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Pease, Allen and Violet "Vi" oral history interview

Nicholas Christie

Interview with Allen and Violet "Vi" Pease by Nicholas Christie

Summary Sheet and Transcript

Interviewee
Pease, Allen
Pease, Violet "Vi"

Interviewer
Christie, Nicholas

Date
July 11, 2001

Place
Hollis, Maine

ID Number
MOH 281

Biographical Note

Allen Pease was born July 10, 1925 in Wilton, Maine to Howard and Azubah Pease. His father was a farmer and his mother was a teacher. He attended Wilton Academy, spent three semesters at Ohio University, one year at Farmington State Teachers College (Now UMF) and finished at Colby College. He served in the Marine Corps during World War II. He was an Administrative Assistant to Ken Curtis and a Professor of Political Science at several Maine state universities.

Violet "Vi" Pease was born February 24, 1927 in Levant, Maine to Evelyn and Elmer Call, a farming family. She attended Higgins Classical Institute in Charleston, Maine. Vi and Allen met at Farmington State Teacher's college, where she majored in Home Economics. She was a Democratic candidate for state representative in 1966, a long time member of the York County Democratic Committee from 1968 to1998, a member of the Maine Democratic State Committee from 1968 to 1974 serving as Vice Chairman from 1968 to 1972 and Chairman from 1973 to1974, and a delegate to Maine State Democratic Conventions from 1964 to 1996.

Scope and Content Note

Interview includes discussions of: 1952-1954 Maine Democratic Party; 1954 Democratic

platform; 1954 Maine gubernatorial campaign; 1968 vice presidential campaign; 1965 Maine Action Plan; Vietnam War; Republican Party in Maine; Democratic Party in Maine; media, WLAM; community histories: Levant and Wilton; Ku Klux Klan (KKK) activities against immigrants and Catholics; and the 1970 gubernatorial election of Ken Curtis.

Indexed Names

Beliveau, Severin
Bradford, Peter
Brann, Louis
Brewster, Owen, 1888-1961
Call, Elmer
Call, Evelyn
Childs, Dana
Coffin, Frank Morey
Curtis, Kenneth M., 1931-
Curtis, Polly
Daley, Richard J., 1902-1976
Dewey, Thomas
Donovan, John C.
Dunfey, Robert
Dutremble, Richard “Dick”
Earl, Maurice
Fullam, Paul
Goodwin, Dick
Goodwin, Doris Kearns
Hansen, Don
Harriman, Edward A.
Hathaway, Bill
Hobbins, Barry
Humphrey, Hubert H. (Hubert Horatio), 1911-1978
Jalbert, Louis
Johnson, Lyndon B. (Lyndon Baines), 1908-1973
Kennedy, John F. (John Fitzgerald), 1917-1963
Kennedy, Robert F., 1925-1968
Lipez, Kermit
McGovern, George S. (George Stanley), 1922-
Mitchell, George J. (George John), 1933-
Mitchell, Jim
Muskie, Edmund S., 1914-1996
Muskie, Jane Gray
Nicoll, Don
Oliver, Jim
Pease, Azubah
Pease, Howard

Reed, Carlton "Bud"
Roberts, Gwil
Scribner, Rod
Smith, Margaret Chase, 1897-1995
Strider, Robert
Thumm, Garold “Gary”
Toothaker, Abner
Truman, Harry S., 1884-1972
Truman, Plato
Whitcomb, Roy, Jr.
Williams, Maurice
Wood, Debbie

Transcript

Nick Christie: This is Nick Christie interviewing Vi and Allen Pease on July 15th at their home in Hollis, Maine. Could you please both state your names and spell them for the record.

Allen Pease: Well, my name is Allen Pease, that’s A-L-L-E-N, P-E-A-S-E.

Vi Pease: And I'm Violet Pease, for short Vi Pease, and my name is spelled V-I-O-L-E-T, P-E-A-S-E.

NC: And what are your respective dates and places of birth?

AP: Well I was born on July 10th, 1925 in Wilton, Maine.

VP: And I was born in Levant, Maine, 1927, February 24th.

NC: Now, Allen, what were your parents' names?

AP: Howard and Azubah, Howard is just H-O-W-A-R-D, and Azubah A-Z-U-B-A-H.

NC: Where were they from?

AP: Well Howard was from Wilton and he had inherited the family farm that had been a Pease farm from about 1796. And Azubah was a Myrick from Troy, Maine. And she was a school teacher, elementary school teacher when they married.

NC: How did they end up living where they did?

AP: Well, because my father was farming the homestead farm.

NC: Vi, what were your parents' names?

VP: Evelyn and Elmer, E-L-M-E-R, Call and they were also farmers and so I grew up on a farm.

NC: Where were they originally from?

VP: My father was from the town Levant and born there. My mother was born in Lowell, Mass.

NC: How did she end up coming up to Maine?

VP: Well I'm not absolutely sure, really. I think at some juncture her mother moved to Maine and I think that's, but I, we've never figured that quite out, you know, really, as to how she happened to come to Levant, Maine. But I think that the closest explanation is her mother moved up here after her father died and, to seek employment or whatever, and that's how she happened to meet my father.

NC: How big was Levant?

VP: Goodness, it wasn't big at all when I was growing up. What would you think the population would be, Al, back then, I wouldn't even -

AP: Probably twelve, fifteen hundred.

VP: Or less.

NC: So basically just a farming community.

VP: Pretty much. Not so now, but then it was. As a matter of fact, the farm is still a working farm.

NC: Oh, wow.

VP: And my mother just died in the last, a year ago this August. She was nearly ninety-four. And the grandchildren that she brought up, because their mother died in her early twenties, are working the farm still, and my brother.

NC: So it's still owned by the family.

VP: Yeah.

NC: Wow. What do they farm there?

VP: Well, it's basically a milk production, cows and sell milk.

NC: Now what about Wilton, what sort of town was that?

AP: Well Wilton was probably twenty-five hundred. It's eight miles from Farmington, which is the county seat. Wilton itself was more of a mill town, as well as an agricultural community. There was a woollen mill in Wilton, and a shoe shop, Bass Shoe shop. It's quite well-known and still is, under a different ownership, still produces. And had wood turning mills in it.

NC: So the mills had a big influence on the town's employment.

AP: Yes.

NC: Did you ever work in either of those mills?

AP: Yes, I worked in the woollen mill while I was, in vacations while I was going to school, while I was going to college, even after I got out of high school.

NC: What was your job in the mill?

AP: Well, I worked in a place called the picker house, which is a place where they bring in raw wool or rags to process, and before they are cleaned, before it's cleaned, and then woven into the material which eventually will become cloth. So I worked in sort of the basic, where the process started. Pretty rough job, and-

NC: Was it?

AP: Yeah.

NC: And you said you did that on vacations during high school and college?

AP: Right.

NC: Now this is a question for Allen, what were your parents' political views when you were growing up as a child and adolescent?

AP: They were the traditionally Republican.

NC: Republican. And that was a strong influence in the family, or -?

AP: My mother had been on the local school board, but I don't, I would not consider her to be a political person. My father had pretty strong, quite well-informed views on politics.

NC: So political conversations were present in the household?

AP: Yes, and we, you know, we had periodicals, newspapers and so on and were aware of what was going on pretty well. And growing up, you didn't have of course TV, you had radio and, you know, your newspapers, then what you learned at school. But we're talking of the period about 1930s where traditionally Maine was very heavily Republican. It was really a one party state as far as the state legislature's concerned. And only a few communities like maybe

Rumford, Lewiston, Biddeford, had Democratic majorities. Basically mill towns that had a fairly heavy percentage of Democrats. But the state legislature and the governorships went to Republicans.

NC: And what were your parents' religious background?

AP: They were Protestants. My mother was a Methodist. My father, I'm not sure whether he belonged to the church or not, but we had a church pew, we owned a church pew in the Baptist church.

NC: And what sort of involvement did your mother and father have in Wilton?

AP: Well, the only public office either one had that I know of was my mother was on the school board.

NC: Right. What sort of influence did your parents have on you when you were growing up?

AP: Well, I always assumed that I was going to go to college, and I think probably that's from my mother's interest in education, it was just sort of assumed that I would go on. I never, I did work on the farm but I never really gave that a thought that I would continue to farm, you know, as a lifetime project like some of my neighbors, some of my playmates always figured they'd live on the, continue to live on the farm.

NC: And that wasn't necessarily -?

AP: I never really considered that to be attractive to me.

NC: Okay. Do you remember at what point you began to have any political views of your own?

AP: Well, I was informed but I think that I didn't really mature in my thinking until I was in college. I did a lot of, I studied a lot of history and was good in history when I was at Wilton Academy, that was my high school.

NC: What was -?

AP: My first, the first time I voted was in 1948. And traditional in the family I registered, this was after the war, I registered as a, or enrolled as a Republican and voted for Margaret Chase Smith and for the Thomas E. Dewey who was the presidential candidate that year against Harry Truman. I voted Republican in '48, so my evolution to be thinking more Democrat came after that.

NC: Now I want to go back a little bit. Where did you go to elementary school?

AP: I went to an eight-room schoolhouse. Yeah, and my first three years in school my mother was the teacher.

NC: Okay, you were in her classroom?

AP: There was only one classroom; a one-room schoolhouse.

NC: Oh, a one-room schoolhouse.

AP: In (*name*) Corner.

NC: What was that school like?

AP: Well I thought it was a pretty good education, except when we got through, in high school, I was deficient in some subjects. We had things I had not taken, for example algebra, and didn't have a very good background in grammar. So, you know, I think foreign, I think when I took Latin in high school I think the grammatical structure was hard for me for a while. But a lot of the experiences there in that little school were pretty good. In fact there's three people in my graduating class in that, of the high school, all three of us were on the honor role at Wilton Academy.

NC: Oh, wow. So Wilton Academy was an accelerated high school?

AP: Well, in Maine there were a lot of private academies. Some of them had religious orientation, and they eventually became pretty much the public school for the town that they were in. And my, that was the, Wilton Academy had its own board of trustees, but the money really came from the town. And they did have some traditional five-year programs in which they would have tuition students, you know. There might have been forty or fifty of those academies around the state. In fact, Vi went to a similar one in her high school.

VP: Yeah, but mine was different.

NC: What do you mean?

VP: Well, I went to Higgins Classical Institute in Charleston, Maine. Our options, you know were, living in Levant, there was no high school of course, and many youngsters went to Bangor High or Brewer High. And several went to this, it's a prep school, Higgins Classical Institute was a prep school, and a very good one, naturally.

NC: Now you went to a public school for elementary school?

VP: Yes. I also went to a two-room.

NC: Two-room. Do you remember much about that elementary teaching?

VP: I really felt I got a very good education in my elementary schools. We had good teachers and, I'd say, a good education. In that day and age certainly.

NC: Now, what were your parents' political views?

VP: Well, my parents were just totally devoid of the political scene as far as I could ever decipher, you know. They just, I'm sure if, I don't, I really don't know whether they even ever registered to vote. If you can believe that in this day and age. But, I always had an interest in politics. And I can remember as a youngster listening to the radio and thinking, "I wish my parents talked politics," you know. Because, you know, your peers just, you know, back then just didn't talk about politics, they talked about school or sports or whatever, you know. And I can remember listening to the radio, you know and, "Why don't my parents talk about politics?" So I could know a little more about it.

NC: Was Levant a political town then, or -?

VP: No, I wouldn't call it a political town.

NC: What were your parents' religious backgrounds?

VP: They were both Protestant.

NC: Methodist?

VP: Probably Baptist. I don't know whether they were, you know, registered in that church but if they attended church it was the Baptist church.

NC: Now, you mentioned your parents weren't that political, but did they have any other involvement in the community?

VP: Well my mother served once on, they didn't call it a school board then, they had another name for it, but she served on that one term. But other than that, basically they pretty much, you know, worked the farm and that was their life, you know, full-time, seven days a week.

NC: What influence do you think your parents had on you when you were growing up?

VP: Well, that's hard to know. I, I was always a fairly strong-minded youngster and I kind of created my own world, really. Is from early on I belonged to the 4-H Club which was, you know, really a great program back then. And, I participated in that and made exhibits for the Bangor fair, which is a big, and still is, a big fair and oftentimes got first prize and that shocked my parents (*unintelligible word*). And I actually went to church in the adjacent town, Kenduskeag as I grew up.

NC: This was a Baptist church?

VP: It was a Methodist church.

NC: How did you get involved with that church?

VP: Well, we lived, our house was the last house before the Kenduskeag line, so some of my peers, or my friends, lived in Kenduskeag, because it was so close, you know. And it was through them primarily that I chose to go in that direction as opposed to the other direction, which would have been up in Levant, because that's where they went, and I liked to go with them. As I did with the library. They had a neat little library and every Saturday we'd walk two, two and a half miles with our little shopping bag and come back with a bag full of books to read for the week. Yeah--- Summer, winter, fall and spring.

NC: Now, about the Higgins Classical Institute? How big was that school?

VP: Oh dear, I don't know what the population of the school would be. I'm not very good on those things.

AP: How many in your class, Vi, graduating class?

VP: I can't even remember that, that was a long time ago.

NC: But it was considerably bigger than your elementary school.

VP: Oh yeah, it was a good-sized high school, prep school.

NC: Do you remember any specific teachers that had a big influence on you?

VP: Well I, my favorite teacher probably was my chemistry and my algebra teacher.

NC: Do you remember their names?

VP: Mr. Keith was the chemistry teacher. I had different teachers for algebra and geometry and advanced algebra. Mr. Meter taught one of those, and I can't really recall who the other teacher was. But they were good teachers and, actually we had a lot of good teachers at the school.

NC: Do you remember one specific subject or any specific topics that you became very interested in, in secondary school?

VP: Well, as I said, I just had an affinity for chemistry, and I liked algebra. English I tolerated. But I was never very good about writing essays, so that was a chore for me that-.

NC: Right. Now, and what about you, Allen? Do you remember any specific teachers at your school that really stuck out?

AP: Well I remember all of them pretty well, and-.

VP: You went to a small school.

AP: We had a, well, Wilton Academy at that time probably had two hundred and fifty students

in the (*unintelligible phrase*), two seventy-five possibly. The principal, Maurice Earl was principal all four years, and he also taught an occasional course in history. I remembered him well. And Abner Toothaker who was a coach as well as lived in my, in the neighborhood. Sometimes I went back and forth with him, I knew him quite well. He used to tell me, "Don't go into education unless you want to be poor (*unintelligible word*)." Harold Karkos was the senior English teacher and that's why I kept in touch with him most of my life, once in a while. And but I, yeah, I remember them all with quite a bit of affection. My principle strength in high school was, that's probably, I really enjoyed my history and social science type courses the most. Had a lot of interest in that. I read a lot, read a lot in the library as well and was quite curious like that.

NC: Now what year would you have graduated high school?

AP: Forty-two.

NC: Forty-two. You said you first voted on the national level in '48. So in that six year period do you feel that you had really come to having a Republican point of view on your own?

AP: Not really. That that period of time I had taken a year off and gone to Houston, Texas and worked in the steel mill. And then I went into the Marine Corps, and I got out of the Marine Corps in '46 and started college in '46. So, the first election that I was, that I had enrolled and voted on was '48. I don't know that it was, or I think it was just part of the whole atmosphere of the time and the state, the newspapers, editorial writers and so on were generally fairly conservative and Republican.

I was a good friend, I went out to Ohio University in 1947 and I was very good friends with a guy from Connecticut named Ben Klimmer, and he was very politically motivated. And I think for the first time I realized how biased, I'm not saying biased in a negative way, but how slanted or biased most publications were, newspapers and magazines. So this fellow, Benson Klimmer, he used to talk about it and how you read one paper and you get one point of view, and it's probably, another paper takes a quite different way. So I became pretty conscious of that, you know, at a fairly early, well, probably about twenty, twenty-one years old.

NC: What university did you go to in '46? Ohio?

AP: Ohio University, in Athens, Ohio.

NC: And how long did you stay there?

AP: Well I was only there about three semesters.

NC: What did you study there?

AP: I studied, basically I studied journalism, you know.

NC: What led you to that?

AP: Because I had taken, I had taken examinations and been, a sort of evaluation as to what would be a potentially good field. I had some artistic talent and that was one of the fields which was recommended to me, was journalism.

NC: You mentioned you went to the Marine Corps. And you finished with that in '46?

AP: Hm-hmmm.

NC: What were your experiences like in the, in the Corps?

AP: Well, I joined the Marine Corps from Houston, Texas. So I did my basic training in San Diego rather than on the East coast, and I spent most of the time in California or Hawaii. The only military operation I was in was Iwo Jima and, I was in that, and-.

VP: And then he has, part of his time he spent in the war years life guard during his tour of duty. Tough duty, you know what they say?

NC: Now, when you got out in '46 was the G.I. Bill must have been a big influence. I was wondering if you could tell me about your perception of how that bill took place?

AP: Well, actually the state of Texas passed a similar bill for their people, so there was a kind of a G.I. Bill in Texas for returning veterans. But of course the national one, Congress passed the federal one and that had been passed in, I believe in 1945. Forty-four, '45, so I knew it was there about a year before I had been discharged that it was available and would help me in college. So actually it helped a great deal. I probably only, I never took any money from my parents going to college, and I probably ended up at Colby borrowing five hundred dollars to get through. But, you know, compared to today's problems, why, for students, why, I got through my undergraduate program only owing about four hundred dollars. Which is quite different than the experience that -

VP: Our children never had.

NC: You mentioned Colby. What year did you first enter Colby?

AP: I was in Colby in, I guess I went in in '48. I graduated from Colby in February of 1950.

NC: You were able to transfer credits over from Ohio?

AP: Yeah. I had been, had also been one year at the Farmington State, at the what was then called Farmington State Teacher's College, which is where I met Vi.

NC: Now, what did you study while you were at Colby?

AP: My ma-, well I took a lot of economics, but I had twenty-three hours of economics so I patched it together to make a major in, it was called history and government economics major.

So I had kind of a combination of economics, government and history.

NC: Why did you choose to go to Colby College?

AP: Well, it was a pretty good college. In state, it had a higher reputation than the state public university. And it was comparable to Bates College. And it might have been a cut below, considered a cut below at that time, to Bowdoin. Bowdoin at that time was, was all male and probably would be the highest rep, at least out of the state, had more distinguished graduates from Bowdoin than the other colleges. And, so, I had also had a cousin that went to Colby, so I was somewhat familiar with it.

NC: Do you remember any specific people or teachers at Colby that really stick out in your mind?

AP: Yeah, very much. My advisor was a fellow named Paul Fullam, who was chairman of the history and government department. And he actually was a, he was kind of my mentor and he was also the mentor of Don Nicoll, that you probably are familiar with or maybe met him already. Don was one year ahead of me at Colby, and at that time Fullam was using him to grade some of his papers so, you know, he was a good history student and so on. And so, we also had an economics professor named Breckinridge and everybody kind of liked him, they called Eccy with Brecky, you know. So most of the kids that went through they look back, the alumni look back and they, they remember him. Then there were a number of others.

But in 1954, Fullam ran for United States senator as a Democrat against Margaret Chase Smith. And so '54 was the year that I, I really started to, you know, I not only supported Fullam but I contributed, that was the first person I ever contributed money to. And so, but that happened to also be the year that Ed Muskie was, ran for Maine governor. It was kind of a, that's kind of a threshold year as far as the modern Democratic Party is concerned, 1954.

NC: I want to go back a little bit to '48. You mentioned voting for Margaret Chase Smith. I was wondering if both of you could tell me what your reflections are of her?

AP: Well Margaret Smith was, she was the wife of a congressman, and when he died she ran for his congressional seat and won. And so she was, always had a favorable image in the state, so she always won quite handily up until the time she finally was defeated by, you know, Congressman Bill Hathaway at that time, that was 1972, I guess. And, so she was a, she was well-regarded and there wasn't any problem. Why I voted for Thomas E. Dewey rather than Truman, I guess the thing is that Dewey was for me (*unintelligible phrase*) had been governor of New York, he was quite progressive, represented -. And so I didn't really have any problem at that time of making that decision of voting for those two. But I was not involved in the campaigns at any level at that time. It was probably after that I became, probably most every election I was involved to some degree. When I was at graduate school, we usually got involved with some campaign.

NC: Now, Vi, where did you go to college?

VP: I went to Farmington State Teacher's College. Of course now it's Farmington and the University of Maine.

NC: Right. Why did you choose to go there?

VP: Well, there again we go back to peer identification, and a very good friend of mine from Kenduskeag was going. And they had a that time probably the top home economics program in the state and I was interested in that, as a carryover from some of the projects I'd done through the 4-H Club and all that business. And so, I applied and was accepted and went.

NC: You majored in home economics.

VP: Yes, B.S. degree.

NC: Do you remember any specific people there that really stand out in your memory?

VP: Well, I remember a lot of them. Of course GwilRoberts, have you run across him? Well you will eventually, I think. He was our history and government teacher and he's, actually he's very ac-, became very active. He wasn't at the time, politically, but he did run for the legislature later, after I graduated, and was really quite an unusual professor. A memory that I've never equaled anywhere else. I mean, he came in, when you came in as a freshman, by day two he knew every person's first name at least, and maybe their last name. Now, that's quite a feat. And, you know, plus the fact he was a very good teacher, you know. So he probably would be one of the most memorable teachers I had.

NC: And what was your political thinking at that time?

VP: Well, I don't know as I really was thinking very political at that juncture. I was political, but not party political. I mean, I ran for president of the student government and, you know, various organizations, but not thinking in terms of the political end of the scope, you know. Because, at that time you didn't have anything like Young Dems and Young Republicans like you do now in the colleges. So, there just never was much political identity on the campus. So, but as far as, but politically I was active, but not in government.

NC: Now, do you, would you say that that might have something to do with the fact that Maine was a one party state, or do you think it might have something generational to do?

VP: Well, I think that could have, the business of the party being a one party state would be a factor. But I think also that at that juncture, back in '45, the end of the war was going on and people were more concerned with that really than the political structure. You know, that affected families all over, you know. And it just wasn't a big thing on campus. I mean, people just didn't talk politically to any great extent that I recall, anyway.

NC: Now, can you tell me about the first time the two of you met?

VP: Well, again Gwil Roberts comes into play. The Outing Club had an outing, and Gwil was

leading it. And we were climbing Tumbledown Mountain, and I really didn't have a date. I had my lunch and my roommate was with me, and we started out with a couple of other guys and pretty soon this Al Pease comes along. And when I came back down the mountain I was with Al Pease and have been for fifty-one years.

NC: So, you got married in what year?

AP: Nineteen fifty.

VP: Yeah, we just celebrated our fiftieth wedding anniversary last year.

NC: Congratulations.

VP: And it was a big time, big do.

NC: Now, I want to ask Allen, you said that Paul Fullam and Don Nicoll, that you were introduced first to Don Nicoll through that professor. What were your initial impressions of Don then?

AP: Don was not in the service. He was either, actually, I suppose he was somewhat younger than I was, I'm not sure just why he was not in the service. But he went directly to Colby from high school. He was a very controlled, intelligent guy, very. He was serious and -

VP: But a dry wit.

AP: And he was active in a number of organizations and always could be relied on as a competent person. So I knew him, I don't know that I ever had a class, I don't know that he and I were ever in the same classes because he was a class ahead. I know that at least in one of my courses with Fullam, he was a grader in, for Fullam, he was grading for Fullam. But if you want to jump ahead a little bit, Nicoll I'm sure was instrumental in getting Paul Fullam to run for senate.

In 1954, the person that became congressman, that was then a circuit court judge, from Bates College, Frank Coffin. And Frank Coffin and Muskie agreed to run, one for, agreed to run, and they needed a candidate to run for the senate, and Fullam eventually agreed to run. Don Nicoll, so Frank Coffin became chairman of the Democratic party, and Don Nicoll was hired as his administrative, as his executive director. And Nicoll had been with, I think he'd been kind of a radio newsman I think with WLAM perhaps, in Lewiston. So he had some kind of public relations background, plus his interest in it. So, in a sense, Muskie, Coffin and Nicoll, playing different roles, they really triggered the, kind of the modernization of the party, of the Democratic Party.

And, later on John Donovan, who was at that time professor of government in Bates College, he became chairman of the Democratic Party. And jumping again down the road, four years later when Muskie was elected to the Senate, Donovan went down as his first administrative assistant. So you, that's where, so you did have this pretty strong Bates College convention with that,

revitalizing the Democratic party, which is a little interesting. Because later on, probably, there were several of the Bates College government faculty that were identified with the Republican party, you know. Doug Hodgkins and Garold Thumm, either one would be probably, I imagine Doug is retired now, certainly Thumm would be.

NC: No, Hodgkins is still a teacher.

AP: But he was a, he's a fierce, he's quite an auth-, he's a great authority on Maine politics, and he -

NC: He was just quoted in the *Sun-Journal* talking about the Lewiston, some of Lewiston Democrats.

AP: Yeah. No, he's very well, is very much informed and has been for years on Maine politics, election statistics and so on.

VP: Tell Rick about, you left that out, about your experience with Fullam there when, when he said if he were elected.

AP: Well, I don't know.

VP: Well, I think it's kind of interesting.

AP: I had, this is jumping ahead quite a bit, because I had come out of graduate school at Ohio State in Columbus, Ohio and I had an opportunity to come back to Farmington. And I really replaced Gwilym Roberts, Vi had talked about him, I replaced him. Roberts had a Fulbright to Wales, see. So we not only replaced him, but Vi and I lived in his apartment while he was gone.

So, I say, I was back in contact with Paul Fullam and he had encouraged me to go to graduate school and so on. And then he told me, it was during the campaign, that he was going to take a sabbatical after the campaign and all the excitement, and then, he was going to Ireland. And he said that he would recommend me to replace him at Colby. And he (*unintelligible phrase*) when he got back that they could make that position permanent. And about a month or so after the election Fullam died and that was the end of that. But, he died and he was buried in, he had a High Mass, he was Catholic, he had, you know, a High Mass in Waterville and, which Muskie attended and of course probably, you know, hundreds of people.

NC: He was quite an influential man.

AP: Yeah. It was also in '54 was, that was the first time in Maine politics that TV was used.

NC: Let me flip this tape over real quick, so-

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

NC: Okay, we're continuing the interview. Now, Allen, you were talking about TV and its impact on Maine politics.

AP: That was the, see, Muskie had gone in for the legislature as a Democrat and he had done well, but the, there were only about twenty-five or thirty Democrats in the legislature of a hundred and fifty-one. He still was respected but, you know, the Republicans were a very heavy majority.

So he ran, when he ran his [gubernatorial] campaign they used the TV somewhat, and he was, you know, a tall, imposing figure and had a natural aura about him that, I think, created some confidence, and I think that helped him a lot in that. He did travel around the state, too, but I mean he also used the TV. And Fullam was on TV also, and he got beaten pretty badly by Margaret Chase Smith. But still, he got over forty percent of the vote, you know, which was at that time, you know, she was of course heavily favored. But, when Fullam was on the TV, he kind of talked like a professor and that didn't, you know, that might not have been too attractive to a lot of people.

But let me make a comment about this background of Protestantism and Republicanism, because that tended to be the way things were at that time in Maine. In the traditional family, say the rural family, farm family like mine and her parents being of this farm Protestant tradition, tended to look at the Democratic Party as being pretty much composed of one or two sorts. One is what was left of a Democratic Party in Maine in the Civil War that had sort of waffled on the Civil War and had, many of them, almost like they, they wanted to compromise on the Civil War. And the Republicans in Maine became very strong and the issue was the Civil War, you know, whether to go to war, and Maine contributed a great many of the, a great percentage of its people were active in the war and believed in the war for one reason or another. And both my grandfathers were in the Civil War, so you had the tendency to vote as you shot. And after that, one of my grandfathers was active in the, in the Republican Party. He'd go to the conventions, he held a postmaster's job and stuff like that, which was political patronage in those days.

So you had this one group of Democrats that were sort of associated with being sympathizers of the South during the Civil War. And the other group of Democrats were pretty much mill workers that came down from Canada, many of them French, and some of them were immigrants from Europe. Like Muskie himself, from a Polish family (*unintelligible phrase*). There's quite a Polish settlement in my hometown of Wilton as well as in Rumford. So, and frequently they were Roman Catholic rather than Protestant. So, you know, it was almost if you knew a person's religion back in the thirties and forties, you would know their politics.

And there was in the 1920s among conservative Republicans, there was quite a Ku Klux Klan in Maine. And it was, it was not directed against the blacks or the Negroes, it was against the European immigrants and the Catholics. And I suppose you'd say the Jews, although I don't know if the Jews were much of an immigration at that point.

NC: Well, can you tell me anything else about that, about the KKK in Maine or-?

AP: It was a very, it was only, it was probably like a 1919 to 1924, '26 phenomenon, and it

died out. There was one presidential, one potential presidential candidate from Maine, a guy named Owen Brewster, Senator Brewster, who was stigmatized by some saying that he had been a member of the Ku Klux Klan, of that Klan. I'm not sure he ever was, but he very likely could have been, he very likely could have associated with them. They would be, many of the people that would be considered respectable, traditional type Maine people might have been sort of anti-foreign. And that sort of, that sort of would, that would not have been impossible for many established people to have had sympathies with them.

VP: Actually, there was a very strong movement right here in this area. Because a friend of ours who lives across the river, his aunt was very much involved in the Ku Klux Klan, and when she died, well, several years ago now, when they went through her belongings they found all this Ku Klux Klan material.

AP: And the cape's the cape. And she was an educated woman, she was a school teacher, you know, she died about 1975 probably, you know, she's gone a long time.

VP: But we just were in awe when Carol and Ben found that stuff in her trunks (*unintelligible phrase*).

AP: But (*unintelligible phrase*) what I, kind of what I said there that there was in Maine among the Republican party, there was a tendency for, to support quite a lot of progressive, Republican progressive things. For example, Teddy Roosevelt was probably the hero of a lot of the people. And Teddy Roosevelt, I believe, won Maine when he ran as a Bull Moose, as an independent when he ran the Bull Moose ticket.

NC: Now, you were talking about the Franco-American communities and how they might not have been accepted by the entrenched, traditional Protestant segments of the Maine population. Was it more that they were foreign, or more that they were Catholic?

AP: No, I think it's because they were brought in, they were not traditional. They were brought in by the bankers and mill owners to work. And they took jobs that the Maine people were reluctant to go into, you know. They'd rather, Maine people would rather do something else. So they took rather menial jobs working by the hour. And, and they tended to, often lived in company housing, and often were sort of crowded together and created their own environment, had their own language that they preferred to speak, and many of them that was the only language they could speak. And they created their own church and so on. Well, it wasn't just the French or the Polish. The Irish immigrants also in a sense became an enclave, and they were treated as a minority for quite a while, you know.

VP: And the Acadians, don't forget the Acadians.

NC: Who is this?

VP: The Acadians.

AP: Well, he's talking about the, that's a different, that's a French (*unintelligible phrase*).

VP: Yeah, but they're Catholic, most of them.

NC: Now, what was the perception, this is a question for both of you, about, of the mills, outside of the mill towns. How was Lewiston or Rumford, how were they viewed by the farming communities?

AP: Well, like my mother's sister, my Aunt Lena, was a really well educated woman, she was also kind of a historian. And even though she was poor and lived on the farm, she really looked down on the mill workers in the pulp mill in Jay. Looked down on their way of life, that they were dependent on somebody else for a job and for their income. And I don't know that was entirely because, see, there was a prejudice against them as individuals as much as, that didn't really want to associate with them. Just, that they weren't her kind of people.

NC: How about you, did you get a feeling?

VP: There was, where we lived near Bangor there, there was none of this, you know. We were quite removed from any mill town.

NC: Any immigrants, immigration.

VP: Well, if there were any it wasn't a big deal, you know. Like, I mean if we'd lived closer to any of these towns we've mentioned, Biddeford or Lewiston or up north, Madawaska, Fort Kent and all those things, it would be a different story. But, I never heard any discussion in my family about immigrants to speak of.

NC: Right. Now I want to move ahead a little bit. Vi, when did, when did you first get involved in politics?

VP: Well, when I first got involved actively in politics was actually, well, I was kind of indirectly involved with politics when Al was teaching at the college in Presque Isle, just by association because he'd been asked to work on some campaigns. And so that sort of peaked my interest also. I thought, "Oh, now I'll really find out what politics is all about." And then, when we moved down here to Buxton when Al taught at the college in Gorham and the university, we lived in Buxton. And the chairman of the Democratic Party, I may have been selected as vice chair then, but he asked me to run for the legislature, so I got heavily involved in a hurry. And, I didn't win, but I ran against an extremely popular gentleman who ran an IGA in Gorham and -

NC: What's an IGA?

VP: A store, well, like Shop 'n' Save but not as big as Shop 'n' Save.

NC: And he had name publicity; people knew who he was.

VP: Yes. So I was kind of a sacrificial lamb, if you must put it that way. But actually I did pretty well, because we hadn't lived here that long and of course in these little towns, you know,

you have to live here all your life or you're never accepted, you know.

NC: You're not a native.

VP: You're not a native, you're from away. But, it was a very interesting experience and I really enjoyed it.

NC: So now I want to get both of your perceptions. You were talking how '54 was really the threshold year for the Democratic Party in Maine. First, I want to get just your initial memory of Frank Coffin, and what sort of man he was on a personal level and as a politician.

AP: Well, Coffin's reputation would be that he was brilliant and perhaps more intelligent, say, than Muskie, although, you know, that's subjective. In other words, someone might say he was the brains behind what was going on in getting the party going. Coffin was a low-key man, very rather subdued. And he did get elected to Congress, and he came back and ran for governor in 19-, I think, I think 1960, and ran for governor and he was defeated. It might have been '58. No, I think it was '60, yeah, '60. And he was defeated. And he had a way of speaking, as I say, kind of low key and kind of intellectual, but he was not a good political type speaker, like a stump speaker. He wasn't a commanding speaker, like Muskie was a stronger speaker. Coffin was more like a professor, more giving information and so on but not a kind of a rousing type person. I think the -

VP: Very well respected, though.

AP: Yeah, he was so, and of course eventually became, he was appointed by President Kennedy to the court. But, when Coffin was elected to Congress, I believe this is correct, when he was elected to Congress, Nicoll went down, Don Nicoll went down as his administrative assistant I believe.

NC: Yes.

AP: Because, I know I was in Presque Isle at that time, so. And I talked with, and Don, I talked with Don and he said, he asked me at that time if I would be interested in taking over his job as a executive secretary to the Democratic party. So I know we talked about it. So Don was leaving, I guess, right about that time for Washington. And then eventually went on the staff of Muskie down there.

NC: Now what were your perceptions of the major personalities within the early Democratic Party?

VP: Well, one thing I liked, while we're on this Muskie bit a little bit, I think that you can't ever dismiss the role that Jane Muskie played in the campaign. She was extremely well received and liked, I think, by both men and women. You know, along the line for years, I worked with her closely when I was chairman, and prior to that also. But she was, she should never be dismissed at all, because she played, I think, a very essential role to his being elected and was extremely well liked.

AP: She was kind of a local beauty queen, she was very, very attractive.

VP: But she was also real and people recognized that, you know. She was just, she could go into any type of group and they felt comfortable with her.

AP: And she would remember, she would remember your names more likely than Muskie would.

NC: Really?

VP: Yeah.

AP: Yeah, she would engage in small talk easier than Muskie. But Muskie -

VP: As a matter of fact, I had an unusual experience. And you may want to cut this, but when I was vice chair of the Democratic Party here in Maine, we had set up in Sanford, because I was still, even though we were living in Augusta at that time because Al was on Governor Curtis' staff, we still maintained our residence down here, and our home was here. And we had set up this big program over in Sanford, and of course Severin Beliveau was chairman at that time and he'd sent me down to represent the party in Sanford. And I went in, of course I had, you know, a fairly prominent role. And Muskie had no idea who I was. And I wasn't too happy about it, I'll tell you. So I went up to him and I said, "Senator Muskie," I said, "do you know who I am?" I said, "I'm Vi Pease and I'm vice chairman of the Democratic Party." He never forgot my name after that.

NC: Wow. So how did you first become involved with the state Democratic committee?

VP: Well, I'd been a member of the York County Democratic Committee for several years, and at a certain juncture they asked me to run for the Democratic state committee, so I did and won.

NC: It seemed like the natural step to take?

VP: Yeah, easily, and with a lot of good help, and that's where my involvement at the state level really began.

NC: What sort of responsibilities did you have?

VP: As far as being on the Democratic state committee?

NC: Yup.

VP: Well, you really run the state organization.

NC: And what year again was this that you first entered at the state level?

VP: Well, I think it was, let's see.

AP: You ran in '68, I think.

VP: I think it was '68, but I'm checking to make sure. Yeah, '68 I think is correct.

NC: So, we talked about what the party was like with the early leaders in the mid- fifties. But now thinking ahead to the sixties, mid to late sixties, what did the party, the Democratic Party in Maine look like then? That's a question for both of you.

VP: Well, when I was involved in the Democratic state committee, we were very, we were activists. I mean, really, we had this state organized like you'd never believe. I mean, we had, in '66 I believe, or was it '68? Sixty-six I think, we had someone running for every seat for the state legislature for the first time ever in the history of the state of Maine. And the reason we, and actually we traveled all over the state, in every nook and cranny you could ever imagine. And it was kind of a difficult year because the candidates sort of wanted to spread themselves out as individuals. They didn't want to be lumped together, you know, and let us run the campaign. And we finally, after a few battles, we finally convinced them that if they'd give us the money we'd run the thing, the camp- and it did. I'm sure Governor Curtis would never have become elected if we had not done that. We were so well organized.

AP: Well, you're talking about the second election.

VP: Yes, the second election.

AP: The 1970 election.

VP: But, so the, I don't feel the state committee is as strong now as it was back then. But certainly when we were running it, we were serious about it, and we had communication with everyone all over the state. I mean, we had a tremendous network going that was just unbelievable. That was before I was chairman, actually, of the party.

NC: So you came into the organization when they were pretty well in place already.

VP: Well, yeah, to some degree, yeah. Because I, then I, later as vice chair, you know, so I knew what the game was and how to play it.

NC: Now you mentioned some of the battles you had to have with individual politicians, and you also mentioned Ken Curtis. Was he one of the politicians that had to be convinced to -?

VP: He was least difficult. Muskie was the toughest.

NC: Oh, Okay. Really?

VP: Yup.

NC: Can you tell me about that?

VP: Well, he just didn't want us, he didn't have the confidence, I guess, in us, and he didn't want to release his money. And of course now they all run their campaigns individually. But it was so much better for the party to do it that way, because there was much more activity, there was much more interest, and people knew who was running, you know, because we had some money and could do some, a lot more mailings and things that they can't do now, because they don't have the money.

NC: With a chance also that if you run together, you might also work together a little more closely.

VP: That's right, yes. But -

NC: Now, in the early fifties there was the issue of trying to create a platform for the Democratic Party to run with, and I've heard that Frank Coffin had a lot to do with that. Can you tell me a little bit about what you perceived the Democratic platform to be at the beginning, and how it might have changed or stayed the same as time went on?

AP: Well -

VP: And Bud (*name*) was another person that was very instrumental in the platform committee, too.

AP: Okay, back in 1954 Muskie, there was one thing that, some of the things that Muskie sort of ran on, and they included strengthening the governor's office, reorganizing government, economic development, and doing, giving a little more money to the education. And both houses were controlled by the Republicans. He won part, he won some of his program. And that helped identify the Democrats with some economic development, with some state assistance, and with some concern for reorgan--, modernizing the state government. Although not much was done at that time, it was put out as a problem. And was doing more to help the public institutions of higher education, and also subsidizing local schools. So, Democrats had that.

In 1960 when Coffin was running for governor he made a big thing out of abolishing what was then called the executive council. Maine was, at that time Maine was, had a dual executive, we had a governor, and a lot of things that he could do had to be approved by an executive council. The executive council was always Republican at that time. And, so that was, although Coffin was defeated on that, that was one of the issues that always showed up in the Democratic party platform. And there began to be also some concern, some Democratic concern with some environmental problems that were occurring. That was a little, back in the, in that particular time, the fifties, was a little early for it to be very mature but in the sixties it became much more, much more important.

I'll tell you an interesting little story about some of the attitudes (*unintelligible phrase*), that among the faculty that I was associated with at that time. I was teaching at Farmington, and we had a dean who was a strong Republican and a, he was a Methodist deacon. And he was,

however, he was attracted to Muskie because Muskie was talking about aid to the public education and helping out, and he'd see him on TV and he thought he was quite impressive. So, and we were working on him in the offices there, so after the, three or four days after the election. He ended up voting for Muskie. And then he came back three or four days later when they wrote it up in the paper and he said, "Well," he said, "that did it." "That's the only time I've ever voted for a Democrat in my life and he turned out to be a Catholic." "So," he said, "that really, that did it," you know.

VP: But we all got such a kick out of it because he was such a staunch Republican.

AP: Yeah, what a (*unintelligible word*), he was hoodwinked once, we would never fool him again. But that was kind of like they were, that, so-. But Muskie was attractive to a lot of people who were, you know, became kind of cross-over, you know, independents or Republicans.

NC: Maine's shown an independent tendency for quite a while then.

AP: Yeah. There was always, yeah, yeah, that strong, there's always been quite a strong group that didn't care about being identified or enrolled in either party.

NC: Right. Now, I just want to throw a few names out. Jo Gaccetta? Can you tell me about her?

AP: She worked for Jim Oliver down in Washington, D.C. And Ken Curtis also worked with Jim Oliver when he was, he is in, I think he was there in '60, '62. And then, I don't know what Jo did immediately. But Ken was, became, Ken ran in 1964 for, well Oliver ran in '62 again and he was defeated. And then in '64 Ken Curtis ran for Oliver's former seat in Congress, a congressional seat. He was defeated but he became Secretary of State, because '64 becomes the threshold year, probably the next big year you want to talk about. That was when Lyndon Johnson was elected and he won overwhelmingly in Maine. And we had at that time a ballot in which you could vote either individually or you could vote straight tickets and that brought in a lot of people, in that '64 election. And it turned the state legislature into Democrats for the first time in, you know, maybe before the Civil War. Well when Curtis went up as Secretary of State, Jo, Jo Gaccetta went up as a, worked in the Secretary of State's office. And then after he was elected as governor in 1966, she worked as his scheduling person and sort of a personal secretary all the time he was governor.

NC: How was Jim Oliver perceived by -

AP: Who?

NC: Jim Oliver?

AP: As a kind of a progressive, kind of a liberal, working-class kind of values, as kind of a traditional type politician, kind of a little bit of a blowhard, you know, in speaking, but a, probably, I would probably think of him as probably more of a conventionally pol--, conventional politician. And more of a, probably more liberal than Muskie was perceived at the

time, Muskie being perceived as sounder and a little bit more cautious. And, Oliver was just there that one term and then he got defeated. But Curtis, I think, learned quite a bit of politics from Oliver, and he was more, he was less cautious than Muskie. Curtis this was kind of the next generation.

NC: Now how did you first meet Ken Curtis?

AP: In 1964, when he ran for Congress (*pause for clock chimes*). Well, in 1964 I was working for, I was teaching at University of Maine in Portland. And I had a couple of students there that were acquainted with Muskie, with Curtis, and I did a little work for him, did a little writing for him in the campaign.

NC: For Curtis.

AP: Then in 19-, then when Curtis went up to be Secretary of State, he very soon organized a group to raise money and organize for him to run for governor in '66. And he asked John Donovan, who now was head of the government department at Bowdoin College, and he asked John Donovan and me to be kind of co-chair of his research. That was, you know, about a year, fourteen months maybe before the campaign. So I was working with him on the, very heavily during the campaign while I was teaching. And I had some students that were also working with him. That was the way we got in connection. We developed what was called, we called it the Maine Action Plan in 1966. The name, actually Don Nicoll may have given it that name, but there were a number of us that worked on different parts of it, including George Mitchell. He was on Muskie's staff part of the time.

NC: Before we get back to George Mitchell I want to ask, when was the first time that you met Ken Curtis?

VP: Well, about the same time Al did, yes.

NC: What were your initial impressions of him as a -?

VP: Oh, very affable, pleasant, bright person. And he just seemed like a natural winner to me.

NC: Now, let's see.

AP: Curtis was, he might, Curtis probably would not be as impressive as a public speaker as Muskie, but in working the crowd or just fooling around he had a much more buoyant type of personality, and shaking hands with everyone, and-.

NC: Charming.

AP: Yeah, just a, he just moved very easily with people, so -

VP: Still does.

AP: Yeah.

NC: Right.

VP: We ought to mention, too -

AP: Of course Polly was, had two small children at that time but she, you know, two, really two babies through the campaign, -

VP: Yeah, but she did quite a bit.

AP: And she's a very, you know, a very attractive person.

VP: We ought to mention, since we're in the '66 area, of going to the convention in Chicago, too, Al. When Muskie was running for president. That was quite an exciting experience.

NC: Tell me about it.

VP: Well, we chartered, actually that year we chartered a plane and our whole delegation went out together. And at that time we had, the state Democratic Party, had organized an excellent group of young Dems and many of them went with us, too. And you'd recognize some of the names, like probably Barry Hobbins and, well, Debbie Wood and Berube and several others, but they went anyway. So, you know, we were some excited when, you know, he was nominated. And Al was instrumental in helping him, help George write his speech and all. But that was pretty exciting, I'll tell you.

NC: I bet.

VP: My role basically, I wasn't a delegate that year. I was a delegate later to three conventions but not that year. My basic role was to escort Polly around. And that, we had a funny experience on that. Here I'm supposed to be taking care of her, and you know Polly Curtis, you ever met her?

NC: No.

VP: Well, she's just a little thing ‘bout barely five feet tall. And we went into this hotel, they were having a luncheon for all the governors' wives, and I had, I remember I had a white sleeveless lime green dress on, a sheath. And on the front I had this button that the delegation from the Virgin Islands had given me and it said, I'm a Virgin Islander. And, it was really neat, you know. And as you went through the lobby I'll tell you, it reeked of marijuana smoke.

NC: What?

VP: Oh yeah. And some guy went to grab it off my dress, and here's little Polly Curtis, I'm supposed to be taking care of her, and she looks up at him and she says, “You leave her alone.” And he did. We've laughed about that many times.

NC: So it was a real party.

VP: But that evening was pretty exciting, you know, Al and George and all, and Ken getting his speech together, and then we hastily got together this great big party after the convention. That was very interesting.

AP: That election in '68 was all, was very heavily involved with the schism within the party on the Vietnam War. And of course that's why Lyndon Johnson decided not to run because it, you know, his popularity had gone down so bad. And, when Bobby Kennedy declared for, that he was going to run, Ken Curtis threw his support to him. Well, that was, that conflicted with Muskie's ambitions because within the that, Hubert Humphrey being vice president and planning to go for the presidency -

NC: We're talking about the '68 election.

AP: Yeah. Yeah, it was, from the outset, it was clear that Humphrey had a lot of respect for Muskie, and Muskie was pretty high on his list of, he got the nomination of vice presidency. Well, I don't know how much everyone knew about that, I don't know, well I knew about that at that time, but Curtis had gone with Bobby Kennedy and the Muskie people didn't like that.

And I don't, I remember Don Nicoll calling me, and Don had always been very helpful in the Curtis administration. He was a good friend and he helped on the government reorganization task force, he chaired that at one point. And so he called up and really kind of reamed me out for Curtis going with Kennedy. And he said, you know, he said, "Well," he said, "I'll finish up what I'm doing, but" he said, "that's the last thing I'm going to do to help out," and so on. So, fortunately, you know, unfortunately of course, Bobby Kennedy was shot. And then by the time we got to the convention Muskie did get the pick by Humphrey.

And so there was some schism in the Democratic, in our Democratic delegation, state of Maine delegation. People that felt strongly against the war, as well as people that had gone along with the administrations policy and so on. But once Muskie was picked as vice president, it all kind of united our group, so we were probably about the only happy delegation. The whole city's just kind of burning around us, and Mayor Daley and all, and we had this big party at the Holiday Inn. So we were pretty, there was pretty good, then had this chartered plane, we all flew back together. So there was a good feeling. And as I say, Muskie invited Ken Curtis to give one of his second the nomination speeches before the convention. Which is what Vi referred to that George Mitchell primarily drafted, but I worked with him. And so, you know, that little, that schism kind of eased off, but that was one way of kind of uniting the party. And of course Maine was one of the relatively few states I guess that, well I don't know if relatively few, but Maine did vote for Humphrey and that was because, primarily because, Muskie was on the ticket.

NC: I'm going to stop the tape for one second.

End of Side B, Tape One

Side A, Tape Two

NC: . . . Side A of Tape Two, of the interview with Vi and Allen Pease. I want to talk about the, Allen, your work as an administrative assistant for Ken Curtis. Were you with him for his entire term in office?

AP: Yeah, yeah.

NC: And what were your major responsibilities?

AP: Well, the administrative assistant was really the chief of staff of the people that worked in the office, really organized the office and kept it going on an everyday basis. I'll go back to where it started. Curtis won that election in '66 and the -

VP: And we had just bought this house.

NC: Oh, all right, you had just moved to Hollis, okay.

VP: Buxton.

AP: At that time, yeah I was teaching at the university and we bought the house here in August and moved into it. So I guess about a week afterwards, Curtis called and asked me to meet him in Lewiston for a coffee. And I went up, and he offered me a chance to come up as the administrative assistant. So I said, "Well, I'll talk to Vi about it," and went back and said, "Let's go." And so I put in for a leave from the University of Maine, you know, to go and, for a couple years, but I really continued on, although I did go back to teach courses once in a while.

Curtis had a good way of working with his staff, is that he worked with people that had, whatever their project was. Whether they were working with legislation or some economic development project, or working with government reorganization, something like that, he had an easy way of being able to work with individuals on the staff. So I tried to operate pretty much like you do with a faculty in the collegial way. That, you know, that you're sort of working with people that, they were, you were doing different things but you sort of, you're associates working for a common cause but you're kind of specialized in doing different things. So, which worked out pretty well. And all those people that Curtis brought in always had a high regard for him, and he wasn't afraid to have people around -

VP: And very talented young people he brought in.

AP: He had some arrangement with the dean up to Yale University, so he brought in a number of people that were top of the class at Yale. People like Peter Bradford and Kermit Lipez and Walter Corey and Michael Caine, and Jim Mitchell was also, you know. So about year or two he'd bring in these guys and they would, sometimes they'd only stay a couple years and sometimes they would stay for quite a while. But he had the, so these people came in, they were outsiders, they weren't from Maine, but yet he brought them in on the staff, you know. They usually worked on two or three high level projects and, you know, very capable guys. And

several of them have kind of, have also written books about the situation. Peter Bradford wrote a book, Kermit Lipez wrote a book called Kenneth Curtis. He kind of wrote the, he wrote a biography. I organized a book called The Curtis Years. Which was a, basically it was the record of the Curtis administration from a favorable point of view and, but also with a lot of factual stuff there that wasn't available anywhere else. And also, when I came in as administration assistant there wasn't any, there really wasn't any records except for the appoint-, people that you had to appoint, the Secretary of State kept a record of. There really wasn't any system to it. So before I was done I thought we had a pretty good system, and I put a manual together called *The Governor's Office* and all the, using, showing all the forms that we used and described all the procedures and so on. And a couple of the governor's administrations after that time used that, you know, they modified as they wanted, but it gave them a handle to start with.

When Curtis was elected, there was a few months after the election before he'd be sworn in. And so we used to go up to Maury Williams' house, and Don Nicoll and Maury Williams and myself and Ken Curtis, and sometimes one or two other people. Roy Whitcomb was sometimes with us, he was the first guy that dealt with the press. And we tried to organize a budget and a program for that first administration. And Don Nicoll was very instrumental in taking our Maine Action Plan and kind of developing a timetable for implementing, or presenting it. And also, one thing that Curtis made a commitment, that every two years that the Democratic platform was adopted, we would see to it that the platform items were introduced to the legislature, even if they were things that we couldn't afford or couldn't maybe support for one reason or another. And I don't know that that's ever happened since, that we've had, you know, that the governor has really, say, taken the platform seriously and tried to implement it, or tried to get it presented.

VP: Well, well, let me interrupt here. I was chairman one of those years and I had the great fortune of having an intern working for me for a semester for college credit. And her job was to work with the governor's office to help implement, you know, the platform. And as Al said, everything virtually was introduced that was in the platform.

NC: What was her name?

VP: Karen, now what's Karen -

AP: Hawk-, well, she was Karen, she was Hawkins, and then she was married and at that time that you knew her, she was Chuck's wife.

VP: Yeah, I was trying to think of Chuck's last name. I can't think of it. Well, anyway, her name now is Karen, what is her name, oh, I'm blocking that out.

NC: But you got a chance to see how the platform was being understood by the legislature.

VP: Right.

NC: How did you perceive the Maine Action -?

VP: I think that's the first time a Democratic committee, state committee, ever had someone

working directly with the governor's office and the legislature to, you know . . . .

AP: She was a Morton at that time, Vi.

VP: Yeah, Karen Morton at that time. She's been married three times, so. So that was, you know, that was kind of an interesting experience. We probably wouldn't have been able to do it any other, otherwise, because we just wouldn't have had the staff, you know. But since that was a given, and she was loaned to us. Very bright person, and I think she enjoyed it, too.

NC: Ideas were being coordinated.

VP: Right, and she's, I think she enjoyed the experience a lot, too, you know.

NC: Now, how would you say the Maine Action Plan related to more national platforms, or the Great Society?

AP: Well, I think it was, I think it probably did have a similar philosophy in the sense that it was, the idea of using government to try to solve a lot of the social problems, economic problems, in a way which is not being done now, really, by either party too well. But I remember one comment that Don Nicoll made when we were, you know, talking about the role of government on some of these things. "Well," he said, "power unused is power abused." In other words, if you've got a chance to do something and don't do it, why, that's an abuse of power as much as maybe trying to do too much.

Publicly, Curtis on his first term was, he was resented by the Republican legislators, they were majority in both houses and he had executive council all Republican. He was resented because they didn't think he ought to be elected anyway because he was young. And you had, he was running against an incumbent Republican governor, so there was resentment there. And they considered him kind of brash and young, untested, even though he'd been Secretary of State. Then he introduced all this program, different things. And Don, well there was a, Don Hansen, who was a political writer for the Portland papers at that time, he had an editorial on it. And he said, "Curtis program leaves Republicans agog," A-G-O-G, agog. In other words, just kind of. So not only was Curtis resented in a sense when he came in but the fact that he was proposing all these things was certainly without much sense of priority, just too much. Yeah, just too much.

So he didn't have the legislative support for it, he didn't have, but went with a lot of the, he went with a lot of ideas and so on. I think it did, I think it resonated quite well among young people at that time, and it helped attract a lot of people to the Democratic Party. Because it was, if you look in the next, by the time Curtis left the administration, I think, in 1974, we had more Democratic enrollment than Republican enrollment in Maine. As compared to, say, ten years before there would be like two to one Republicans over Democrats, and still of course large number that weren't enrolled in any party.

NC: It's a quick change.

AP: Yeah. Oh yeah, there was a big change. The sixties were the big, was the time of big

change, and-.

VP: And early seventies.

AP: Yeah, and early seventies. And in 1964, when Lyndon Johnson was elected, because we had at that time the straight ticket possibility and people weren't, they just voted for straight ticket for Johnson. We had for the first time in all that to see a Democratic house and Democratic senate. And of course once they were in they started to introduce some progressive programs also and, you know, that helped, I think. And of course they helped work for the Democratic ticket in '66 when Curtis was elected.

Curtis had a tough primary in '66. He was running against two very able, experienced people: the president of the senate who was a Democrat, Bud Reed, and he was an attractive candidate; and then Dana Childs, Democrat, speaker of the house. So that was an unusual thing, you had Democrat incumbent, Secretary of State, president of the senate and speaker of the house running in the primary. Which Curtis won quite handily, but there was a split, kind of a three-way split going into the primary. And I think probably the Childs people, you know, accepted it really better than some of the Bud Reed people did. Eventually I think they came around, too, but -

VP: Well, the Bud Reed people would be the more conservative end of the Democratic Party.

AP: Might be, it might have been. Might have been the better, maybe some of the more traditional but some of the better educated people in the party, and some businesspeople.

NC: Now Vi, you made a little noise when Bud Reed's name was mentioned. I was wondering if you could tell me about your perceptions of him.

VP: Oh well, he was a very personable guy. Except that it was, it was, we knew it was going to be a tough race, particularly a three-way race. But, we had hoped that he wouldn't run, but of course he did and I've forgotten the percentage he got now, but he did well.

NC: He had quite a bit of connections.

VP: Well, he'd, you know, been involved in the legislature so he knew a lot of people. But, busy campaign I'll tell you.

NC: What do you remember from it? What things stand out?

VP: Well, everyone just, we organized and worked hard and got out the vote. That's the key to any election, and if you aren't organized, I think I was co-chairman to get out the vote statewide that year and I'm telling you, we hustled the votes in every community.

AP: The Curtis campaign made an appeal that was kind of a, it could be viewed as kind of a desperate appeal, that came back to haunt Ken Curtis in his second, when he ran for second term. See, they had changed so that he had a four year term, and didn't have to run again until 1970.

But in 1966, you know, polls were taken and people had the impression and a lot of people thought it was a very tight election and that Reed might win. So, as I understood it, Bob Dunfey went to Rod Scribner, who was legislative, assistant legislative finance officer, and became very important p-, a very important part of the Curtis campaign, and asked if Curtis could run a program in which he pledged for no, no major new taxes. Well, Scribner and I had put together the tentative budget, but I wasn't consulted on that situation. And I guess finally Rod said, well, I guess barely, I guess barely could get by. And so they, they arranged this, someone wrote this letter which Dick Dutremble signed as treasurer, in which it says that Curtis is running and pledges, or promises, no major new taxes. This is fairly close to the election. And the, I know I was surprised at seeing it because I had been working with the program and obviously some of that stuff was talking a lot of money.

And, so, four years later, after the income tax had been installed, and the sales tax had been increased, and when Curtis ran in the primary in, he ran against opposition of a guy name Plato Truman. And it was, stop, his slogan was 'Stop Curtis Taxes'. And this thing was thrown up that he promised, that he had broken his promise that he had pledged, this, you know, no major new taxes. And that was a real, you know, that was a real weak thing, a real important thing. It may have won him some votes to the first election, but it sure created a misconception among those who looked at Curtis as coming up with some programs and putting in some more money into the institutions and the school subsidy. So it made it, made it very tight. And, but Curtis took it seriously. And the Republicans in the legislature took it seriously, too, because they knew they'd have to raise more money and they put a, they increased, in the first session they added a sales tax. And since Curtis had made this pledge, why, he vetoed it. And so, they couldn't override the veto, and so finally went back and resolved it with some sort of a compromise. But, that was a bad, that was an embarrassing move on -. And Kermit Lipez in his book on Kenneth Curtis, he explored that quite a bit, that was, he writes quite a bit about that. If you get a hold of that book you might be interested in that. So in, back in, back to the 1960 primary, see that, I mean 19-, yeah, the 1970 primary, when he, for the second term, that was a big thing, the income tax going on and the sales tax had been increased. And Curtis was of two minds about it, and he'd lost his oldest daughter that summer, so, like in I guess July, so he was demoralized by that and he didn't know whether he ought, I mean he was almost like for a month he, you know, couldn't think of -

VP: Function hardly.

AP: He couldn't really do anything. And one day that summer, it was probably in August, early August, we had a luncheon at the Blaine House, it was Governor Curtis and Senator Muskie and myself, and this is something I always kind of respected Muskie for, his response. But Ken says, “Look,” he said, “I know that I'm a liability for having, you know, put on the income tax, increased the sales tax. So, you know, the tax and spend issue is going to be that’s going to be thrown up, it's going to be a big issue.” He said, “If there is someone that can do this better,” he says, “I don't need to run.” And Muskie said, “No,” he said, “you have to run,” you know, to do it, “for party responsibility to defend the program.” And so, that was, that, so that became the, you know, I, you know, he made quite a, he gave quite a lecture about it and he said, that's responsible government. You do something for your principles, and then you have to defend it and try to sell it. So that was kind of a turning point, so Curtis ran, he picked himself up and got his campaign going, got his election campaign staff working. But that was a kind of a

good little story about Muskie.

VP: Ken Curtis actually, he's remembered very fondly. Even, he's been out how many years, you know, of office. And he was at our fiftieth reunion and the photographer, Chuck Campbell, and he just shaking his head. "Boy," he said, "couldn't we have another one like Ken Curtis, you know." You know, the so many people still talk about him, you know, with affection really. Not knowing him well, but they still just liked him.

NC: For the way he ran his, his work.

VP: And respected him. And, as Chuck said, he said, "He always had such a good sense of humor." Well Ken, you know, does have a wonderful smile, the man's all smiles. And there's many, you know, practically everywhere you go, if they know we've been associated with Curtis, why they'll say something nice. I've never had a bad word, of course probably no one would say it to us anyway, but no, he's remembered with a tremendous amount of affection. As Muskie's remembered with a tremendous amount of respect. I mean, you know, two greats, really. Of course I thought Hathaway was pretty special, too, but unfortunately he lost to Margaret Chase Smith and that was the end of him.

NC: Right. Now, I was wondering if we could talk a little bit about the '68 Maine state convention. I have some names. You were Democratic Party chair in Maine in '68, and one of them would be Louis Jalbert.

AP: Louis Jalbert was sort of self-proclaimed and identified by the press as Mr. Democrat.

VP: Sort of facetiously.

AP: And he was a kind of a master over the appropriation process and so on. He was not, he was not so highly interested in the political party platform as he was in the legislative process. He was a factor in the legislative process, and very, very kind of a able type of guy. And often he didn't agree with some of the things that we were doing, he thought it was, you know, that we were increasing taxes, or proposing taxes too much. He had been-

VP: He sort of had his own agenda.

AP: Well he had, we had elected for some strange reason a governor for a couple of years in the 1930s a guy named Louis Brann, and Jalbert was sort of his administrative assistant at that time, so he'd had some experience for quite a while. But he was elected from a very safe seat in the legislature. He wasn't as far as I know very active, especially active in the party platform. But we had a tendency at that time to try to go out and get someone quite distinguished to be party chairman. One year we got Robert Strider, who was the president of Colby College - remember what year that was, Vi? - to be chairman of the party.

VP: I'm not sure.

AP: I've forgotten where the '68, where was the '68 convention held?

NC: I don't have it in my notes.

AP: You don't have that, no. I think it was, I'm not sure whether it was, I think the '68 -

VP: It must have been in Portland.

AP: I think it was. I think the '68 convention in Portland -

VP: Or was it Augusta? I mean-

AP: I think I was on the government platform, subcommittee and platform committee, and I don't remember who was chairman. But I believe that's the year that we had quite a demonstration on the Vietnam War, and we also had Black, we had, really I think that was the first time that we really had a Civil Rights, I think there were some Black Panthers in the balcony, too.

VP: Well, I don't remember Black Panthers, but we had some Blacks that were activists.

AP: I think that was it, I think that was them. But I think, you know, the big issue was the Vietnam.

NC: How do you think that issue played out in Maine politics?

AP: Well, I think initially Maine supported the Vietnam War and went along with it. And I think the opposition was primarily from the younger people. And, a lot of the people who went into college, a lot of the kids in my class, you know, were in there because they were, they were doing it to avoid going in the service, they were taking the classes. So they had kind of a vested interest in it. And they got a lot of, so there was a lot of sympathy in the, for that point of view in the Democratic convention. And there was, so it kind of split the party some. And we had, somehow, we were able to compromise a foreign policy plan in a way, or worded in a way that we got through the convention fairly well. But -

NC: Meaning without riling up one side or the other to -?

AP: Well, we had to face it, but -

VP: Without major -

AP: But we also had to face it again in 1970 convention because the Vietnam was, you know, hadn't been resolved yet, and-

VP: Well, major displays and, you know, rebellion. But it worked out very well.

AP: In 1970, Dick Goodwin chaired the foreign affairs platform. You know Dick Goodwin, the speech writer for President, former speech writer for President Kennedy.

VP: (*Unintelligible phrase*).

AP: Doris Goodwin's husband?

NC: I'm not familiar.

AP: Well, she's a leading, kind of a leading authority on the presidency, Doris Goodwin, Doris Kearns Goodwin. She's often on the TV programs, talk shows.

VP: Historian.

NC: Okay. No, I don't know.

AP: So Dick Goodwin, I think he chaired the, of course he had a reputation of being opposed to the war, or he turned against the war. So I think that helped a lot because I think the people who felt strongly against the war felt they had someone, a spokesman for them, been recognized by the party and so on.

VP: Well, '70, the convention was in Bangor.

AP: I don't know.

VP: Well yes you do, wasn't that the presidential year?

NC: Seventy-two.

VP: Seventy-two? Was it '72?

AP: No, presidential year was -

VP: Was '72?

AP: Six-, yeah, '72.

VP: Okay, well it was in Bangor '72.

AP: Well '70 was, I think that was Portland.

VP: Yeah, I think it must have been. I meant '72, yeah.

AP: Yeah, so I think that, then Curtis, after the, well at some point, and I'm not sure just where, Curtis had, was favorably supporting the Vietnam Veterans Against the War. He had come out against the, and said they ought to get out of there, end the war.

NC: Prior to the convention?

AP: Well, that's what I'm not sure of. But he was, he had made his position known, I think, yeah, I have an idea it was '68 or '9 that he, it was fairly early that it kind of began to talk against, began to identify that he was against the war. He had been a lieutenant commander in the Navy, Curtis was graduated Maine Maritime Academy so, he initially went into a, spent some time as a military officer before he went to law school.

NC: Well, prior to Muskie's run in the '72 campaign, how do you think Muskie was perceived to feel about the Vietnam War within the Maine populace?

AP: Muskie was about a year late on the war issue, and that, that hurt him. But he, it, he was cautious on that issue, he was not a leader on that issue. And I think that was probably the way he was perceived here, that there were some others like Bill Hathaway and Ken Curtis that were more out in front on the war.

NC: Taking it more seriously.

AP: And the same way down in Washington, you know, people like the McGoverns and those people were ahead of him, the Bobby Kennedys and so on.

NC: Do you think that Muskie was viewed, not so much in Maine but nationally, as someone who took the party line more so than others?

AP: Muskie, Muskie was considered probably as a conscientious, hard working, honest politician who was not, he was not, probably not perceived as, was considered probably left of center slightly, but not, but not really a, you know, fighting liberal. He didn't have that background, like Humphrey had when he's before he became vice president. Humphrey, you know, was a -. So he was considered a progressive but sort of -

VP: But people, I don't think, perceived him as a flaming liberal by any means -

AP: No, not at all, not at all, - no, no-

VP: They trusted him and thought he'd be great, you know.

AP: He was considered to be, you know, they thought he was a thoughtful person and when he ran with Humphrey there were people who said that they got the wrong guy running for -

VP: Right.

AP: And Muskie made quite a bit out of, at several of the colleges that he spoke during that campaign, when he'd start to get some heckling about the war, to invite, he'd say, well invite one of your spokesmen to come up here and he can talk, I'll debate with him. Because Muskie was a formidable debater; he didn't have any worry about being able to talk with anybody, particularly, you know, a college guy. So, that didn't, and he did that a number of times and got good response from it because he was giving the other side a chance to speak. And that was, but he

was still at that time, he was identified as, he wasn't willing to strike out and try to get out of the war, you know, he was just saying how, you know, that it was too complicated a decision as far as he was concerned to say, let's just cut out or let's just quit, you know. Our foreign policy, and both parties really pretty much bought into the domino theory at that time, so there was a view if you went out and you said, well, let's pull out, well that would mean, you mean they're going to take the Philippines or Australia or something else, you know. So the domino theory was very strongly predominant at that time.

There was another theory that had, that wasn't as popularly held but eventually perhaps prevailed, and that really was that if you contain, they'll explode from within, you know. That was more of George Kinnon and after, I think Walter Lipman used to talk about that in his article, was that if you, that they would eventually kind of run out of steam and Communists would change.

NC: Because our ideologies would have to be put to practice.

AP: Yeah. And that may be what happened in a way, in a sense that's what, that was a policy (*unintelligible word*) that we followed in Korea, dividing it, drawing the line. And, so that was part of the complicated history, too.

NC: Now, I'm thinking we'll take a break for today. I'll turn this off.

End of Interview
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