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Paulson, Carmelle and Richard oral history interview

Nicholas Christie

Interview with Carmelle and Richard Paulson by Nicholas Christie

Summary Sheet and Transcript

Interviewee
Paulson, Carmelle
Paulson, Richard

Interviewer
Christie, Nicholas

Date
July 12, 2001

Place
Portland, Maine

ID Number
MOH 307

Biographical Note

Carmelle Paulson was born on April 14, 1957 in Rumford, Maine. Her parents were Adrian and Gertrude Boivin. Her father worked in the paper mill. They were a French-Canadian, Catholic, Democratic family. She attended New Hampshire College of Accounting in Manchester, New Hampshire. After college she worked at Fairchild Semiconductor in the cost accounting department, and then joined the Model Cities Project in Portland as an accountant, working with Jack Dexter. She also lived in a Model Cities neighborhood, so was very involved with its progress and development, and was later promoted to deputy director.

Richard Paulson, Jr. was born on September 29, 1948 in Portland, Maine and grew up in Cape Elizabeth. His mother, Kathleen Paulson, was a homemaker and his father, Richard Paulson, Sr., was a commercial fisherman. They were registered Republicans but were not politically active. Richard attended Cape Elizabeth High School, Bentley College for two years, and then transferred to Quinnipiac College (now Quinnipiac University) in Hamden, Connecticut. He worked for the Model Cities program as an accountant (replacing Carmelle when she was promoted). He ran for the Portland City Council, and served from 1991 to 1997 and as mayor from 1994 to 1995.

Scope and Content Note

Interview includes discussions of: Rumford, Maine community in the 1950s and 1960s; how Muskie helped Carmelle's family; Oxford Paper Company; description of Cape Elizabeth in the 1950s and 1960s; Model Cities in Portland; City Council, Portland; Housing and Urban Development (HUD) in Portland; the Citizens Advisory Committee; West End Neighborhood Center; People's Building; Youth in Action; Holy Innocence Homemaker Program; Twenty-four Hour Club; Serenity House for alcoholics; Our Place; Community Health Services; Jerry Conley Sr.; the impact of tourism on Portland; the impact of recent influx of immigrants on Portland; Catholic Charities Refugee Program; mill towns like Lewiston and Rumford; Bates College; mercury scare in fishing industry in the 1960s; and the fishing industry in Maine.

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Transcript

Nick Christie: This is an interview with Carmelle and Richard Paulson on July 12th, 2001, at their home in Portland, Maine. The interviewer is Nick Christie. Mrs. Paulson, would you please state and spell your full name?

Carmelle Paulson: My name is Carmelle Paulson, C-A-R-M-E-L-L-E, P-A-U-L-S-O-N.

NC: And Mr. Paulson, would you please state and spell your full name?

Richard Paulson: Richard Paulson, R-I-C-H-A-R-D, P-A-U-L-S-O-N.

NC: Okay. Mrs. Paulson, could you tell me where and when you were born?

CP: I was born on April 14th, 1947 in Rumford, Maine.

NC: Rumford, Maine? That's the hometown of Mr. Muskie.

CP: Yes, Senator Muskie, right, of course.

NC: Did you go through your elementary schooling and in Rumford?

CP: Elementary and high school.

NC: Did you go to Stephens [High School]?

CP: Yup, graduated from Stephens 1965.

NC: What was Rumford like when you were growing up?

CP: Small, paper mill town. Most of the fathers worked in the paper mill. And it was, people weren't rich, weren't poor, it was working class people. I went to Catholic grammar school, and then to the public high school. There's only one public high school. But it was a nice place to grow up. Lakes were nearby for summer swimming, and in the winter skiing and sliding. It was a great place to grow up in. There was just no place to work once you graduated from high school.

NC: What were your parents' names?

CP: My parents' names? Adrian and Gertrude Boivin, B-O-I-V-I-N.

NC: And your father worked in the Oxford Paper Mill?

CP: Right, he worked in the, he was a trimmer, he worked in the trimming department, factory worker. French Canadian descent.

NC: So you went to the French Catholic church in town?

CP: Yes, St. Athanasius - St. John Church.

NC: It was already . . . .

CP: I think it was St. Johns back when I went to school, the French one. Yeah, that's right, I went to St. John, to eighth grade. That's right, they hadn't merged parishes yet. That’s right, yup.

NC: People have told me that the reason why it merged at one point was because of a shortage of -

CP: Priests.

NC: Of priests. Do you remember anything about that, or?

CP: It was after I left. But that was the case. It's happened all over the state of Maine. Yeah, it's still happening.

NC: What was St. Stephens like?

CP: It wasn't St. Stephens, it was Stephens High School.

NC: Stephens High School.

CP: Yeah, and it was a public high school, it was the Rumford, it's called Rumford High School now, but it was Stephens High School. I don't know why they named it Stephens, but it was the public high school. We were a big class. We were the baby boomers, 1947, right after the war, so we doubled the year ahead of us. So our class was 232 students. So we were a huge high school class. So everything was hard. Hard to get summer jobs, hard to, you know, go to get anything, there was so many of us. So everything was difficult in those years. I remember getting out of high school and it was hard to find work.

NC: Now, can you tell me a little bit about ethnically, what Rumford was like?

CP: Ethnically? Well, I came from French Canadian Quebec province descent. There were a lot of P.I.s, they called the P.I.s, from Prince Edward Island. There was a lot of Italians.

RP: And some Greeks, wouldn't you say there were Greeks?

CP: Some, it was more -

RP: Italians.

CP: Yeah, and then of course there was the Mainers, the, you know, Downeast English Mainers [Yankees]. And you were pretty much going through a Catholic parochial school, you were with, and I was in the French one. And at that time we had French half of the day, and half the day was English. So we really learned French, we learned to speak it even better and to write it up until eighth grade. And then in eighth grade, all, the two Catholic grammar schools, there was St. Athanasius which would be, the ones, the French were at St. John's. The Irish and the Italians went to St. Athanasius, which you would be surprised that those two went, but that was their church.

And then we all went to the same high school when we got to ninth grade with all of the public school kids. So then you got to know all the kids from all the other schools at high school. So that was a big shock, leaving your little insulated, you know, eighth grade, that you'd had with these kids all along. I guess it's like that for everyone when you go to high school, junior high and then high school. And we all knew about Muskie, you know, he was a pretty revered person.

NC: Right, so he would have been already in the Senate by the time you graduated from high school.

CP: Yeah, oh yeah. And I know my father, he had a crippled brother and sister, and they had a lot of difficulty getting aid, because they had to have them in a nursing home in the end, in Marcotte Home in Lewiston. And I know Senator Muskie helped them try to get help, to get, for them. I remember them talking about that, that he had helped them with that issue, that problem. Because they had had, the brothers and sisters had taken care of them all their lives until they were, I think, in their sixties, and then they finally needed to be placed somewhere. So they got help from his office on that. And we all, he was well thought of, well admired, you know, everybody really thought a lot of him. We were thrilled that he was in the position that he was in, from our little town. And I think they've built a housing for the elderly there now and named it after him, right at the end of the downtown.

NC: I think there's the bridge on one side, there's a memorial on the other side.

CP: Right, right, beautiful building, right facing the waterfalls. And then I think they've dedicated a little park, put a statue in there.

NC: I think Harold McQuade and a few others put it together with George Mitchell, put together the trust for that. So, do you remember what the relationship in the town was between the French Canadians and, say, the Irish and the Italians?

CP: Fine. There was no problem.

NC: It was pretty integrated, with kids playing together . . . . ?

CP: Yeah, yeah, everybody was friendly. There was never any fights that I was ever involved in, no. We were all friendly.

NC: I heard, not so much the friendly issue, but more, I've heard there was Virginia, and Sticky Town, and Little Italy and all these separate areas. I don't know if -

CP: Not so much for us, because we were on Knox Street and it was a mixture of all kinds of people where we were. We weren't in those areas. Maybe way back, when the people first came from Italy, they did move into Smith Crossing, which is the neighborhood coming right into Rumford, that first, where the Italian Club is. But by the time we were in our growing up, it was mixed up, you know, there were all kinds of people everywhere. So, you know, on our street we had French and we had English, we had Italians, we had everything. We had, it was a new, fairly new, my parents built the house in 19-, well, I was six years old so that would have been in the '50s, they built their little ranch house on Knox Street and there was, you know, all kinds of different people on that street. Of course, we were very close with our relatives, you know. There was, so you did tend to, you know, the holidays and everything were always with our relatives, who were French. But I mean, I never experienced any ethnic feelings, no, it wasn't anything that I ever noticed.

NC: Did you ever, did you get a feeling for how the town's populace viewed the mill?

CR: Oh yeah, oh yeah, the mill was the, very important to all of us. And they were very fair, they paid their workers very well. And so, you know, and all our fathers were very hard workers, they were very dedicated, hard working people. And so the mills were important. They used to have big celebrations on Labor Day, have big family celebrations with all kinds of hot dogs and hamburgers, and races and prizes and, you know. It was a real family oriented company way back. It was Oxford Paper Company then, when we grew up. And then later on it got sold and became Ethel Corporation, but when we were growing up it was Oxford Paper Company.

And my father was really lucky to work there because none of them had any education. And they had come from very poor families. My mother came from a family of eighteen children, my father from a family of ten. So, you know, they came from Canada and they'd had hard lives in Canada, so it was wonderful to work in a factory and be paid well. And it was a profitable paper company through those years.

NC: Now, what were you interested in when you were in high school?

CR: Me? I was in band, I loved band.

NC: What did you play?

CP: I played the drums, bass fiddle, played the piano. Drama, I was director of some of the plays. I was in student council; I was in the National Honor Society. I was very studious, very conscientious, very dedicated to school. I wasn't, as my friend (*friends nameCSandy?*) told me I wasn't normal.

NC: Were you politically conscious at that time?

CP: No.

NC: Was your family politically active?

CP: No, no, no, my father, they always voted, you know, they always went to vote, but they weren't involved in politics, whereas my cousins now are involved in politics, my Boivin cousins. My uncle's sons, they were fire chiefs there and one of them's on the school committee and one is on the town council now.

NC: In Rumford?

CP: Yeah, in Rumford right now. But our parents were, my father just worked, came home, you know, went to bed early, eight o'clock, got up early to go to work for seven o'clock.

NC: What party did they vote with?

CP: Democratic, oh yeah, Democratic, definitely.

NC: Would you say that was the general feeling in the town?

CP: Well, with the French Canadians it was, yeah. Actually, the whole town of Rumford was pretty Democratic.

NC: I would think the Irish would have been pretty -

CP: Yeah, they, I think the elections, most, it was mostly Democrats that were elected, yeah, from Rumford. It was a very Democratic town, that's true.

NC: Now, Mr. Paulson, where and when were you born?

RP: I was born in Portland, September 29th, 1948, and I grew up in Cape Elizabeth.

NC: So you did your secondary schooling in Cape Elizabeth as well?

RP: All my schooling, yeah. I lived in Cape Elizabeth. I mean, I was born at the hospital in Portland but Cape Elizabeth was our home.

NC: What kind of community was Cape Elizabeth when you were growing up?

RP: It was sort of split between upwardly mobile insurance, lawyers, as sort of the transient population, and then a large farming and fishing contingent, and then some very, very wealthy people.

NC: What were your parents' names?

RP: Richard, Sr., and Kathleen Paulson.

NC: And what did they do, what were their occupations?

RP: My mother was a housewife; my father was a commercial fisherman.

NC: And he did that for his entire adult life?

RP: Yes.

NC: Do you remember much detail about his job?

RP: I remember going in to pick him up at one, two o'clock in the morning. He was the captain of several trawlers out of Portland. And they would go out for two to three weeks at a time, and come in for three or four days to unload and re-equip the boat, and then go back out again for two or three weeks.

NC: Do you know what they were trying to catch?

RP: When I was young, it was redfish. And then when I got toward my teenage years, they had switched to long lining for swordfish.

NC: And he was a captain for most of -?

RP: Yes.

NC: Now, what was the name of the elementary school you went to in Cape Elizabeth?

RP: Well, there were several, I mean, I went to Pond Cove Elementary to begin with, and then to the Lunt School, and then to, it was just called the junior high school basically.

NC: Were these large schools?

RP: No, no, we had a, my graduating class was a hundred and four, and that was the largest class ever in Cape Elizabeth.

NC: This is the high school.

RP: High school, yeah.

NC: Hundred and four.

RP: Yeah, big year.

NC: And that was the Cape Elizabeth community high school.

RP: It was Cape Elizabeth High School.

NC: Okay. Now, were your parents politically active?

RP: No.

NC: But they voted with one party or the other?

RP: Republican.

NC: Republican? Did you grow up politically conscious?

RP: No.

NC: So, when you were in high school, did you have any idea that you were going to end up taking a political route in your career later on?

RP: No, no.

NC: What were your interests at that time?

RP: I was editor of the yearbook, and I was involved with, I had more interest in business, accounting and that sort of thing.

NC: And that's what you studied (*unintelligible phrase*).

RP: Yes. Well, yeah, I studied a lot of business courses at high school, and then I went on to college and accounting.

NC: And where did you go to college?

RP: I went to Bentley for two years, and then I transferred to Quinnipiac College, which is Hamden, Connecticut. Bentley was in Boston at the time.

NC: And those are both business schools?

RP: Bentley College of Accounting. And Quinnipiac is, well it's called a university now, it was Quinnipiac College when I went there, but they had several major programs. One was in health science, one was in accounting, and now they've expanded into communications and law and so forth.

NC: Now, jumping ahead, thinking in terms of both of your work with the Portland Model Cities Project, I want to hear how you first both got involved with the project. And, I actually have a little catching up to do with you, Carmelle, you, last we were talking you were finishing high school. So how did you get -?

CP: I was in the business course in high school, too. And I wanted to continue so I went to New Hampshire College of Accounting in Manchester, New Hampshire and majored in accounting. But I only had enough money to go for two years, so I got an associate degree. Then I came to work in South Portland at Fairchild Semi Conductor, in the cost accounting department. And they were going through these fluctuations that these semi conductor companies go through after a couple of years, and they were laying people off. So I went looking for a job in, somewhere in the area. And they were advertising for an accountant for the Model Cities Program, and for the city of Portland. And we were, one advantage both had is we were Model Cities residents, we lived in a Model neighborhood. So, and there was a preference -

NC: Oh wow. In Portland?

CP: In Portland. There was a preference to people from the Model neighborhood when you applied for the jobs. So that was nice, you know, that gave us a little bit of an advantage. I lived on Carroll Street at the time, and later on when you applied you were on Park Street. So they

were, we were in the Model neighborhood. And it was funny, I applied for the job at the city accounting department and they were asking me questions about my future plans for marriage and all this stuff, all these illegal questions you couldn't do today. And I didn't get the job in the accounting department, but I got the job in the Model Cities department. Jack Dexter hired me as the accountant.

NC: Do you remember your initial meetings with Jack?

CP: Yeah, he was great, wonderful guy, super, super. Very dedicated, very enthused about the program, just loved, you know, what was going on. He was a great guy. I loved working for him. And so we really got, I mean, it was very interesting, you're in your early twenties and to go into that program. And they had so many areas, housing, very complicated. So you had to learn all the, we were keeping track of it financially. And it was a lot of layers because you had the advisory board, you had the agencies, you had the city council, and you had HUD that you had to work with. So you had a lot of bosses, you know, a lot of people to please. And Dick came in later on, I had been there four or five years by the time you came, right? I think.

RP: Something like that.

CP: Yeah. It was a hard job, but it was very interesting. And we in Portland, what was different in Portland was, we had a lot of social service programs.

NC: Already in place.

CP: Because of Model Cities, really. In most of the country, Model Cities programs did not have social services. It wasn't intended to be so much social services, it was intended to be hardware, primarily. You know, the housing. Well, of course, we had an urban development department and we had the housing agency here in Portland. But in Portland, the Citizens Advisory Committee saw a real need for social services in the Model neighborhood. I mean, they did do housing, they did all various other hardware things. But a lot, a big bulk, and I think in looking at it maybe, and comparing it to other ones in the rest of the country, we had a huge percentage of social services. And that was hard for HUD to accept. And hard for us to justify.

And we used to have to do all kinds of reporting to HUD, of the people served. It was very, very strict, a lot of paper work on the numbers of people served. And the financial, I had to review every proposal that came in from every agency, view their budgets, get them audited, view the audit findings, you know. We were real strict. We were pretty darn honest in Portland. There was no, there wasn't any corruption in our offices. It was very, very straightforward, well done. But we had a lot of groups out there that wanted some of that money. Some of them gave a lot of trouble. The Low Income People [LIP] in Portland West, the West End Neighborhood Center, and People's Building, and that group of people caused a lot of trouble. I remember them coming into our offices and ransacking the files and -

NC: Now we're talking about the West Advisory Committee of Model Cities program?

CP: That was one of the programs funded, the People's Building. Youth In Action, Low

Income People, those kind of programs. They were kind of rowdy, they were the action, they caused a lot of trouble. The majority of the programs, wonderful programs, doing great stuff.

RP: Child care.

CP: Oh, we had tons of child care. Child care got developed, I don't remember how many programs, there must have been ten of them. And they were also using Title I funds, which are federal funds funneled through the state for income eligible recipients. So if you were eligible, they could go into this day care.

NC: That's like revenue sharing?

CP: I don't know if the state still gets those funds for day care. It was called Title I, for day care, I think it was Title I, or Title 8. I can't remember the title of it, but I remember those were matching funds. We used to have to always be showing that we were out there searching for matching funds for Model Cities. So I'd be looking through the catalogue of revenues, I mean programs, in the federal government and making them apply for funds to match our funds. And we had the meals for the elderly, Holy Innocence Homemaker Program, alcoholism -

NC: What was that?

CP: Holy Innocence Homemaker Program.

NC: What's that?

CP: That was the beginnings of the Homemaker Health Aid Programs here in Portland, Holy Innocence was the first name of the first program. Sister Jeanne or Jean Little was the first director. The Catholic diocese, through Catholic Charities, operated a lot of the programs that were funded through Model Cities. They were the operating agency for a great many of the Model Cities programs, quite a few.

RP: Yeah, a lot of the organizations had, were already in existence and they were just sort of following this federal money. And then there were probably half as many new organizations.

CP: Yeah, brand new.

RP: That just developed.

NC: Out of the Model Cities.

RP: Out of Model Cities, yeah.

CP: Yeah, Twenty Four Hour Club. Serenity House for the alcoholics.

NC: Tell me about those.

CP: Those were the alcoholism programs, twenty four hour clubs for the real drunks in the streets, you know, and it's still, India Street.

RP: That was sort of an emergency thing.

CP: That was an emergency shelter for alcoholics.

RP: They could stay there for three or four days and then, but Serenity House was a long term -

CP: And I think it's still operating, I think it's still operating on India Street.

RP: Serenity House was a residential program.

CP: That was when, you know, they had cleaned up their act, they wanted to, it was more long term. Then they'd help them find a job.

NC: Right, getting on their feet.

CP: Yeah.

RP: Pharoah's House.

CP: Yeah, for the mentally -

RP: No, Pharoah's House was for criminals out of jail.

CP: Oh, right, on Spring Street. And then Shalom House was for the mentally retarded. What were the other programs? God, I wish I had my list, I used to have lists of this stuff.

NC: I've got, let's see, crime prevention, like neighborhood PAL?

RP: Police Athletic League?

CP: That wasn't Model Cities.

RP: I don't remember that was, I don't remember that being -

CP: No, that wasn't Model Cities. Maybe in the beginnings, but it wasn't during the years we had. There was -

RP: [sic] My Place.

CP: Our Place.

RP: Our Place, yeah.

CP: On York Street, they renovated this building and tried to operate programs with the neighborhood. There was, oh with the Salvation Army, Meals on Wheels that got started.

RP: Right, that was a big program.

CP: Huge program. Community Health Services, those were for the health aides that went in, that were, people that needed more than a homemaker, they needed a health person? Those were funded. There was forty-three or forty-five projects every year that were funded in social services. And then you had funding of housing projects; you had funding of city department projects. A lot of programs started, police, new policing programs. Yeah, it was the police, Model Cities Police, the community police really started in the Model Cities years. They bought ambulances, we never had EMTs. One of the first ambulances were bought with Model Cities. Remember when we bought those ambulances, got trained EMTs? They had, oh, capital, what was Dick McGoldrick's capital project there?

RP: I can't remember the name of that one.

CP: And then MICA, buying houses and repairC, restoring them. So we were, and our role was to be, we weren't the ones that decided any of this, because I was the accounting manager, and then I eventually became the deputy director. But our role was just to make sure that the funds that were allocated and approved, first by the Citizens Advisory Committee, then by the City Council, once all those approvals had happened and it had gone to HUD, and they'd approved it. We then had to review, well no, we reviewed the proposals when they first came in. And then they went to the Advisory Committee and then to the City Council.

Then when it finally got approved, you had this huge big book, and you'd take each of those proposals and you'd have to draw up contracts for forty-two, forty-five social service agencies, housing projects, you know. And then the city departments, you had to review those, get those proposals written, initiate requisition forms so that they could request their money, help them, help them. Some of them didn't know how to do -

RP: They had to submit monthly reports.

CP: They had to submit monthly reports to us. Every month they're requesting money, and then they had to submit to the -

RP: Budget reports of how much they had spent on different line items.

CP: Yeah, and their other funding sources, too. And then, we were in the finance office. But people that were in the evaluation, there was also an evaluation component to Model Cities, they would review the statistic information that the people served. So that would go into evaluation, which they had three or four staff.

NC: Now, the two of you were working in the same department?

CP: Yeah, we were both in finance.

NC: Now, when Jack Dexter hired you, were you hired by Jack Dexter?

CP: No, he wasn't working then.

NC: You came in later under Jadine O'Brien?

CP: Right.

NC: And you were still working.

CP: Yeah, so I got promoted to deputy director, which Jadine had been, and Dick got hired as accountant which was my old job. So that's why he eventually worked with me, so we were both in finance.

RP: I was only there a year and a half.

CP: Yeah, I was there longer than that.

RP: Oh yeah, you were there before and after me.

CP: Yeah, so that's why I have so much more memory of all this stuff. They had also coordinators for every area, they had a housing coordinator, a recreation coordinator, a health coordinator. Each of those areas of Model Cities, you probably have them all written somewhere, had a coordinator. And they were the ones that worked . . . . There were housing committees, health committees, recreation committees, they were subcommittees to the Portland West Advisory Committee, you know, I mean the Model Cities Advisory Committee. They were like the governing body, but each area had its own committee. And they would like recommend, they'd all want to be funded but they couldn't be, so that the advisory board would decide, then the city council was the final solution.

NC: So let me see if I understand the process. Now you say a proposal is made to begin with, and the proposal would be made by -

CP: Agencies.

NC: By an agency.

CP: And city departments.

NC: And a city department. And then that comes under review to the finance board first.

CP: Eventually.

NC: Okay, oh first it goes to the citizens, the council and the HUD?

CP: Well, the committees would look at them first and decide on the ones that, and then we would look at them to make sure they made sense. And then we'd send them to, on to the city council. Then the city council had huge meetings that would last hours, sometimes two nights, late, late into the night. You can imagine, you had sixty, seventy agencies who wanted to be funded, city departments and it was just a marathon.

RP: And there was always a battle between how much was going to go to the conventional city departments first -

CP: Versus outside agencies.

RP: Versus the social agencies that knew better than the city how to run things.

CP: And the social agencies really wanted to be funded, because here was a chance to get funding. But really, HUD wanted you to put your money into hardware. So that's why we had to be reporting so much more of the benefits, because when you build something you see the benefits, and when you have the social service you can't show it to somebody very easily. It takes a longer time.

NC: About HUD, how, well, let me step back a little bit. Okay, so in 1966 LBJ says, [*CP makes side comment to RP*] "Let's create a program that will improve the lives of slum dwellers," in his words, "in the war on poverty." And somehow from that -

RP: The ever tactful LBJ, that's right.

NC: Right. So how did, when you first got introduced to understanding how the program worked, was it clear where the goals and agenda was coming from?

CP: Yeah, it really was. I mean, they really were trying to attack the West End neighborhood, and they did.

RP: The poverty, and the poverty.

CP: The poverty, yeah, and they really did.

RP: And the deteriorating infrastructure and buildings.

CP: Yeah, and it just wasn't Model Cities. Through the Housing Authority they got funding for housing. And they also, urban renewal tore down buildings and built a brand new school, Reiche School got built in that neighborhood.

RP: And it had a huge impact, because blocks and blocks of homes that had been torn down.

CP: So they had to find, you know, find housing for those people. And then that's why they had that priority if you were a Model Neighborhood resident, so they would have the first chance

at jobs.

NC: Now how did HUD work into the system in terms of -?

CP: You'd have to send the applications to them in the end.

NC: They had a national mandate to be in charge of the HUD . . . .

CP: Yeah, and we reported to the HUD office in Manchester, New Hampshire.

NC: Manchester? Okay.

CP: Yeah, that's where the, that's where you sent -. So once the city council had approved all of the projects, then you had to put together the big packet to send to HUD.

NC: To Congress.

CP: Well, you had to send to HUD next.

RP: Before the contracts were even written.

CP: Oh yeah, you couldn't write any contracts until HUD had finally approved everything.

RP: Approved the projects.

NC: Now how did in the end the balance work out between hardware and social?

CP: We had a large percentage.

NC: In the social area?

CP: Yeah.

NC: Yeah, comparatively.

CP: I think so, as compared to other cities. And I had all those numbers at one time.

RP: I don't know how the money worked out, but I think it was probably 60/40 in terms of projects. But whether the forty percent of hardware stuff had more money in it, I don't know. But certainly sixty percent of the projects were social services.

CP: But I know up in the Renewal Authority and the Housing Authority, they were getting money to build housing, and Renewal was getting money to do renewal. So that was all coming out of HUD, too, you know, the same office. So during those years there was a lot of money coming to Portland. And that's why we're kind of suffering now because we don't have much housing, because those fundings aren't here for it, like they were in those years, you know, really

attacking the need. Because you had all deteriorating housing in Portland, and a lot of it got improved during those years. Well, you were in an old house; you had bought an old house.

RP: I didn't have anything to do with Model Cities.

CP: You weren't involved in Model Cities.

NC: You did live in a Model -

CP: I lived, we both lived in the model neighborhood.

NC: Now what does that mean, what makes a model, geographic area?

CP: The geographic area was determined. They had to determine a model neighborhood, initially, when they got the funding from HUD. The city had to decide, this is going to be the model neighborhood.

NC: And how did they come to that decision.

CP: I don't know.

NC: It wasn't based on the worst area, or?

CP: They must have had meetings of citizens and council, and where is the worst area. And probably it was, it was pretty bad.

NC: Probably in terms of just deteriorating buildings (*unintelligible phrase*).

CP: Yes, the downtown peninsula. If you know Portland at all, it's the, Portland has like a downtown peninsula, kind of water around both sides, the ocean side and the Back Bay side, and then the downtown. Well, the west end is kind of the end of the peninsula, the west end of the peninsula, (*unintelligible phrase*), and a concentrated area. And you had to designate where, because you couldn't fund anything that wasn't in the model neighborhood. And every program you funded had to be serving model neighborhood residents.

NC: Primarily.

CP: Oh, a hundred percent.

NC: Oh, okay.

CP: Oh yeah.

RP: All the money -

CP: For the Model Cities money.

RP: Right, for the Model Cities money. They could be serving a hundred clients throughout the city, but if their, if twenty percent of their budget was Model Cities then -

CP: They had to show -

RP: - all that money had to be in the Model Cities area.

CP: That's right, and they had to prove it. And we were very strict about reviewing that and making sure they did.

NC: And did they?

CP: They did, oh yeah.

RP: Well they did or they didn't get paid for it.

CP: They didn't get their money. When we, we had to -

RP: They could spend it, but they wouldn't get reimbursed.

CP: We were pretty strict, and we had good audit findings, too. I mean, there was never a showing -

RP: And we had hold backs, too. So, I mean they could, if they put in a hundred dollars worth of expenditures, they'd get, what, eighty-five percent is it? It was either ten or fifteen percent hold back at the end to ensure that they got in all the reporting, and then they finally got their ten percent. I think it was ten percent hold back.

CP: Yeah, and they, monthly requisitions, so they'd only get once a month.

NC: So it was an insurance policy to make them -

CP: Yeah.

RP: Right.

NC: - do what they were supposed to do with that money.

CP: But I think in attacking the neighborhood in a social service way, they really made Portland a more caring city so that, to take care of its less fortunate. Portland really has a high, and it's continued, and I think because of Model Cities. A lot of those programs are still around, still serving, you know, people that really need it. And you don't have that in a lot of cities. So we really, we really saw that.

And when Dick was working with me, we were really involved in it. I mean, we lived Model

Cities. We lived in the neighborhood, we worked in it, and you were busy, you had so much work, and then we'd go to those meetings. And so, like we'd talk about it all the time, you know, it was, we were really involved. So we really, and living downtown, so we really got very, very interested in Portland and in the neighborhood, and really started caring about the city. We lived there, we walked to work, to City Hall. Dick had an old house on Park Street. So we were very, and that's I think how you started getting interested in Portland. And eventually, you know, somebody came to him and asked him would he, because he, Dick was not a political person, wanted him to run for city council.

NC: What year was that, that you ran, your first year?

RP: Ninety-one.

CP: So it's a long time after working there.

RP: Oh yes, '91 (*unintelligible phrase*).

CP: But we lived downtown, we stayed downtown for years. We lived there until eleven years ago. We lived on Park Street. When we got married -

RP: About fourteen now, thirteen.

CP: Has it been thirteen, yeah, so we were very much involved with wanting downtown to be a better place, and Portland to be a better place. But during those years they really tried real hard to help the people in the model neighborhood. And I think it continues somewhat with community development block grant funds. I think the city of Portland still gets those funds. And I believe some of the programs that were funded in Model Cities get those community development block grant funds, social service programs. I don't know that for sure, but I think that's still happening.

NC: Now, one of the most basic ideas with the Model Cities program would be that whatever was done require citizen participation, specifically the citizens who were going to be gaining from that funding. Did you get a chance to see how that worked out in Portland? Did the people who lived in the neighborhood, not necessarily working for the Model Cities program, did they feel like the program was a part of their lives?

RP: They pursued the funds aggressively, yeah. They all wanted their piece of the pie.

CP: The agencies did.

RP: No, no, not just the agencies. I'm talking about Mel Talbot and (*nameBsounds like: Chris or Sis*) Fontaine.

CP: Oh, you mean some of the people that were on the boards.

RP: Citizens in the area.

CP: Yeah, oh yeah, they fought for their causes and their agencies and their programs, definitely. And some of them succeeded.

RP: But they did, I think there was a lot of resentment to any money that was going to subsidize city services, you know, existing city services, that they felt that money should be going all to community organizations and not to support infrastructure of, you know, social programs that were already being run by the city and things like that. And of course the city was trying to help subsidize its own programs, too.

CP: Yeah, well, and when Model Cities ended, I went into health and social services, and continued working in the social service part of it, with community development block grant funds. So I stayed with it a couple more years, I was deputy director of health and social services. So we were funding, continuing to fund programs, doing it kind of the same way because that came through HUD. And I don't know if that legislation was passed replacing Model Cities, but it had some of the same regulations that you could use the funding. So we did it for, and actually we were funding non-social service programs then, but it was coming through our department because we were so used to the majority of them being social services, that we funded the others, too, you know, as part of that. And I think now they have a, the office of community development at City Hall, but I don't know.

RP: They do, it's in the plan for them, sure.

CP: Yeah, I think they still get those funds.

RP: What's his name, Adelson -

CP: Mark Adelson, through him?

RP: Yeah.

NC: Now, I was wondering if I could get your impressions, both of your impressions, of Jadine O'Brien?

CP: Oh, great, she was wonderful. A real mentor. Thought a lot of her, we both did. Yeah, she was a great person. She was a mentor for me, definitely a role model that I followed. She was great, yeah, we liked her a lot.

RP: Forceful, and determined.

CP: Very bright, very caring, you know, tried to continue the program that Jack left. Had worked with Jack before. Yeah, she was great, we liked her. She ran for public office, and Dick worked as a treasurer for that, although she didn't win. But you did it that time. Yeah, I know, we think a lot of her. She was great, very (unintelligible) person.

NC: Is she still working in Portland now?

CP: No, she's retired now.

NC: Oh, okay.

CP: She, when she left Model Cities, was it to run for that office?

RP: Yeah, well I think so.

CP: Yeah, and then she didn't win. It was a run for a representative.

RP: Yeah, either representative or senate, I don't know.

CP: No, it was house of representatives. And then she went to work for . . . .

RP: Blue Cross . . . .

CP: Blue Cross/Blue Shield, and she was -

RP: Sort of a lobbyist.

CP: Lobbyist for them, working with legislature, state legislature, for a lot of years.

NC: Up in Augusta?

CP: Yeah. And as a private citizen, she was on the Planning Board for the city of Portland for a lot of years.

RP: She was always very politically active for the Democratic Party.

CP: Oh, Jadine is very political.

RP: And her husband is . . . .

CP: Her husband, they're both Democrats to the core. They're very political, both of them. Her husband is the county register of deeds I think now.

RP: Yeah, deeds, yeah.

CP: Democratic, you know, he ran for office and won. They're always very close to, I don't know if they knew Muskie, I think they might have known him. I don't know.

RP: They probably did.

CP: Yeah, because they were very involved in the Democratic Party. Whereas Dick and I were nonpolitical people. We -

NC: Coming into the program.

CP: Never political.

NC: Never? And then have you developed over time -?

CP: A little bit.

RP: Not in terms of state parties or anything, no, we don't have any strong party -

CP: No. We were more dedicated to the city and making it a better place. And Dick loved downtown, and could see the deterioration of downtown. And so he really, and he, after Model Cities, he went to work for an oil company, he worked for fifteen years, a controller for an oil company; and then a security company for another fifteen years.

NC: Was that in Maine?

CP: Right here, in Portland. So he's worked in business more. So he was just approached, would he run for city council, because they just wanted somebody to run, but he never sought it.

NC: And city politics isn't necessarily partisan politics.

CP: It's not so much.

RP: Well, it's not except that the parties try to find a candidate that is, that has their same values, you know, basically. The Democrats try to put somebody up and the Republicans try to put somebody up, but I mean, -

CP: You don't run as a Democratic or Republican.

RP: You don't run, right.

NC: But even in, do you feel like there are influences behind closed doors that are partisan?

RP: No, I think it's, I don't, well, it depends on who the councilors are. I mean, some councilors are very politically motivated, I mean very, you know, very strong Democrat or Republican supporters. But for me, I didn't have any real strong affiliation. I mean, I was a registered Democrat, but -

CP: Only because you wanted to vote for Jadine, because he came from a family that was Republican.

RP: I was independent, I was a registered independent before, and I couldn't vote in the primary to support Jadine, so I registered as a Democrat. Now that's the strength of my political convictions right there.

End of Side A
Side B

CP: . . . programs, you knew, all the agencies. I mean, so you couldn't help but be interested in what was going on in the city. Whereas a normal ordinary person may not have paid much attention to the city politics and what was going on. But we did because we were immersed in it, when we lived it day and night. And we reviewed it and we saw what was going on.

RP: Well, and you understood the players and who -

CP: Yeah, so we paid attention to local politics (*unintelligible phraseCtwo people talking at same time*).

RP: What was good and what was bad about what was going on in the city, that's -

CP: Yeah, and if you saw something that didn't, you know, you thought was corrupt, you weren't going to go that route, you know. You wanted something else to happen. But most of the time -

RP: There wasn't really, there was hardly ever -

CP: - it was pretty darn straight.

RP: Yeah, no, I don't think there was ever anything that I would have characterized as corrupt. Just gray areas, or somebody -

CP: Just the Low Income People in that, Youth in Action, they were about the only two that you might say caused problems. But the other people were all really good programs, good agencies, running good stuff.

NC: Was Jerry Conley -?

CP: Yeah, yeah, we knew of him.

RP: Well, he was a city councilor back in the original days.

CP: He was a city councilor, very political Democrat, friend of Jadine's.

NC: He ended up in the state senate, too, right?

RP: Oh yeah, for years. Years and years.

CP: Yeah, oh yeah. He was good friend of Jadine's. They were real Democrats, you know, real political people, yeah, Jerry Conley. His son is now I think, Jerry Conley, Jr., I think he's in the state legislature.

NC: So how long did you work as a council member?

RP: Six years.

NC: That was from '91 to '97?

RP: Yes.

NC: And then you ran for mayor?

RP: No, mayor is appointed by the council. So one of my years as a city councilor I served as mayor, which was '94 to '95.

NC: And how does the function, your function, change in that (*unintelligible phrase*)?

RP: You do a lot of ceremonial things, like welcoming meetings, officiating at testimonial dinners.

CP: A lot of speeches.

RP: Yeah, and welcoming delegations like from China or Korea or something, you know.

CP: And you run the council meetings.

RP: And you, right -

CP: Chair the council.

RP: You're the chair of the council, so you're effectively -

NC: Okay, following procedure and all of that.

RP: Right, right, right.

CP: You're really chairman of the council.

RP: Yup.

NC: Now is Portland running on every other year, the election, or?

RP: Yeah, two years.

NC: For a council -

RP: Every year.

NC: Every year.

CP: But it's a three year term.

RP: But it's a three year term.

NC: Oh, okay, just certain seats come up, one or two seats a year or something.

RP: Yes, every year, yeah, right.

CP: And you do this on the side. I mean, you're working a working a regular job. This is just an additional thing that you do, in addition to your regular work. It's not a full time job.

NC: And what was your full time job at that time?

RP: I was a controller for a security company, well, I was, yeah, a controller for a security company during those years.

CP: And they pay you a very small amount of money for a year to be on the council. It's a lot of hours, a lot of meetings, a lot of, and then you're on committees, to renovate the auditorium and other committees. A lot of time out of his life.

NC: So, how have you seen Portland change since you both finished your work with the Model Cities program?

RP: Well, that program really ended in the mid-seventies. And I think there was sort of a lull there for the last five years of the seventies. And then of course when the eighties kicked in, everybody was on a rising tide, you know, with the economy. So I mean Portland had a lot of advantages of the economy, and so that's when we saw a lot of redevelopment downtown. And then like everybody else in the nineties, early nineties, you know, we were in the recession just like everybody else, and then it's just been a gradual comeback over the last ten years. But I think Portland's had a much, in the last ten years, had a much greater appreciation of the impact of tourism. I mean, Portland used to not be such a tourist town as it is, as it has become in the last ten or fifteen years. And a lot of that's due to Tom Veloe who got, who actually was in Urban Renewal?

CP: Yeah, he was the Urban Renewal director.

RP: Urban Renewal director, and then he went to, he was appointed to the Transportation and Waterways position, the director of that. And he really developed a lot of the cruise ship business that's really snowballed in the last few years. So I would say the difference between now and fifteen years ago is that Portland, which used to be simply the center of legal and financial business in Portland B I meanB in the state, has now become a much more prominent player in tourism. And that's had a lot of impacts on the economy in Portland.

NC: What about you, how would you say Portland has changed?

CP: I haven't been on top of it as much. Because when I left Health and Social Services, I, well I was always funded by Model Cities and then community development grant funds, so it was always federal funding. You never knew if you, you know, when the funding was going to end. So I applied for a job at Portland Public Schools and I went over as a, and got a job as the accounting manager at the Portland Public Schools in 198-, oh gosh, must have been late seventies, I guess. Yeah, late seventies, almost the eighties. So I was at the schools and I was away from City Hall. I was over in Veranda Street school department and got into all of their issues, and really wasn't so much on top of what was going on at City Hall and, you know, and the programs. So I really, then you got involved really, in City Hall.

RP: Yeah, I think Portland has become, you know, with the, all of the immigration that's happened over the last ten years, Portland used to be sort of an inbred community. I mean, you had long time family, Irish families that lived here and so forth. And then once the eighties hit and we had so much more economic growth, and Portland sort of made the map nationally, and we got a lot of people coming here from all over the country that found out Portland was a nice place to live. So we're so much more a diverse community than we were back then. I mean, back in the seventies when they were doing that Model Cities, God, you -

CP: Everybody was white.

RP: Everybody was white and all the families -

CP: It was hard to find a colored person.

RP: You know, and the families had been here for generations. Now I don't think half, I bet you a third of the population of Portland is not native to Maine, never mind to Portland.

NC: Really?

RP: Oh yes, yeah.

NC: That was interesting, when I was looking through some of the national guidelines for what Model Cities did and what happened, a lot of it was talking about grass roots African American leaders emerging, and I was thinking about Portland, Maine, and also Lewiston was a Model City.

CP: And I'm sure Lewiston and Portland must have got it because Muskie was one of the -

NC: Right, Auburn got it, I mean -

CP: Was one of the founders of that legislation. Because we used to have to, they'd always ask us, you always had to give the numbers of people served and what their color was. It was kind of hard for us to, they wanted us to have more colored but we said, there aren't any up here, there's none here, you can't pull them up. They just didn't come up and live in Maine, you know?

So that was always the hard part. But now, because of the refugee program, Catholic Charities refugee program, people come from all over. And then when we had our son, we sent him to King Elementary, King Middle School where all of the children are from all over the world.

NC: Now you have an interesting perspective coming from Rumford to Portland. Well, first of all, we've mentioned Lewiston quickly, and I was wondering, Lewiston-Auburn area, how do you think Lewiston-Auburn was perceived, and is perceived today by Portland? Has it pretty much -?

CP: Well, it's deteriorated from what it was. We knew Lewiston real well in our family because my family came from Lewiston. She was born in Lewiston. A lot of French people in Lewiston, lots of French people in Lewiston. And it was wonderful. We went to Lewiston all the time. They had the beautiful stores downtown, Lisbon Street, gorgeous. Peck's and Ward Brothers, and my mother would go down and get, bring us down there to shop. Penney's, you know, it was a beautiful downtown. And a lot of mill, mill town, a lot of jobs, you know. But now, now it's really pretty depressed. So we don't, I don't know that much about what's going on now. Just seeing it, it doesn't look, but although in the past few years it seems to be making a little bit of a rebound.

NC: Auburn is, yeah.

CP: Yeah, and Lewiston a little bit, too. They've brought, I, my last few years I worked for five and a half years at WCSH TV, NBC affiliate. And we had a, we still do, we did have a studio down there on Main Street, in Lewiston, the NBC affiliate. And we put on the Maine State Parade, and Charlene, who was the station manager down there, got involved in a lot of committees in Lewiston, and used to tell us about trying to bring back Lewiston-Auburn. The balloon festival and, you know, they've done a lot of things, Bates Mills. So, you know, through CSH -

NC: It's closed, it just closed.

CP: Oh, it did?

NC: Yeah.

CP: But weren't they developing other things in those buildings?

NC: I think there's plans to do that, like what they did up in Augusta, (*unintelligible)* along the river and stuff like that. I think it's still on. And then there's the, CMMC is just getting the heart center built up there, (*unintelligible phrase*), so that I know was a big issue with Portland and Lewiston, figuring out how that would all work out. I think there still are some issues with that.

CP: But I mean, we really don't have that much knowledge about Lewiston personally, do we?

RP: No, but I, I mean, the biggest difference, I think, is that Lewiston was a mill town, whereas Portland never was a mill town. And so you had a lot of, well I think the mills always

operated on a lot of unskilled labor, I mean on, yeah, unskilled, lower wage -

CP: Actually they weren't lower wage, they were just people who weren't educated.

RP: Right, less educated people that worked in the mills, and they were well paid. And they suffered a lot when those mills went under. And they, you know, manufacturing jobs just kept leaving and so any towns like Lewiston -

CP: Our town, Rumford.

RP: - and Rumford, and any town that was dependent on mills, there was nothing to replace them. You know, there were no new jobs that used the same skills or that had, or that you could get with the same education.

CP: Well, and that you could get paid what they used to get paid. People, they paid very well -

RP: So they suffered more than Portland because Portland, as I said, was the largest, well I mean beside being the largest metropolitan area, it had, it was the center for banking, law, and really for government. I mean, you know, I mean Augusta is technically the capitol, but -

CP: And also medical, Maine Medical Center.

RP: And medical, that's what I meant, health care, yeah, that was the third thing, health care, health care, law, and banking, Portland always had the upper hand. So there were a lot of professional jobs here. So I think that's the strength that Portland's always had.

CP: And a lot of people come to Portland from all those towns because of our social services. They are drawn here from all over the state.

RP: And we still have a relatively healthy retail sector, so there are jobs here for most any level of -

NC: But you have a tradition of professional jobs.

RP: Yes, that's right.

NC: People come here knowing that there's a market.

RP: And education of course, we have the university, you know, several colleges. Westbrook College, University of Maine -

CP: Even though there was always Bates in Lewiston, that Bates was always very separate from the community. It's not, I don't -

NC: They're trying to change that, but it's slow going.

CP: It was never like that before, for years. I never heard about it being part of the community.

RP: Not representative of the community in any way, no.

CP: No, no, it was like, that was the other world. I know my aunt had a store on Pettingill Street, right across from the campus, right there, Pettingill Variety or whatever it was called. And it was like another world over there, you know, that we didn't know about. We just saw it.

NC: They used to have the hedge that would go all around it.

CP: It was a beautiful campus. Very separated, yeah, yeah.

NC: Now you mentioned that your father was a fisherman, a captain. The fishing industry in New England, I know more about Massachusetts than I personally know about Maine and maybe you could fill me in, what has happened in the last ten years to the fishing industry coming out of Portland?

RP: Well, you know, I haven't really stayed on top of it, because I was never really interested in it other than it being my father's occupation. But, I mean, the city has done a lot to help underpin it through the fish exchange, through the waterfront zoning, you know. The city's done a lot to try and keep it as a viable industry by offering support in those ways.

CP: Well, tell him the story of your father, what happened to him with his fishing, how he had to go, leave, because it was sword fishing.

RP: Well, yeah. Well, back in the sixties when they had the mercury scare, you're much too young to remember this, but they determined that the fish being brought in had too high a level of mercury in them. And there was always this ongoing debate about how much of it was just natural to the species and how much was from contamination, and so forth. But it didn't matter because what would happen is, they'd bring in loads of fish, in my father's case swordfish, that they would normally get ten or fifteen thousand dollars for, a load. And the government would just confiscate it as soon as it came in, because the levels were too high and they couldn't sell it. So they, after a couple of trips like that there was just no place to go. So they ended up selling the boat and my father actually ended up in Florida off Nicaragua, fishing down there for the person who had bought their boat.

NC: Wait, now this is in Florida he was?

CP: Well, he was in Nicaragua, he wasn't in Florida.

NC: Okay, in the Gulf.

CP: And they didn't, they couldn't, they didn't, they had a hard time down there, too.

RP: But I mean as far as Maine was -

NC: There was a mercury scare there off the Keys for a very long time, they've been having that problem (*unintelligible phraseCtwo people talking at same time*).

RP: Well, he wasn't fishing for the same fish. They weren't fishing for swordfish, they were fishing for spiny tail lobster in the Gulf. But I mean he literally had to leave Maine because there was no future in what they had been doing up to that point. And my grandfather was manager for Fullam Brothers, which was a large fish processing business down on Central Wharf, where the big condominium project is now, Chandler's Wharf. They call it Chandler's Wharf now but it used to be Central Wharf. And there used to be all kinds of fishing businesses there: Fullam Brothers, Silver Bay, Willard Daggett, all used to be located on Central Wharf. Now that's all been, I mean, that was part of the eighties sort of takeover of the waterfront, and that's what actually started the zoning wars down there.

CP: The waterfront referendum.

RP: Waterfront referendum, right, yeah.

NC: But Maine, I think, just recently guaranteed to start reinsuring Maine fishermen. Something like that, or lobstermen.

RP: Oh, yeah?

NC: They showed that on the news a couple days ago, things are improving.

RP: It's a hard life, it's a very hard life. They can use all the help they can get.

NC: And I'm from Gloucester and there's been this issue of there's no cod, you know, there just wasn't any left, so.

RP: Well, New Gloucester used to be the largest, they used to take in the largest catches year after year after year. Now Portland, Portland I think was the top one for the past couple of years.

NC: I don't think Gloucester's in very good shape right now.

RP: No, no. Well, and they got a lot of sort of gentrification down there, too, in terms of development and so forth. So you know, once you turn it into a touristy thing, I mean, just economically it's no longer possible to do fishing. Because fishing can't support the infrastructure that, once it gets, you know, valued up, can't support the property values once it gets valued up, competing with residential and commercial development.

CP: Well I would say overall, Portland really benefited from having Model Cities program, definitely; it’s a better place because of it.

NC: It sounds like you can still see the influence today.

CP: Yeah, oh yeah. A lot of things I'll say, that started in Model Cities, you know. People don't realize that, but it's because of that that they started some of these innovative programs that they never had before, they didn't have the money to do it. Somehow they'd managed to get other funding through, and there's been some continued HUD funding, so that's been good, they haven't completely pulled the strings. It's not as much, I'm sure it's a lot less. Yeah, I think, and I don't know if that happened all over the country, but I think Portland benefited from having it, definitely.

NC: Well, I guess (*unintelligible phrase*) Is there anything else you guys would like to add to the record, any other anecdotes or stories of politics in Portland?

CP: No.

RP: No.

NC: Okay, well thank you very much.

CP: You're welcome.

End of Interview