said, "Gee, what's happened to Waterville? We lost the department stores." "Well," I said, "Porteous isn't in downtown Portland any more; Ward Brothers aren't in downtown Lewiston any more; Freeses is not in downtown Bangor any more." You don't have those things any more in any of the communities.

*(Telephone interruption.)*

**AL:** This is the end of the first interview with Paul Mitchell.

*End of Interview*