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Interview with Linwood E. Palmer by Stuart O'Brien

Summary Sheet and Transcript

Interviewee

Palmer, Linwood E.

Interviewer

O'Brien, Stuart

Date

September 14, 1998

Place

Nobleboro, Maine

ID Number

MOH 047

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Biographical Note

Linwood E. Palmer was born in 1921 in Nobleboro, Maine. His father was the owner of a general store. He went to college at Colby and Andover Newton Theological School. Later, he did graduate work at the University of Maine. Palmer was a prominent legislator and was active in the Republican Party for years. He ran for Secretary of State but did not win. Linwood was a GOP contender for Governor in 1977 but lost in the primary. He served two terms in the House. He was a state official and representative.

Scope and Content Note

Interview includes discussion of: Palmer's personal and family background; the Nobleboro, Maine community; his early political career; what his campaigns were like then and as a finance manager now; his time in the legislature, especially relating to Muskie; the makeup of the Senate; highway and transportation problems in Maine; Lincoln County economic history; years Palmer spent in Boston from 1951-1971; his return to the Legislature and how it changed; running for Governor; why he did not become Secretary of State; why he wanted to be Governor; Angus King; and contemporary Maine politics.

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Stuart O'Brien: If you could, could you please state and spell your name?

Linwood E. Palmer: Linwood E. Palmer, Jr., and you want the spelling? It's L-I-N-W-O-O-D, initial E-, P-A-L-M-E-R, Jr.

SB: Where were you born?

LP: Born right here in Nobleboro.

SB: Nobleboro. When?

LP: Nineteen twenty-one.

SB: And you grew up here?

LP: I went to grade school here, I went to Lincoln Academy, Colby College, and I went to Andover Newton Theological School after Colby, and then I did some graduate work at the University of Maine.

SB: What were your parents' occupations?

LP: My father owned the only store there was in town, the general store here in the center of town, and my mother was a housewife.

SB: Is that the one that's up on Center Street?

LP: Yeah, it's up in, it's right on the old, it's by, Center Street. Yes, opposite the monument in front and the church, the little church there. I was born in the house just beyond the church, and that was my dad's store.

SB: How many members were there in your family?

LP: There were Mother and Dad and three boys and one girl.

SB: What was Nobleboro like at the time, when you were growing up? Was it, what kind of, what did people do, was it a very small community?

LP: Well, it was a, definitely a real rural town, I think we had a population then of probably six hundred maybe, a little more. My dad ran the store and we delivered groceries all over town to all the homes, as well as grain for the cattle. And what did people do? I'll tell you something, most of the people in those days had, most of the people had a farm with a small number of cows and probably a pig and some chickens and so, and they were pretty self sufficient. Things they bought were things like flour and grain and vinegar and molasses, stuff like that. Nothing like you buy at the supermarkets today.

SB: Was your family very politically active?

LP: Well, yes, I'd say for those times. My father was a selectman here for many, many years, and I think that's where I got an interest in it, from him.

SB: Was he a Democrat or a Republican.

LP: Republican.

SB: He was Republican. This is a very Republican area?

LP: Very definitely. Not as much as it used to be, obviously nothing is the same as it used to be, but this county, Lincoln county, in which we are, is a, it's a Republican county. Put it this way, I think there are probably more independents than there are anybody else, unenrolled voters, but there are far more Republicans and, yeah, I'd say it's a Republican county.

SB: That seems to be my experience with talking to people from Lincoln County. Were you very active in extracurricular activities in high school?

LP: Yeah, I was active in dramatics and debating and I did some in sports, cross country and a small amount in basketball, but mostly my interests were in history and in debating. In fact, I almost went to Bates. I had a scholarship to Bates, had a full scholarship to Bates, and nearly went there, but we were pretty much a Colby family and Colby matched the scholarship I had and so I went to Colby.

SB: And your scholarship to Bates had a lot to do with debate?

LP: What's that?

SB: Your scholarship to Bates had a lot to do with debate?

LP: Yes, they had a, we had a, every year all the schools in Maine had a, had debating teams. They had a tournament at Bates for the state championship, and we won it. And in that particular year they also chose the best speaker of the tournament and he got a full scholarship, he or she, and I got that.

SB: What year was that?

LP: Oh God, it must have been 1938 probably.

SB: Nineteen thirty eight. So why did you, you chose Colby because ...

LP: Well, we were a Colby family. My brother had been at Colby and so I'd been there a lot and so forth. And then, and my teachers at the academy, my debating coach was from Bates and she very much wanted me to go to Bates. But most of my teachers were Colby and I had been to Colby a lot more than Bates and so I just... But I was going to go to Bates because they were tough times and I had a full scholarship at Bates, but I had full scholarship at Colby and I had a chance to work. So it was, it turned out to be economically the thing for me to do.

SB: And that was between the two, Bates and Colby.

LP: Yeah.

SB: Were you very active in Waterville in campus life when you were at Colby?

LP: Uh-hunh. And there again, it was mostly in speech. I was, I did all of the, I entered all the

speech contests they had. I was on the Colby debating team for four years. I was student assistant in the department my senior year, and I was president of my fraternity and ran the dining hall. As a matter of fact, I made money in my senior year with all the things that were going on. It was just a marvelous experience, but we worked and were able to do it.

SB: Now, were you very politically active in college?

LP: Not a lot, but I did belong to the young Republicans group and that way. It was only after college that I really became more active. But I was active, I always made... As a matter of fact, we lived across the town, there was little town hall in those days and my home was right across the street from it. And as soon as I could drive an automobile, I had a license to drive, I used to drive voters to the polls. In those days you know, today most everybody drives themselves to the polls. In those days we had lists and we went and got the people and took them to the polls. And I was doing that when I was fifteen, because I was, you could get a license when you were fifteen then. So yeah, I was active all right. In fact I ran, when I was twenty one or two, for the house.

SB: So you ran almost right after you graduated from Colby?

LP: I graduated from Colby when I was twenty, and I went to Andover Newton Theological School for a year, and made up my mind that was not what I really wanted to do. And I came back and I taught school at Lincoln Academy for two or three years, and it was when I was doing that that I really made up my mind I wanted to get into politics.

SB: So for awhile you thought you wanted to be a preacher?

LP: Yeah, yeah, thought so. All during my late grade school and high school and college. That's why I took heavy courses in philosophy and some religion, but not too much, I was told not to do that because I'd get all that I wanted at seminary. But I did a lot of work in speech.

SB: What motivated you to run for the house?

LP: I can't tell you. I just knew I wanted to do it, it was just one of those things I had to do. And there was a man who had the job who was a... He was a Republican, and I didn't think he was the greatest in the world and ...

SB: Was he from Nobleboro?

LP: No, he was from Damariscotta. And I came from a small town in the district but I said to myself, I want to do that. And so I ran against an incumbent but I beat him, and it was fun. And I just got it in my blood and I just loved it from that point on.

SB: Really. What was your first campaign like?

LP: Very simple, and it makes me laugh today because I'm still involved, I, right now I'm working as the finance chairman for Bob Spear here in Nobleboro, who's running for the state

senate. And he's running against an incumbent and I know what it costs to run a campaign today.

And when I first ran... It was amazing... You didn't go house to house like they do today, you didn't go hustle every house. There were individuals in every town that were very, very influential, and if you had those individuals you were pretty well sure of making it. And so instead of maybe my making hundreds and hundreds of house calls, I probably had in the, my district changed from time to time, but I'd say that I maybe had a hundred contacts to make, and continue to make. Of course you'd speak to groups and stuff like that, but totally different from today and I don't think I ever spent, until I... I don't know as I ever did spend much more than three or four or five hundred dollars. Back then I didn't spend hardly anything. And when I came back from Boston, from Massachusetts, and served the last three terms I served in the house, I don't think even then I spent over five or six hundred. Before that it was just a minimal amount: put a little ad in the paper, you know, and do a lot of visiting with influential people, but no house to house canvassing like we have today.

SB: So what year were you elected to the house?

LP: Nineteen forty-seven [1947].

SB: Nineteen forty-seven, and you were, you said you were tw- ...

LP: Well, that isn't exactly right, uh '47. I was looking it up the other day, in fact in the biographical sketches of the house and senate back then, my picture happened to be right beside Ed Muskie's, and I recall in that particular picture I was I think twenty-four. Ed was, I believe, ten years my senior. (*Showing photograph.*)

SB: You say you were twenty-four?

LP: He was thirty-two and I was twenty-four. And we had a very interesting... We got along real fine. First year I was there I was just a freshman, just a member, you know, I had a little committee that I, you know, I was learning the ropes. The second year, the second term, I became, I ran for majority leader of the Republicans, and I lost that. But I became, I was elected assistant majority leader, and Ed was the minority leader. So we used to get together quite a lot then. It was a strange thing, you know, back then, and if you look at the numbers and what would happen to Maine politically since then. I mean, when I was in the house, within one or two, plus or minus one or two, I think there were about a hundred and twenty-five Republicans and twenty-five Democrats. And in the senate, after two terms in the house I went to the senate and we had I think thirty Republicans and three Democrats. Back in those days even the St. John Valley, which is strongly Democrat today, was Republican. And of course Ed was the one who really did the most to make the Democratic Party a power in the state. People have talked about that since then, about John Martin and others, but let's get it... he was the guy, he was the power that did it, that turned it around.

SB: So when you were first elected to the house, the Democratic Party was just a non- entity pretty much.

LP: Exactly, it was in the senate, too.

SB: Really.

LP: And that was back in '47. I was, in '51, I served under Horace Hildreth, he was the first governor I served under, and then after he served Fred Payne became governor. He came from Waldoboro and we were very, very good friends. And he was very helpful to me in my progress out there. Being young, and in those days there were very few young people in the house and senate. I mean, today there's a lot of young people in the house and senate, but back then there were very few. In fact I was called Junior, they'd say Junior for this and Junior for that, but I had a lot of good friends. I made friends with some of the most influential people, including Ed Muskie, but I mean people like Bob Haskell who was one of the realbrains in my book of state finances, and so forth.

And I remember when I ran for the senate, this was one of the funny ones, I had, I did not vote for the right person to be president of the senate. I knew who I wanted to vote for, I wanted to vote for Bob Haskell. He was a good friend of mine. And Burt Cross, who had said he wasn't going to run again, knew that I had supported Haskell, you know, Haskell. And then when the time came he decided to run again, he wanted me to change my mind. I said, no, no, I've made my mind up, I'm going to vote for Haskell. So as a consequence Haskell lost anyway, and when he passed out his committee assignments, I was out in the boonies, it was absolutely nothing. I had two or three committees, and never received a bill. And one day the governor called me and, Fred Payne, he says, Lin, it appears to me as though you're going to be doing not too much this session, and I said, that's right. He says, well I've got a job for you to do, he says, I want you to sponsor a bond issue for highways of twenty seven million dollars. Now you think of that, that was 1951, twenty seven million dollars. That was like, I mean a hundred million today, I don't know, I mean terrific.

SB: A lot more than that.

LP: And we got it, got it passed, I spent the whole session, that was my job. But in doing it I got involved with highways and I got involved with a whole lot of the things we did to straighten out the program, made it a better program.

SB: Now, there being pretty much just one party in the state, how did, do you ever think about that as being a negative when you first were in the legislature?

LP: I didn't then because I knew nothing different. That's the way it was, all during that time. I mean, it was a shock when I came back twenty-one years later and found that we were, at that, I think I served one term when I came back with a Republican speaker, and the Republicans did hold the senate for all the time I was there. But the first speaker I served under, I might have had more than one, no, no, Dick Hughes from Portland, Cape Elizabeth, was the speaker and he was the last Republican speaker of the house. That would have been 1972 or something like that. John Martin took over and was there ever since, until he lost.

SB: Getting back to the highway issue, now that highway bill was really, really big in the state, it really changed a lot.

LP: It was tremendous, it sure did.

SB: It comes up again and again throughout Ed's gubernatorial stint and later on even up during Curtis' administration and Reed's administration. I was talking to Eben Elwell a couple weeks ago and Eben had a lot to say about the highways, the reapportionment, the redistribution of the school districts, and one other, he had three "R's" that he had, and the highways was one of them. So tell me a little bit more about how, what exactly the highway bill was and what exactly it accomplished.

LP: Well, first of all you've got to realize that we are a state of, what, a million two hundred thousand people, something like that, and we have thirty three thousand square miles. You know full well that we have a terrible time with roads. I mean, back then it was much worse. You went to Aroostook county back in those days, you didn't see, it's pretty bad now, but... So we were in a position that we had to do something for commerce, for business in the state. We didn't even have a good, decent transportation system. So the twenty seven million dollars was used on the primary roads, but then we had other funds back in those days, we had state aid roads they called them, that was one category. One was town road improvement funds, and things like that.

I had the opportunity, being... I told the governor, I will do this if you will let me make some changes in how, some of the things we're spending money on. One was the town road improvement fund. I thought it was just a, I thought it was kind of a grab bag, what we call today "pork" in a way. Whoever was up there, they... I can remember when I got it changed, I tried to get it changed and I couldn't. So I said, well, in my district I'm going to do what I wanted to do statewide, which was, I did a very simple thing. I take the number of unimproved roads that I had in each town I represented and would give them so many thousands of dollars, and I just divided one into the other and I gave them each their proportionate share. I can remember that the largest town I had, the selectmen were very mad at me because they were getting big plug money and I cut them way back to very, very little, and they, I remember their selectmen called me and they said, you know, they were very ticked at me and I said, well, I'll tell you how I did it. And they said, well, that's fair, that's honest, and they respected me for it. And we had changed that around.

It's a lot of little things, but anyway, the point to this highway thing back then was we needed money and we just were a poor state, as we are today really, and the transportation system in this state still isn't that great, we still need, we have problems. Look at, you came down here from Lewiston today, you went through Bath? No, you didn't go through Bath. Yes, you did, you went to Brunswick. Well, you go through Bath, there's the bridge, you come to Wiscasset, it needs to be bypassed, and we have no money to bypass Wiscasset, Wiscasset. I have a friend in Wiscasset, runs a wonderful restaurant there, and he, you know, it's tough for him to make a living because he, we say to each other, well Wiscasset is a place that you go through, not to, because you can't afford to get off the beaten path in Wiscasset, you couldn't even get back in on the... Oh, after Labor Day, you probably had no trouble today, all (*unintelligible phrase*).

(Speaking at once.)

SB: No, it was all backed up today all the way through town, and I was just thinking as I was going through, I was like, you know, this is a nice, it's a beautiful town, but you don't want to pull over there because you'll never get back on the damn road.

LP: No, no, so if you're on Little Storrow there, you're not going to stop for a hamburger either, you aren't going to stop for anything. You're just bumper to bumper. And years ago the same thing happened at Damariscotta down here, this is when I was involved in the highway program, we had a group of people in Damariscotta who didn't want Damariscotta bypassed, and they fought it. But we, a bunch of us and those who were for it finally prevailed and we bypassed Newcastle, Damariscotta; best thing that ever happened to them. It's a thriving community, Damariscotta is, and it's the commercial center for, oh, the peninsula down there, Bristol, South Bristol, New Harbor, Pemaquid, all that area. And if you didn't have that, and even now there's congestion down there, being bypassed. Wiscasset, I think they even, I know that a number of people there have been fighting bypassing Wiscasset, but I think now they have come to change their mind, I think they want to be bypassed, but there's no money. And that's the way it was back then. Twenty seven million dollars, of course that went a long way back then. And I guess, I don't know how much, I don't remember now how much the federal government matched with that twenty seven million.

SB: Now did that money go to building the turnpike?

LP: No.

SB: No, that was later?

LP: That was later.

SB: So that was all just improvement of unimproved roads.

LP: Well this, no this was actually, no, this money was pretty much, yeah it was but a lot of it was for the primary road system though. I can't remember the turnpike, I can't remember now exactly. George Varney was president of the senate I think when he first pushed for that turnpike, but I think that was pretty much funded by bond issues and paid for by tolls. This other money went strictly for primary highways and others, I mean we got a chunk of money here in Lincoln county. I mean just a resurfacing program wasn't any good in those days, it was horrible.

Today it's a pretty good program. But we will never be, we'll never have the system that we should have because we just don't have the resources for the, you figure how many people there are in Maine. I can remember I served once on the very first commission on Maine's future, I was on that commission with Halsey Smith and I can remember some other, Arthur Johnson who later became president of the University of Maine, and some others. And as I recall, when we were doing that work, if you take a center line, the center line of the Maine Turnpike and fifteen

miles either side, it's seventy percent of the population in Maine. Now seventy percent, so somewhere in this thousands of square miles there's thirty percent where people in Maine live and some of them don't even have decent roads to...

When Mr. Kennedy built this cottage, this camp up here, this Kieve, which is a big place today. I can remember he used to call my father and tell him when they were coming. And my father would call a farmer over here who would come in with a buckboard and meet them at the store and bring them back here in the spring every year, so he could come in and see how much damage was done in the winter and what they had to do for repairs and so forth. It was just a mucky, mucky mess, and it didn't get much better, there was no grading much done in the summer time either, but now of course we have paved road here ...

SB: Brand new paved road, too.

LP: Pretty good, yeah, not too bad, not too bad for a little town, but I'll tell you back in the '40s it wasn't that way.

SB: Now, Lincoln County today, tourism and maybe the lobstering are two of the bigger industries. What was, back then was that also the case?

LP: Well, of course the tourism wasn't as good because the transportation was so dreadful, but it always has been rural farming individually. Like, for example, let me tell you something, today in Nobleboro we have two big farms, just two. And when I was a child and worked in my father's store, most every other house had cows and chickens and hens and so forth and they lived on that. Today the Spears family up here in North Nobleboro, they have the largest dairy farm there is around here. They have probably three hundred milking cows and, well if they have three hundred milking cows, you're supposed to have about three hundred back ups, so they probably have close to six hundred head of cattle up there. And they do a big business on vegetables in the summer. They grow a lot of corn, they have stands, retail stands around here. Lincoln county back there then was fishing, yes, darn right, it was big and it still is. And the northern end of the county up here was farming and if you were a politician and you were a legislator, you were representing them, it wasn't very often that issues (*aside, referring to cat which has been mewling in the background*), this is my baby boy, isn't he cute? He's a Maine coon, he's a beautiful cat. Fishing, you couldn't, a bill that usually helped the fishermen hurt the farmer and one that helped the farmer hurt the fisherman. It was really a, you had to be a Solomon, really, to serve the two masters. But, and of course Lincoln county does have a lot of lakes like Damariscotta Lake, and we did have tourism then, but it was not thriving like it is today. People came down here and they built cottages and summer homes, and obviously the business was very, very good in the summer time because these people arrived. But since we had a decent road system, and still need to improve it, since we had it the tourism is much bigger. Tourism is big, big here now.

SB: Now when you served in the legislature as a part time job, what were you doing besides that?

LP: Teaching school, and I also, in time off I worked with my father in the store.

SB: So how did a normal legislative session go?

LP: Oh, it was very simple. We, and that, and of course that was kind of like, this answers another question of yours about one party. Because it was one party, and I'm not saying it was right, but we went in there first of January and we were out, well when the Aroostook farmer had to plant potatoes, the legislature was over. Usually, I'm saying, it was by the end of March. Now we had it so we had a budget, a two year budget and there was no second annual session in those days. You came to work, after the regular session, which lasted about three months. The only time you would come up there again would be for a special session called by the governor, usually for some financial reason. And in the time that I served as senator for example, after I served my first term, my first year, the three months, I had this opportunity to move to Boston to manage a steel company. And I was still senator, and they said well, it won't make any difference, we probably won't have another session anyway. Well I went to Boston, I did come up once and I think it was for two days. So that's how it happened. You just, it was just one session really in two years for three months, and you might have a special session occasionally and if you did it would last one or two or three days.

SB: For those three months you, people from far away, like Presque Isle or wherever, would have to come and stay or they...

LP: Yeah, they lived here. And that's true today of course, but with better transportation. People do come longer distances and not as many stay as did, but certainly in Aroostook county and western Maine where, way up in western Maine, and certainly way down in the Kittery area, most of them do stay there now.

SB: You just said senator, you, when you first ran you ran for the house. When did you make the switch?

LP: To the senate?

SB: Yeah.

LP: I served two terms in the house and then I ran for the senate. And I ...

SB: This is all before you went to Boston.

LP: ... I was intending to stay longer but I had this opportunity in business in Boston and I, quite frankly things were not very good, the economy wasn't very good. And I was married and had a child, I said, I guess I'd better do something besides being in politics, although I missed it greatly and I always come back to it. I looked upon my Boston experience as being like a hitch in the Army, stay for twenty years and then come back.

SB: So your time when you got to know Ed Muskie, what was he like as a legislator?

LP: Well he was obviously a very bright guy, and when he spoke people listened because there

was no foolishness about him. And he was not a ideologue. I mean, he got along well with the Republicans because he, in retrospect, probably had to, I mean he was the leader of twenty-four people and there were a hundred and twenty-five who just go like that (*snaps fingers*) and it was all over. And, but I can remember I used to say to him, Ed, you ought to be a Republican, you're wasting your time as a Democrat because you can't do anything, and he couldn't really. But he'd get, except gain the respect of the Republican majority and after awhile they began to work with him and collaborate with him on bills that he wanted. And they would work and, you know, compromise and do things that he looked good, and he was good.

SB: Now, some people have said that they knew from knowing Ed in the late '40s that he was going to go on to do great things. Did you have any ...?

LP: Well I had a feeling of course he was going to be governor.

SB: Oh you did?

LP: Oh yeah, I had a feeling he'd be governor some day, but I knew that things had to change politically before he'd be governor. I mean, there was just no way. Because I had known so many, even as young as I was I'd seen so many Democrats run for governor and it was just a, it was just ridiculous. You know, we have Harold Dubord, was a big name in Waterville, and he was a popular guy but how far did he go? No. But Ed made so many Republican friends, and then I'll tell you something else that I think helped him tremendously. Governor Cross made some very, very bad mistakes politically, and a lot of Republicans resented him. And see, he served only one term, he served two years and that's all. Back then they were just two year terms, now they're four. Well he served just one term and he lost to Ed Muskie in that so Ed got in, primarily that first time a lot on the fact that the Republicans had a lot of internal strife.

SB: Now when did you leave to go to Boston?

LP: I left in 1951.

SB: Fifty-one, so you missed the whole gubernatorial years.

LP: Exactly.

SB: Did you keep a lot of contact with former peers in the legislature or did you ...?

LP: In that time you mean?

SB: Yeah, because I always kept a home here. If I didn't have a home I had a cottage or I had a home and a cottage because I was trying to figure out what I could do when I came back, if I retired young, not retired young but gave up business young, came back here and wanted to go into politics. You had to have something besides legislative pay, so I started in the Christmas tree business. And for years I'd come down here and put Christmas trees in in the spring. I had kids help me. We'd built up quite a business. But that was good as foddering, because it would take ten years to grow the trees so about ten years before I decided to come back I started

growing trees, so when I got back here we had our first crop of trees. So obviously having a home here and a farm here or a cottage here, I was down a great deal and spent my vacations here, so I, you know. And then of course our company had a lot of customers in Maine, and it worked out just fine for me because we had a Maine salesman, and once in awhile they wanted to see if the guy's running the show and I'd come down and so I'd take an extra day or two and go into the state house and see some of my old friends. I remember distinctly, you must have heard of the name Sam Slosberg.

SB: Yeah.

LP: Sam Slosberg was a real, still is, quite a character; brilliant guy. And he was, he had a guy named Silsby, Bill, not Bill Silsby, I can't think of it, anyway, Dave Silsby, I think it was, and when I was in the legislature if I wanted a bill drafted I'd go in an office, and they had an office that wasn't as big as the ground floor of this house, and it was Sam Slosberg and Dave Silsby, and they had two or three women type and stuff like that. Those two took care of all the bills. Of course we didn't have twenty two hundred then either, there weren't as many bills in, but they were amazing people, the work they did, the amount of work they, I could never get over it. So I always, when I come in I'd always stop and see Sam Slosberg. He's a funny guy. Have you interviewed him?

SB: No, I haven't.

LP: Well you should.

SB: Really.

LP: If you can, yeah, he's, Sam is now, God I don't know how old he is, he's certainly older than I am and I'm seventy six, but I see him usually once a year. He goes to Florida winters, and his mind's still good, and he'd be a good source for you too, I'll tell you that, on Ed Muskie.

SB: Now did you know some of the other players in the Democratic revival, like Frank Coffin?

LP: Didn't know Frank Coffin because I wasn't around much when he was around. Of course I, one of my good friends was Louis Jalbert. I served with Louis a long time. In fact I was look-, I'm in the process of moving and throwing things out and I had this big picture that showed Louis and he inscribed it by telling me that I was one of the straightest shooters he ever dealt with, and I used to get along well with Louis. He'd go off the deep end quite oftentimes but he had his good points as well as his bad.

SB: How about Paul Fullam?

LP: Colby College professor.

SB: Yeah, he ran for senator in '54.

LP: Didn't know him very well, but I knew him.

SB: I was just wondering because of the Colby connection. So how did you, in your absence, you came back in summers and for vacations, you probably didn't maintain too much contact with Ed Muskie.

LP: No, I didn't, I didn't. In fact I very seldom ever saw Ed Muskie after that. I'd see him at some big gathering or other; we always shook hands and reminisced a little bit. But now, that's why I said, I don't, I just know, I knew him and I knew Jane and I used to go to the Blaine House once in awhile to see them occasionally, but that was very, very rare. And but I had a, always had a very healthy respect for the guy and I knew he'd be governor when I was, when we were in the strong majority, but he had a lot of help from the Republican party, no question about that. If Cross hadn't been as vindictive as he was with a lot of people, I think he could have served a second term but he lost out on that.

SB: When you worked with Ed Muskie, did you have a social relationship at all with him? Did you ...?

LP: Ever socialize any?

SB: Yeah.

LP: I don't think so. We used to, all of us, get together over at the Augusta House once in awhile, you know, that was the center of all social life. Where, it was there, you know, where the circle is now, there was a hotel there, the Augusta House. People used to say there were more bills passed over there than there were in the State House, and I don't think that's true but I think there were an awful lot of help given to those bills over there. No, I didn't socialize a lot with him, as a matter of fact I didn't spend a lot of time up there after the sessions were over. I lived here in town, I came home and I had a lot of things to do. But I enjoyed my time there. I had more fun there truthfully in my second time around, when I came back after Boston. And I was floor leader for the Republicans for two terms and that was the year when I ran for governor, when I finished that particular cycle, I uh... But that was a whole different scene for me because I had to be, I had to know everybody and I did.

SB: What was the big change from a representative to a senator? What do you see as the major differences between the two positions?

LP: Well of course it's, the house of representatives is a hundred and fifty-one members, that's too many members, that's what it is for one thing. And you went in with an issue and everybody has to say for the record I want to tell you how I feel about this bill. And I'll tell you something, it's the most boring experience to sit there and listen day after day after day after day. The first of the session's interesting because you have bills that are introduced and they're referred to committees and you can get committee work and then that's interesting. You're working and you're studying a bill and you finally... But when it's passed out and it finally comes out of committee and goes back down to the floor of the house, that's when it is pretty boring to sit there for hour and hour. The senate's already adjourned. Maybe they've gone home, and you're still sitting there at ten or eleven o'clock at night. And John Martin, one of his biggest failures

was that he didn't use his head about keeping people in session, you know, until ten, eleven, twelve o'clock at night, sometimes not even had a chance to go out to dinner. You'd run down and grab a hamburger and go back. It was just a meat grinding experience.

The senate, well I'll tell you, when it came to the senate you had a pretty good idea when a bill came before the senate exactly what was going to happen to it. You've been involved in it in the committee and you're a closer group in the senate anyway, thirty three of you, thirty five now, guess it is, and you work together and each senator had to have a couple of committees, and so you had a pretty, there wasn't ever any long drawn out debates in the senate. More so now perhaps because there's two parties closer together in numbers. But the house, it's fun to serve in the house and it's a great institution, but it is a, when it comes to those last, in these days, when it comes to those last, oh, five or six, seven weeks, I mean all you're doing is taking up bills, you sit there. And you know how to vote, pretty sure you know how the vote's going to go, and somebody still has to beat the hell out of it. You just go in there and reconsider it and try it again, so it's a far different experience in the senate.

SB: So where did you live when you moved down to Boston?

LP: I lived in Lexington most of the time. We did move to Wellesley for about eight years, no, not eight years, four or five years. One of our daughters wanted to go to Dana Hall School and we didn't want her to, we wanted her home, she was just junior high stage, so we moved over there and bought a, sold our house, but as soon as she got through Wellesley, Dana Hall and Wellesley High School, went to college, well we moved back to Lexington.

SB: How did the Maine political scene change in your absence?

LP: How'd it change? Well, it was changed tremendously. As I said, when I come back, when I came back to serve my first term second time around, the Republicans were in control by a very razor thin margin, and the senate stayed Republican for a number of years after that. But also the number of bills that were being introduced was tremendous and it was, it became a much more sophisticated operation, it had to be obviously. You couldn't do, Sam Slosberg and his friend couldn't draft all those bills. I don't know as we need as many people today as we have, but we certainly needed more than we had back there then. And so it was a very, very competitive situation, two parties. But that's all right because there's always, it's my experience, there's always a few that like cream will rise to the top of the bottle. You went in the legislature and I could tell you that ten percent of the people do ninety percent of the work. And that I think has always been true.

You, but you've got some, and then you have to have people like Joe Sewall who was president of the senate for I guess as long as anybody, who was probably one of the best presidents of the senate I've ever known, probably the best. Because Joe was not a, he was a Republican but he wasn't a Republican right or wrong, I'm a Republican, it's going to be my way.

John Martin on the other hand was very political, very oriented toward his own party as, it was the right thing. But Joe was the one who could pull two or three or four or five or eight or ten people into his office, say, now look boys, it's time to cut this foolishness out. You know the

governor needs this, or you know the state of Maine needs this, and we've got to pass it, or maybe something else, you've got to kill it, whatever. And he was a big moving spirit in the legislature and to an extent that was the same way Ed Muskie was. Because he was a person who could pull people together and get some consensus when things had gone on too long, when decisions weren't made. Joe was extremely good and we haven't had, I mean, in all due respect, we haven't a president of the senate with his qualities since then I don't think. We had some good ones but not that good.

SB: So you came back and ran for the senate again.

LP: No, I went into the house.

SB: You ran for the house.

LP: But I came back, I knew I wanted to be governor, so I said well, where's the best place to go. The best place is the house.

SB: How come?

LP: Well, you're a hundred and fifty one people there from all over the state of Maine, in the senate I got thirty three, or thirty five. I have a larger group of people to work with day in and day out.

SB: Isn't it generally seen as like, you start out in the house and you move your way up to the senate?

LP: Yeah, that's right. But I'll tell you, you're seeing more now than I've seen in years of people who do run for the senate first shot. For example there's a guy, one of the new senators, he's running for a second term now, is Bruce McKinnon up in Sanford. Very, very talented man, he was the president, he was principle of Sanford High School, he was basketball coach there, and very, very popular man around town. Well now in his case, the senate seat was open and they figured that he had a better chance being elected to the senate than he did to the house. And that sounds strange but there are sections in these cities that are very, very strong, if it happens to be that your senate, your house seat is in a strongly Democratic city, you know, you're not going to, McKinnon had a better chance of being elected to the senate than he was to the house because of the make up of the district in the house ...

End of Side One

Side Two

SB: So how long were you in the house before you decided to run for governor?

LP: When I came back I served three terms. At the end of the third one I had already announced for governor.

SB: So that was six years?

LP: Six years.

SB: Six years. Why did you want to be governor?

LP: Because I had a, I had and I still have, a feeling that you know Maine, we're a poor state and we're a heavily taxed state, a low industry state, forget politics, we are because we're too big and not very many people and a lot of reasons we aren't, you know, we're a poor state. But I have always held the idea that Maine never did, and I preached this back in '78 when I ran for governor and it caught on. And I guess probably I could have been elected governor if Buddy Frankland hadn't left the Republican Party and ran, and split the vote up, you know, it just took away too many votes for me. But the point was that I believe that Maine has to still grow from within. I still believe that we are rich in natural resources and we've got to be sensible how we use those natural resources. And this governor did say the other day, he didn't even like to see a fish leave the state of Maine with the head still on it. Well that's the idea, and it shouldn't be. I mean, we should be processing these things. And the same with our lumber, we ship it out so much and it goes to some other place and they cut it up into two by fours and four by sixes and boards and whatever. We have too much going for us, and we are not, and I don't think we are as friendly toward business as we should be. I know we aren't as friendly toward business. It took, now Jock McKernan was chastised a great deal when he was governor for budget problems that he had, which anybody I guess would have had. But the point was, the workers compensation issue, he faced it head on and thank God he did because right now business isn't suffering so much in heavy costs of workers comp as they did, and it still probably could be a hell of a lot better than it is right now.

So we're not a... Now labor has a, I think has a, their influence is far greater than it should be considering their numbers. And they I think have, although I got along well with most of them over the years, but I think they have pushed for issues in Maine that have affected business that maybe would have been all right in the big cities, one of the high industrial areas and so, big industrial. But what do we have here? We had, paper mills, the best jobs in the state of Maine really. We have the Bath Iron Works, and of course Maine Yankee, now it's gone, the jobs are gone or most of them will be. A lot of the things they tried to pattern after the Ford Motor Companies and the General Motors and all those are the things that they've demanded of business here in the state of Maine, and our business couldn't take it. But that's why I wanted to be governor, I believed and I still do that we're not doing enough for small business in the state and we're not doing enough with the resources we have to create more jobs.

SB: Even now with King, King is a pretty pro business guy.

LP: Yeah, he is.

SB: You don't think it's changing more towards that? Exactly what you were talking about?

LP: Oh, I think King has been pretty business friendly. And I think he's doing a pretty good job at looking at our natural resources and trying to help, but I don't think the legislature has been

helpful. I don't think it'll help at all that the, I don't know, there's been a philosophy up there among some of the leaders in the Democratic Party the last years that, their philosophy is tax business and they think it comes from some other place. In other words, it's going to be right back on the consumer. And that's exactly what happens, I mean business is going to pass it along to somebody else, they aren't going to, they can't pay, there's no separate income falling from heaven down to business, and it's worse on the individual. So I don't think, I think, John Martin was not business friendly, John Martin did a lot of damage in that particular area in the state. I don't know why because John came from Eagle Lake and there's not much industry up there but I don't know why he took an attitude which was pretty anti business.

SB: Actually, Judge Coffin made a good point, this is kind of an aside, but, that although King himself is really pro business, the problem of the independent, and I was making the point as to, you know, having three parties is even better than having two parties, and he was like, well not necessarily because the third party doesn't really have enough support in the legislature so what happens is King ends up getting stonewalled by the legislature all the time, because ...

LP: But he doesn't though. King doesn't. King was a Democrat and he knew he couldn't beat Joe Brennan in the primary, this is my own philosophy, he knew he couldn't beat Joe Brennan in the primary to get the nomination for governor. The only way he'd get it was being independent, and so he had to walk a line of, both sides of that line, he's done a marvelous job. Of course he's got a good television personality, he's a smooth guy, he's great on TV, and that's all a plus. I don't think there's any such thing as an independent party anyway. I mean, you just have people who haven't enrolled in a party, they just don't want to be part of a party, but there's no such thing as, you can say all the independents are going to do this. Green party maybe, yes, maybe some extreme groups yes, but not coming out as independent.

One of the most exciting experiences I had in the legislature was the four years I served when Longley was governor. And that was an exciting time because I was the Republican leader in the house and Joe Sewall was the Republican leader in the senate. The senate was Republican, the house was Democrat, the governor was independent. The governor was more independent than Angus King is, I don't mean it as a plus either, I'm just saying that he was more independent than Angus. Angus is really, he's a democrat, but he's trying to, I don't mean fakery either, he's trying to see, he does see both sides and I think he's done a good job, but he's a, he had no trouble in getting the Democratic party to close in. I just think, I might be totally wrong, but the Democratic Party have this guy Connolly, candidate for governor of the state, and he's raised a few thousand dollars. Jim Longley, Republican running, he's raised a little bit more, but not even enough to put a series of ads on TV in the last of this campaign coming up. The governor, I'm sure the Democrats wouldn't admit to this and I'm sure the governor wouldn't, but I'm sure that they, and I don't think there's a plan written out, we're going to do this, you do this, decided, but things have fitted well together, the leadership of the Democratic party and Governor King, and that's why he is going to be reelected by a big, big margin. And when you see people like Hal Pachios and Ken Curtis giving a cocktail party and fund raisers for King, and you have people like say Hattie Bickmore, who used to be chairman of the Republican party, going with King, you see what's happened.

But I do think that the Democrats have, the budgetary problems last winter, for example, that

was a good example. A budget was passed in the, you're well acquainted with how emergency measures pass as opposed to... (*unintelligible phrase - both speaking*), So okay, so normally the budget would be passed in the last few days of the legislature which gave both parties a chance to work for the appropriations committee and come up with a budget which most everybody agreed was the right thing, they had to have a two thirds vote because usually it was done just about the time when the fiscal year began. This last winter in March, the Democrats did have their own budget, and the governor went with them, and they knew they didn't have two thirds vote so they passed it simple, simple pass. Well that means it couldn't take effect until ninety days after the legislature adjourned so they knew they had to adjourn the legislature. It was a big piece of fakery, they adjourned the legislature. And here's all this stuff still left on the table, the very next day they meet again, come back in. So it was an indication to me that the Democrats and the governor had, as I say, I don't think it was a plan written out or anything like that, but they did it, they certainly did get along pretty well, and that's why I think the governor is getting support from some of the biggest Democrats in the state. And getting money. God, he's raising money, I don't think Connolly's raised fifty thousand dollars; I doubt if he has raised that much. And I don't think Longley has.

SB: Now back when you ran for governor, what were the major issues in the campaign?

LP: The usual ones about Maine's economy and education and transportation. They're still here today. Bob Spear went into the senate up here, and I'm with him a lot, and I said, well Bob what are we talking about? We're talking about business, we're talking about education, we can't have, we've got to have a better grasp on education, you've got to do a better job. Particularly the technical schools because, you know, there are an awful lot of very talented young people in this state who will never get a chance to go beyond high school. And you know they'll turn out to be plumbers or electricians around here, they'll work for somebody else for years and they're very, very talented people. Which if they had a chance earlier to go on to the technical school when they were younger, they'd have been that much farther ahead. We don't, we haven't done enough.

So I think education, business, and highways. They were the issues, they still are, and they always will be because we're not making much progress in those, I think we're doing a better job on tourism as we have better roads and things. I think the governor's done a good job in, you know, pushing for leaf peepers and all those things. There's a lot of places in this state of Maine that are beautiful and after Labor Day, how many people go? My roommate in college came from Rangeley, gorgeous country. And I think now they're beginning to get a little bit of a play up.

SB: They have a thing this year where they have the trains leaving Portland and doing the fall foliage tours.

LP: Yes, that's good.

SB: I think it's a step in the right direction, (*unintelligible phrase*).

LP: And the skiing of course has helped a lot, too. I hope they make out well. The guy, what's

his name, on ...

SB: Les Otten.

LP: Yeah, he'd doing quite a job. And that's a big industry, and that wasn't very big back when I was beginning in politics, so there are a lot of things going good for Maine, but we still are going to have problems. You know, if you look at, say, I'll take Lincoln county, where are the jobs today? Most of them are with small business and small companies and so forth. And those are the guys that really will bitch most about what the government's doing to them. Little fellow down here in the village store here in Nobleboro, one of the finest men I've ever met. And he has a business that, I mean he really works hard and he makes money. But he comes in that store there at one o'clock in the morning, twelve to one, bakes doughnuts and muffins and all this stuff, he has pastries, and he opens his store at five. There's coffee and all these things, and he has a lunch counter there at noontime with good food. There's his convenience store sells a lot of beer, a lot of wine, but I'll bet you that he probably works, oh I know he works at least sixteen, eighteen hours every day, and that includes Sunday, too. A lot of those jobs around. He hasn't, he doesn't have the help he needs, and those jobs aren't big paying jobs either, you know.

SB: I know. What was your strategy when we were talking earlier when you ran for the house way back in '78?*

LP: Well, my campaign manager was Bob McKernan, he was Jock's brother. Very bright guy, he had been the aid to Joe Sewall in Stearn's office, and we just put together this whole thing about Maine's resources. And we were true believers, every one of us true believers in this thing, I mean we just pounded it everywhere we went. And so our strategy was to go more and more to those areas where, and of course we used up a lot of time. You can't, you've got to go into the paper mill country, you've got to go where the jobs are up there and talk to them about what could be better, so, but that's what it was. We had said, there were acres of diamonds. There was a great speech once made when the guy spoke of acres of diamonds, and we said that we have acres of diamonds right here, and we still have acres of diamonds here. It isn't all just trees and, it isn't all just forestry and fishing. It is tourism and it's the beauty of this place which we haven't done right by it always, either. Environmentally we haven't done right by it all. And that is a big conflict there between sometimes the industry and the environmentalists. And each of those you have to bring together, and that was one of the things I was trying to do.

I look down across this place here, you look across this place, isn't that gorgeous? And there's the old Bunker Hill Church over there and all along this lake, this is fourteen miles long, and there are a lot of cottages here but probably just as many as there should be, truthfully. And we're doing a lot better job in protecting the water now than we did, and we're doing a lot better job on planning and on just doing the things you should do to treat nature properly. We're doing things in this town today that, you know, forty years ago nobody ever dreamed of doing. And people wouldn't like it either because they'd say, well my home is my castle and I'll do as I damn please.

*Interviewer misspoke. This is a reference to Linwood Palmer's campaign for governor.

SB: And there's still some of that.

LP: And there's still some of that, yeah, but they're beginning to change.

SB: Why do you think you lost?

LP: I lost because Buddy Frankland ran. That was all, pure and simple. He was a Republican and he was conservative and he had seen Jim Longley for four years in the governorship and he was independent and he said he just knew he'd make it as an independent so he changed and became an independent. He was a very right wing guy and I was more the moderate, and he took away right wing Republican votes which would have gone to me if he hadn't been running. And he had no chance to win. He had no chance to win at all. He wasn't a Jim Longley, and he's the only reason I lost.

SB: So you won the primary?

LP: Yeah.

SB: And then who was the Democratic candidate against you?

LP: In the primary, the Republican that ran against me?

SB: No, no, no, in the election itself?

LP: Oh, Joe Brennan.

SB: Joe Brennan.

LP: Yeah, it was his first term.

SB: Now afterwards there was, I came across some articles about the possibility of you becoming secretary of state. And that, did you ever become secretary of state?

LP: No.

SB: No.

LP: That was a very peculiar thing. I had, the Republicans controlled the legislature by one vote. Now in normal situation everybody votes the party line and I had good popular support. But we had two or three new people come in that were, now we don't, no one knows exactly what did happen that I lost by one vote. And I know pretty well one Republican defected and I know at least one or two Democrats that voted for me. But I didn't figure out the whole thing, how it all happened, but I should have won by one and I lost by one. And that bothered me I think more than it did losing governor almost because the party should have, it shouldn't have been that happen. One person, no one person should ever do that. No, I didn't become secretary

of state and after that I said the hell with it, I've done my bit and I've been there and I've been, and I ran for governor and I ran for secretary of state, so I came home and I took a year or two off and finally decided I would go, my son-in-law is an attorney with a Bangor outfit, Eaton & Peabody, it's a big law firm in Bangor, and he was a Democrat. Incidentally, this is interesting. He married my older daughter and he came to me a year or two after and he says Lin, I think really we could use you. Would you like to work for us in governmental services, lobbying, the whole works? And I did that for eighteen years. Had a wonderful time, I really enjoyed it, and I did it, and it didn't, you know, I got over the business of being up there, it didn't bother me that I wasn't a member any more. People say, oh you can't stand it, you get it in your system you've got to stay on. That's not so. I enjoyed the work, I enjoy governmental work, I enjoyed working with committees; it was doing the same thing. Getting better pay, too.

SB: Now, looking back over the years as a, being someone who was involved in politics for a very long time ...

LP: What's that?

SB: Looking back over the years as someone who was involved with Maine politics for a very long time, how would you describe Ed Muskie's political style? Having seen a lot of people come and go through the years?

LP: How I would describe it? You mean, well, Ed Muskie, of course he had a temper, he could be a real, real ugly if he wanted to be, but generally speaking, though, he held it. And he had a style of being able to, number one, he was a bright guy, number two, he was willing to compromise, he was a master of that art and I don't mean by that giving up what he believed in either. I'm just saying that many times you have to, to accomplish something big you have to take half and then get the other half later on. And it was, it wasn't combative at all, and I think that's what did it. Because he, after all, he was, again the state at that time was totally controlled by the Republican Party. And I still say he was the one who changed it because of his own way and because of also because of the fact that the Republicans stayed in power too damn long and they got, they just got too slap happy, they did foolish things. And they needed to have some opposition; they got it. And they learned, and they're still learning how to be political and still be statesmanlike.

SB: Okay. How did other people through your years view Ed Muskie?

LP: I can't really tell you. I know that among my friends that I saw from time to time, they all viewed him the same way I did, we always thought a lot of Ed Muskie. And I never had, he was always gracious to me and to all my friends afterward. But he did have a little bit of a hang up on, he had a little bit of a temper, but he could control it better than most people. Like Jim Longley, Jim was a strong man but he also had a temper, he couldn't control his the way Ed Muskie could. I met over to the Blaine House many times with Ed Muskie and, I don't mean when he was governor, I mean when we in leadership always used to go over there and talk to the governor about problems. We'd always meet for breakfast or meet for lunch or something, whatever, or meet in the evening. And he was, Ed was a leavening influence always.

And Jim knew what he wanted and he was always going to compromise, but the compromise was what he believed in. In other words, our compromise, let's compromise, well, what are you going to compromise on governor? He'd say I'm gonna do this. Well, that isn't compromise. He was not a compromiser, he was a funny man, he was really a funny man. And I probably more than any leader, there were ten of us in leadership and I bet you I was the only one who really supported that guy more than fifty percent of the time, a lot more than fifty percent of the time. I really did. And when it came time to run for governor, he didn't really support me. He didn't turn against me either but he didn't, he could have helped too, with Buddy Frankland, but he didn't do it. And, but he certainly had strong, strong feelings, and I think the University of Maine was one of the worst things he did, I think he just, he just did so much damage to the university system in the state. He had some hard feelings with some people up there and he let personal feelings sometimes interfere too much, but, now Ed Muskie wouldn't do that. It was a totally different scene with each one of them. He would stick it to the university and they'd never recover, they're just beginning to recover now, it was so bad.

SB: One last question. What do you think Muskie's biggest contribution was to the state of Maine?

LP: God, I don't know. I mean, I really, I wasn't, truthfully I was not there long enough working with him to answer a statement like that. I do think, certainly when the, speaking as a Republican it sounds funny, he probably was making the Democratic Party a better party, because they didn't have the leadership until he took it over. Now that's, for a Republican to say that's a great contri-, well it is a contribution, it is a great contribution and I suppose that's what, I look at it, if I had served with him longer and been here more when he was governor, I could probably make a different kind of statement from that, but that's what I would have to say now. Because I used to deal with Democrats, I would deal with them a lot, and the thing they had, they had nothing good going for them, they had no leadership there, they were just, just no power, no great influence. He did do that and he made it a, he was a... I don't want to begin comparing Democrats but there are a lot of Democrats that I know and they're friends of mine and so forth, but, you know, he was a different kind of a Democrat, say, from John Martin and from Louis Jalbert and that particular type. He gave the Democratic Party something to look up to.

SB: Great.

LP: That's it?

SB: That's it. Thank you very much.

End of Interview

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