INTERVIEW WITH

GERMAINE MARTEL HEBERT

Age 78

History of her family and Lewiston's political and social life as well as her twenty-one-year work experience as the City Clerk's and Mayor's secretary.

Interview conducted by Sharon Halperin

1978
The interview with Mrs. Hebert was recorded over a tape of Connie Cote's WCOU radio program. We hear a little of Connie Cote's voice before we hear the voice of the interviewer, Sharon Halperin.

In some instances, Ms. Halperin makes short comments that aren't loud enough for me to hear.

Halperin: Governor Brann, he was from Lewiston, right?

Hebert: I think formerly he was from Gardiner, or Augusta, but he lived here most of his life.

Halperin: Then, he was governor how long?

Hebert: He had two terms. And he was mayor for two terms. And this is strange to say, but, about two years before he was elected governor, he couldn't be elected alderman in Ward 2.

Halperin: Why not?

Hebert: Because that was a Republican ward. So he lived among the elite American people as he called them. Then, we don't now. And he was a fine gentleman from the old school—and very nice-looking, and very well groomed, and a perfect gentleman at all times. He never drank at all, you know, until he became governor. Then he had problems. But even then, he was still a nice person.

Halperin: He was a good dresser, wasn't he? Someone was telling me that he was an elegant dresser.

Hebert: Oh yes! And so was the family. .... Because they had the best of everything.

Halperin: Did Louis work with Brann too?

Hebert: Jalbert? I was never aware of it. But he was friendly. Louis was starting. Of course, Louis' much younger than me, you know. Louis must be twelve or fourteen—well, I'm seventy-six, so you can count that. And, he might have, yes, because you know, in those days, I didn't bother much. Louis was just a young, why, I was a young lady when Louis was born, I mean, I was a teenager, and I never knew Louis very much until he started to make big noises. I knew the family very well. Germaine was my age, and there was several others. There was Gabrielle too that was married and lived in Waterville—to a druggist. His name escapes me now, but I know it well.

And, as far as Governor Brann was, he was beloved, and he had not a bit of jealousy. He was not at all vindictive. He would lose an election, and I would see him cross the street to shake hands with the people that had defeated him—when he ran for alderman. And my father and he were partners at one time—and we were very friendly with 'em. Well, I
Hebert went to school with the girls anyway. And, I never was aware of it until about ten years ago in “Fifty-years-ago today” in the Journal I was saw where Nat H. Hamel and Louis J. Brann had opened a garage on Lisbon Street—and that was where Levasseur was at one time—of course, you weren’t here. It really became a garage, but they were only selling automobiles. They weren’t repairing. Oh, in those days, it wasn’t everyone, you know, that had a car. I’m talking now, maybe I was fifteen years old. Maybe, 1912 or ’13.

And of course, starting from the beginning, I was still in school. My father was … city clerk, and he was there twenty-one years. He formerly was a jeweler, but after the accident, he had trouble, he chronic meningitis, and he couldn’t do any jewelry repair, and he sold it to his cousin. We’ve been jewelers for a hundred years. My brother still is Henry H. Hamel—that’s my brother, my half-brother. So that, what did I start to tell you now? I’ve lost….

Oh, yes. My father was city clerk, and I was still in school, and my step-mother had died in an automobile accident. I buried four people in one day when I was fifteen, so he watched me pretty closely. And he was quite smart that way, and he loved each child. I loved my father dearly. And we were always together, so after High School, I would go to the office, and I thought I was helping. I imagine I was more in the way than anything else.

So, I was in the City Clerk’s office when I got through school, and I became deputy City Clerk. And the mayor’s office was right across the way. Right there. There was a staircase, and it was not on the second story then. And so, I used to do the Mayor’s work, and my father’s too. The Mayor didn’t have any appropriation at the time for a secretary. So I started in my father’s office, the telephone was on the same line. It used to ring twice for the mayor, and once for the city clerk, and I would answer and do the correspondence, and was part-time anyway.

And most of the meetings were at night, so I did the work. And that’s how I started, and then, one day, I can’t remember if it was Louis Brann or if it was after him, Dr. Wiseman, they came in the office. I wasn’t there. And they said to Papa, “What do you think if Germaine should cross over and become my secretary?” He said, “You know, the work is piling up a little bit, and she could still help you,” and he said, “You know, I don’t have an appropriation. It would have to come under the city clerk’s office.

My father says, “I don’t care, as long as you give me another girl.” So, do you remember Dr. Master’s wife, Hermance L’Heureux?

Halperin: Yes.

Hebert: Well, she was taking shorthand from me. She was bit slow on the shorthand, and she asked me if I wouldn’t help her. And when the position of Deputy Clerk was open, she went in, and that’s how she was in there for years. She married Scott Masters, who was a roommate in college of Fred Hebert, my husband.

Halperin: Really?
Hebert: Oh, the whole bunch of ‘em were together. Sam Sansoucy, oh, so many of ‘em that were there together—in Boston, at BU. And, I first went in there, and I stayed. And I stayed until Henry Paradis came in. And that must have been in 1935—around there.

Halperin: ’33, yuh.

Hebert: I can’t remember exactly. I could if I looked it up. I have all that. And somewheres around there, he wanted a man. So he did. It was a boy I went to school with. I can’t recall now, his name. Before that, Charles Lemaire had a secretary. You remember Charles P. Lemaire. He was postmaster. He was a nice person. I think he was mayor in 1928. He was the first really French young man, and he had Emilio Ouellette—not Emilio—Emile Ouellette—who is a brother to the priest. You know, there’s a priest Ouellette. And he was secretary, and they had an appropriation there, and then after him, I guess came Louis Brann. And then came Dr. Wiseman, and before that, George Newell was there. I used to help a little bit with him when I was in the office. But not much. I was very young then. But I could type and take shorthand, and you remember Cécile Tanguay of Green, of course, she was Louis Brann’s secretary.

Oh, Charles Lemaire and Louis Brann sold insurance on Lisbon Street somewhere—between Ash and Park. They had just one room. And they had a big, big wardrobe, and when they had anything private, they’d go to that darn old wardrobe, you know, and talk business, and when Cécile was away—on vacation or she was sick, I used to go down to the office. I was in the Mayor’s office, but I’d go down there for a couple of hours, and take care of the correspondence. So I really worked for him quite a lot—and I knew him better than most people, because he used to give me everything confidential. I remember, he always had a chain and a jackknife in his pocket. He always wore a vest. And he would play with it, and he always called, GARMAINE, and he used to go. Of course, the big office was there, and my office was here, they had to see me before they came in, and some mornings, he’d come in after court, he went to court downstairs—he had plenty of cases. Besides, he was very talented—which I guess most people didn’t care. He’d look out and he’d play with his jackknife, and he’d say, “GARMAINE, come here.”

Once, I went, and there was the wife and the two daughters, and he said, “I make a barrel of money, er, a bushel of money, and they spend it by the barrel.”

And you know, I felt kind of sorry for him, because he did make a lot of money, and he didn’t seem to get much out of it. But he was a nice person. Very nice.

I remember I used to teach arts and crafts in the schools, you know, and also at the High School in Lewiston and.... Academy—rug making, and hooking, and draping, and interior decorating, and I had. There was a submission at the Copley Plaza in Boston, and I had an Alice in Wonderland which was spoiled on the third story because it rained so much. And I was supposed to show it there, and I did,...... and we stayed at the Copley because the show was there, and the boss, he was then a partner of Governor, what was his name? In Boston?
Halperin: Curley?

Hebert: No. Long after that. It'll come to me. So he was a partner of the Governor of Massachusetts, and he lived at the Copley. And so, we had the show, and he met.... And he said, "GARMAINE, if there's anything you want," Oh, he was always very gracious. So, I says, "Oh, no. There's absolutely nothing. Thank you. So he says, "I'm going to the races. Would you like to come?"

I says, "Well, I can't. Because I have the show." So, Ethel Barrymore was in the Corners Green. Do you remember the story about the er—they were in the coal mines and I loved her, so I says, "Let's go." Well, we couldn't get tickets. I called the boss.

Halperin: What time was this?

Hebert: It was about six o'clock. I called, and his secretary answered. I guess he wasn't available and he wanted to know, and he says, "I'll get you a couple." They did. And do you know, the next day, we came home on the "Flying Yankee," and he was on the train. He was coming home. He lived in Cape Elizabeth, I guess, and first thing we know, before we get to Portland, the train stops, and everybody wondered why, and there was the boss on the track, going home. Laughs.

Halperin: Laughs.

Hebert: They stopped to let him off. He was somebody.

Halperin: Yuh. They stopped to let him off. Yuh.

Hebert: And of course they didn't dance. He... anything, but he didn't dance, er she didn't dance, and they didn't play cards—she was a Christian Scientist—and when he was governor, they used to have the Governor's Ball, as you know, and or course, everybody wanted to go to that, and they had what they called the Governor's Reception, and this is how George Davis ever got acquainted with Rudy Vallee.

Do you remember how friendly they were? My father was on the committee to meet Rudy Vallee in Portland. He arrived by plane. He was one of the entertainers. And, Papa went there to pick him up with George Davis in a Cadillac. Of course, he had a Cadillac. And my father—my father, they had one too. But George Davis Cadillac. And that's how he got acquainted with him, and he bought a car from him right then and there. He liked, they liked each other. And, that's how he got acquainted with George Davis.

Then there was an Indian princess from the reservation, and Old Sammy Green was there with some singer, five or six of them. And Alexandre Lemieux was there. It was all State of Maine people. And, it was very nice evening, we had it in the House of Representatives, and then we went to the Blaine Mansion. Not everybody, but those that have dates....and we had a very, of course, it was not unusual for me, because we went a
lot, because my father was in the legislature you know, for years, and he was when he passed away, so I was really grown up with the legislature, 'cause Papa was.... And, of course I had gone to school with the girls.

I remember we lived on Sabattus Street, so did they—at the corner of Central Avenue—in that apartment house—the Branns. And we used to walk to Bradley School, you know—the High School there on buses. And we came home to lunch too. And my father had a car of course, and so did Louis Brann, and they would give us a ride down. I'd either walk down to Louis Brann's, or Papa would drive down, but we walked a lot.

And there were three daughters, of course. Nancy's my age. She's the one who never married. She went out with George .......for years.

Halperin: Asks a question I can’t make out.

Hebert: Yes. And she was heartbroken. She never married. She's in Portland. A very active social life. I haven't seen her in years, but I keep reading the Portland paper, you know. And one married a professional ball player—well, semi-pro, I guess. Louis Brann used to have, what we used to have ball players, you know, a ball team. And they came from everywhere. And did I have fun. You know, nice-looking young men. Laughter. And, so she met him through that. And I can’t remember exactly who the other one married. Because, I lost track of her. I'm sure if I saw them, we'd be glad to see each other, but, you know, I became small time,......trailer, we moved there on account of Louis, because we lived on East Avenue. Papa, there was a house Papa owned—after he died, and we had a child who died in this house—it was nice—the other one there was alive(?). And so, when Louis wanted a cat, and a dog, and a pony and some hamsters and hens and chickens. And he did. We spoiled him terribly. But he didn’t spoil easy, I guess.

Halperin: Yuh. How long was Louis really in office.

Hebert: You mean as governor, or what?

Halperin: Yes. As governor.

Hebert: Two terms of two years. It was two years then. Four years. He didn’t run after that. The second year, he didn’t think, but he did. But of course, they said .......would never get elected, and they said Ed Muskie would never get elected. As far as Ed Muskie, I was right in the know there. They just see, Lucia was right there, and I was very friendly with her, and not only that, I got myself elected State Committee Woman, so I could get the post-office.... Laughs. And I was in everything. Ed Muskie was National Committee Man, and Lucia was State Committee Woman, then she became National Committee Woman.

And I was with Lucia all summer when she ran against Margaret Chase Smith. And I did everything. I even paid bills, I helped writing speeches, I made appointments, I
substituted for her when she couldn’t go, I let her borrow my hat because my hat, because she never had any—never wanted to wear any, but she had to go to tea, so she had to wear one. We had a lovely time. But we didn’t win, of course. And we never would. Then, after, we never would have won. She claims it was her age, and they claim it wasn’t her age—it was that man that she lived with. Nice man. I don’t blame her. He was really a nice person. (Laughs.)

Halperin: He is a nice man.

Hebert: He’s smart, and she needed him. But of course I knew her first husband very well—very very well.... A nice man.

Of course what I’m telling you, some of it I’ve experienced, some of it I have heard. It may be true, it may not be. But it makes sense. And I don’t know why they should lie. You know what I mean. They’re not that kind of people. First of all, they were in France. And I think in the Cognac country. I think the Martels came from there. From what they told me, and during the Revolution, whatever it was, they went to Spain—because they spoke some Spanish, and of course they’re Latin countries, and I can see the point, and they.........with each other when they went to Spain, and they stayed there quite a while.

And then, they decided to come to Mexico because they spoke Spanish there, and they had found some mines, gold mines, and they were going to make a fortune, like the people went to the Klondike in Washington State and Alaska. So they came to Mexico, and after Mexico, it was not far from Canada. Le Canada? Québec—le Québec. So they went to St. Hiacinthe and Montreal. And that’s when we more or else pick up.

The father—the doctor’s father and Martha’s husband’s father, and Mrs. Belleau and two or three others were sisters and brothers, and, c’était des fouriers—they were furriers, and the business is still there, and the man who bought it is a millionaire, and they have a lovely house on the park. I’ve seen all this because we buried Mr. & Mrs. Martel, Mrs. Martel there. So, that was the beginning of it. There was—who was the oldest? There was Napoleon, after who......J.P. was named after. He was the furrier. And he married a Couturier girl. And there were two Martels. Charles the druggist and Napoleon, married two sisters, and they were Couturiers. How come I tell you about them there? The French cemetery now was a park, and they were all educated girls. They had gone to school. Schoolteachers, and beautiful girls. But somebody put .... So, Napoleon, the furrier, the father of Louis and Nat here(?) inherited the family store. He used to buy his furs from the Indians. Did Murphy’s used to buy from them? Mr. Murphy?

Halperin: Yup, yup.

Hebert: So, his first wife died. This was a second marriage. His first wife died, she was sickly. She never had any children. And by that time, the doctor was here, and the reason the doctor was here, was the Dominican Fathers were here. They hadn’t been here very long, and there were quite an influx of Canadians coming in. They used to come on
the Grand Trunk. And, of course, F. X. Marcotte, had the furniture store, and he had buildings, and they all banded together. They bought furniture from F. X., they, when they married their daughters, they had a tension carried from a big—they used to call them tension carriage, you know—a horse and buggy. And he was undertaker. He became rich because he spoke French, and he was du Canada, and they all gathered, and their friends came and their relatives came, and the Dominican Fathers needed a French doctor, and they needed somebody to teach 'em English, make 'em Americans, make 'em be naturalized. And somebody that you could rely on.

Well, some ways or other, they had heard of the young Dr. Martel in St. Hiacinthe. So they finally influenced him to come—and he was the first one to come here. He was married to Alphonsine St. Germain, who was his own cousin. And she was very, very good. She was and organist, and there was nothing she couldn’t do. She couldn’t keep house, but she could do everything else. You know, she was one of those, the sisters had brought her up—she was an orphan. And they settled here. They had an office where the gas company used to be—you know, on Ash Street. And they lived on the corner on the corner of Bartlett and Wal... of Park and Walnut—in that brick house that’s still there. That was their home. Whether he built it or not, that I don’t know. Nobody ever told me.

So he was here quite a while, and Charles, the druggist, was his younger brother and Madame Belleau, Blanche, was his youngest, and he had another one who was older. Mrs. Graton in Montreal, and she was married to a Mr. Graton, who owned a national tobacco company, very wealthy and very uppy, uppy. All the children went to Paris to school because they were rich, and very nice, though. And there was another one who was a sister—a nun—in South America in Brazil. And I think it was La Congrégation, Les Dames de la Congrégation. And her name was Mathilda, and I think I’ve got them all now. There was my husband’s father, there was the doctor, there was Charles, there was Ma Tante Graton, as we called her, a Tante Belleau, as we called her, and the sister.

And after the doctor had been here a while, he put Charles through school. And after the doctor had been here a while, he finally decided that Charles should come. And Charles did. And they bought a house on Horton Street, near the Frye Grammar School. They always lived there, the Charles Martel. And, oh, I forgot, the doctor didn’t have to be a doctor, he had a pharmacy. He taught school(?).

New voice: Pardon me, Ma......

Hebert: And they had, he had a drugstore. And he not only treated them, but he gave them the prescriptions and the medications. And that’s why he died poor. It wasn’t because he wasn’t a good doctor. He was not. And, of course, he’s the one that owned the Messager and founded the Institut Jacques Cartier, and something else there. I can’t recall exactly. I’ve heard it so many times, but, you know, they never mean too much to me. They did, my husband did, you know, but those generations, but I would hear all this. So anyway, that’s why Dr. Wiseman started his office. So that’s why he had the drugstore. That was all Martel.
Hebert: But Charles got that, and then he came on Lisbon Street, and he had wholesale and retail, and he was still there when I married my first husband in twenty-four, and he had quite a nice family too. And the doctor is Cyprien, uncle Charles’ son, his grandson—Cyprien Louis. He’s my godson. But anyway, then there were two here, and then, oh, it was Nat—my husband’s father—who sent the doctor through school because they were also there—but he had a good business.

Of course, in those days, everybody wore fur hats and they had muffins, and they had fur, and they had fur coats, and they sold des valises—trunks. And everybody had two or three trunks because there was storage. Not only that—the girls went to the convent. The boys went to the college, and they all had trunks. They were bringing trunks. So they sold a lot of it. And they repaired furs too. So anyway, then, Nat, my husband’s father died—he had cancer. The doctor treated him, but he died. And Mrs. Martel, my husband’s mother, knew a bit about furs and hats, so she came back to Lewiston. She was a Lewiston girl. She never liked Canada too well. Because her family was here. And she came back and opened a store—a millinery store—with her sister-in-law Mrs. Maillet, at the head of Lisbon Street, and they were very exclusive. She made money. She belonged to…… When she comes to pay the bills……… They sold it. But nobody wears hats now. But they used to make ‘em, you know. And she used to wear furs a bit much.

Anyway, she came back here, and then they had Blanche, was with Mrs. Belleau. Mrs. Graton. She was established in Montreal in a lovely home, and she didn’t live out here, but now she was alone, so they had her come here, and she married Mr. Belleau. And they say that they took him to school to become a lawyer, but that I don’t know. Of course, the girls are still alive. One of them, anyway. 

Halperin: Blanche.

Hebert: Oh, Blanche told me. I knew the Belleaus—we lived next door to them, and I was always there. And I knew Ma Tante Graton before she was related, and I played with her children, because they visited in the summer. And, anyway, that was it. So the doctor, anyway, he went to Europe with one of them,……and I understand he worked on the pastor or somebody would work on the pastor. And he was one of the first to operate in Lewiston. And he was a founder of St. Mary’s Hospital, and he went to the Legislature, and he wasn’t elected mayor. He tried, but…… was too strong, you know. He wasn’t elected, but he was well-respected by the English-speaking doctors and all the la populace. And, anyway, he died from an infection in his hand—his right hand—that he got from a woman in childbirth that he was operating, and she had an infection, and of course they didn’t have any antibiotics, and he died very young. But his widow lived to a ripe old age. And they had two children. One of them is in Rhode Island somewhere, and Louise. Of course it’s all Louis and Louise. Because since Charlesmagne, there’s been a Louis and a Charles. Because Charlesmagne had two sons, and they were Louis and Charles Martel. And so, then Charlie died, they all, I tell you. But the widow lived
to be very old. And she was at the Marcotte Home at the end, but the Sisters didn’t have any money, of course, and no Social Security, and the doctor worked on Lisbon Street. 

Dans un magasin de tissu—where they used to sell material. And I mean, was Louise too. And the son was in Rhode Island, and I believe he’s a musician, and I think he’s an organist. I don’t know him, but Louise I knew very well. And I knew Ma Tante Docteur we called her—very well long before I was a teenager. She was in the hospital—everybody visited her. She could embroider, there’s nothing she couldn’t do. She made me some very lovely linen, she had some pillowcases with her initials—which were mine, L.J.M. Louis J. Martel. My husband was named Louis. And so, she was very nice. And they were very good to others—and so was everybody. But if they had paid the doctor what they owed him, I think it was $30,000 there on the books. She got probably $10,000 or $8,000 out of it. Out of the kindness of the people’s heart. And, is there anything else I can tell you about the Belleaus?

Halperin: He was very, I knew that he had died poor, and I thought maybe a lot of it Had to do with the fact that he was always in different organizations.

Hebert: Oh no. He was a good doctor. And he found time for everybody. And Ma Tante Docteur was marvelous. She played the organ. She taught them English. Saw they got naturalized and that they voted. Oh, no. The fact was, he didn’t get paid. And he gave it away. But that’s not fair, anyway. They all gave them. Louis the same way. If I didn’t keep him tied down, if I didn’t keep his business, he would never have. Because he’s always had it, you know, don’t realize, and No. He gave it away. As I said, not only the prescriptions and the doctor’s visit, the medication.

And then, of course, we were the other generation. Then there was Louis—my husband—there was Nan J.D., and there was four girls. And there’s only one living now. One, her name was Deniska. I must bring this in. Uncle Belleau was at the embassy. Was it embassy—or consulate in France for the United States, and he was the doctor of course, he was taking them down there. And I think some, two or three of the older Belleaus were born in St. Petersburg, but the others were born here. I’m not sure of that. And, the oldest sister of my first husband, Louis Martel, was named Deniska. (end of first side of tape)

(Second side of tape.)

Hebert: We always called her Deniess, but her name was D I S K A, and she was named after the wife of the Russian—either consulate or what. I’m not sure whether it was not a consulate or an embassy there at the time. Because they were very friendly. Of course, we had no problem with Russia then. And she has a daughter who is named Deniska after her, and she married a dentist in Waterville—his name was Verville, and he died during the influenza. She became a widow very young. She had two children, and she remarried, married a man by the name of Pierre, and they’re all gone. They’re all diabetic, the Martels. She died from diabetes. But the children are alive, and she had a daughter and Roger Verville—from the first marriage—and we lost Roger on the march of the Bataan. Batan, Bataan, what’s the word?

1- Russia
2- Petersburg
Halperin: In World War II, called March of the,

Martel: B A T A N in English.

Halperin: Who was it, Germany's?

Hebert: They never heard, nobody. They knew he was there. But they disco.... The young Deniess, is one married. She was, she is married. I don't know whether they're still there now, 'cause I haven't seen them in a long time, but her father-in-law was one of the big executives at the mill in Saco. You know, that cotton mill. And I think he was superintendent. She's very well married. She has nice children. And the other little pieces, here and there. You know, when you lose your husband, you know, you don't belong anymore. You're not related anymore. But I don't look at it that way. Of course, Louis' related, and when Louis' related—my Louis—he's part of me, so why can't I be related if he's related. Now you figure that out.


Hebert: So anyway that was it, and then it went on, went on, and after the doctor died, well things died down a little. But somebody else picked it up. Oh, they had Mr. Destimobile(?). I don't know if, Etienne. Stephen. C'était le père, he was the father of Irma Michaud. You know the police matron?


Hebert: He was her father. Her natural father. But she was adopted by the Michauds—not the Michauds—her marriage name was Michaud. By someone in New Auburn. I can't remember the name now, but it'll come to me. And there was her father, because he spoke French. He was French, from Europe—from Paris, and he spoke beautiful French, and he wrote beautiful French. And then the Coutures came upon the picture. Jean-Baptiste. 'Cause whom I know very very well. We, my father and mother used to go to Florida in the winter. Papa was forty years old when we went to Florida, even though he was ahead of his club,(this could be, Even then he was ahead of his time,) and the Coutures used to go. We were very friendly with the family. And we liked Jean-Baptiste. Of course, they trouble with the church. You know that.

Halperin: Yup. Yuh.

Hebert: But that didn't make any difference to us, and it didn't make too many people. But anyway, of course the girls—Céline was my age, and of course, Faust was too young. But Faust looks upon me as a mother—we were so close. And, is, the oldest girl, what's her name? Oh, I should know. Anyway, she er,

Halperin: Yvette.
Hebert: Yvette. She’s alive. Archant(?). She’s still alive.


Hebert: But she’s not well, you know.

Halperin: No, she’s not.

Hebert: Because she’s much older than me. And, we were very friendly with the Coutures. We went to Florida once or twice with them. We used to stay at St. Augustine. At forty dollars a month, we had a cottage for the winter, and he drove. There was a man, sometimes a woman, they made a garden, and the first year we went, Louis, er, Harvey, my brother was ....at our disposal. We used to drive to Boston, put the car on the Savannah Line, go to Savannah, Georgia, all sandy roads, and then go up to St. Augustine and do the same on the way back. And I remember, he was very young, because he broke his bottle on the ship, and that’s when we weaned him from the bottle.

Halperin:Laughs.

Hebert: That’s a long time ago. There’s ten years difference, Henry and I. He’s my half-brother, you know. And his mother was lovely. She was a Goyette. She was a lovely woman—beautiful woman. Beautiful—in every way. And loved her very dearly, but I didn’t have her very long. Of course, my mother died, I was only eleven months old. She was tubercular. And she came from the West. She came from Michigan.

Halperin: Really?

Hebert: She couldn’t do anything else either. She had been brought up by.....they were very rich, but they say that the executor of her estate took it all. I don’t know. We have a lot of gold chains anyway. They had gold mines up there—in the West—and when my father married her, she was sick—very sick. He loved her. He married her anyway. And they were married two years before I was born, and I was born on January 7th, 1902, and she died December 5th. She never took me in her arms. Because first of all, she was contagious terribly, and she was weak.

My French grandmother, my Canadian grandmother came up—my grandmamère—and stayed with her during her pregnancy and then took me back to Warwick, Quebec. And I was brought up there. I think I lived there all the time until I got to be fifteen. I used to come up—come down—yuh. I have to stop and think. *On monte aux États Unis*, they always said, you know, so I always thought, *On monte aux États Unis*. But we go down, and er, summers, to visit after my father remarried. But they all told me that stepmothers made you shake rugs, and made you wash clothes, and they scared me to death. But I finally found out they didn’t do that. And I used to come on the Grand Trunk. You’d die, the things I’ve done. I was only eight or nine years old. Didn’t speak a word of English until I was fifteen. And, well, I was in the baby grade at fourteen. And I knew Algebra, and I knew all the history of the United States, and *Grande Bretagne, L’Histoire*
Hebert

Sainte, L'Histoire du Canada, L'Histoire des États Unis, you know, I had to listen to....(sounds emotional.)

Halperin: Yuh.

Hebert: So I had to come and visit my father. He had the jewelry store. 240 Lisbon Street. That's another story. My father, my mother left him two thousand dollars in insurance, she had money, what she had inherited. And that was a sum of money in 1902.

Halperin: I guess.

Hebert: Do you remember Dr. Chevalier? Or was that after you? Well, Monsieur and Madame Chevalier weren't married then. And, when my mother died, he got two thousand dollars. He was working for a Sabourin, where a haberdash...—men's clothing store. I changed the word.

Halperin: Yup.

Hebert: And er, he worked for his cousin. That's how he came—oh, he was born in the United States. He was born..... And he came here and worked for his cousin. He went to High School too. Believe it or not, my father—he was the only one in the family. And, so he came here and worked for him, but he wasn't going to work for somebody for the rest of his life with two thousand dollars, and a few other thousand in his pocket. So Joe Chevalier was going to marry Claudia Roy. Claudia Roy was one of those girls that went to Villa Maria in Montreal and the father ... St. Mary's Hospital. He was a con...He was very rich. And Joe was a good guy, but as we said, he didn't have much. So he decided he was going to learn a trade. So he and Papa went to St. Louis Missouri, and my father learned to sell glasses and test eyes, and became a jeweler. They were there nine months. And Joe Chevalier became a barber. This is all history, you know. He became a barber, and they came and Joe married Claudia Roy. I always called them Papa and Maman Chevalier, and I'll tell you why later. Claudia Roy—big buxom woman, but the most beautiful woman in the world, and an influence in my life. Because she only taught me—oh the sisters tried to make a lady out of me, but they didn't. But Maman Chevalier succeeded a little more. And when I make a mistake, and I said pardon me, in my French, you know, so I knew better. So Joe Chevalier bought that building at 240 Lisbon Street, right next to Atherton's almost. There was two places there. Joe opened his barber shop, and Papa opened his jewelry store. And they were like this all the time.

And then, when my mother died—my stepmother—I lived with Maman Chevalier for almost a year. And I always called them Papa and Maman Chevalier, and Paul was just a young boy. I used to teach him his catechism—the doctor who passed away. And I used to come and visit anytime I felt, and of course my, you didn't telephone the way you do now. 'Cause we had the phone but Grandmamma didn't and I decided to come. And I had to come to my father and mother, and my grandmother wanted to keep my so badly, you
know. I broke her heart—because I was her little girl, you know. And Papa was very generous with money too. And he helped a bit. So, she would let me go and write my father. But the mail was slow, and sometimes it didn’t get here, and there I was. I would leave Warwick—eight, nine years old—all dolled up to.....I had the best of my, they sent me all my clothes from Canada. They used to come over, try to influence me to come home, with great big dolls, jewelry. I used to ....ten cents for a piece of jewelry. And so, I would take the train in Warwick, I had to stop two hours in Richmond, take the train in Richmond, come to Lewiston Junction, take the train and come to Lewiston, then take a ten-cent carriage. It was Mr. Gagné that was riding it—Émilienne Gagné’s father. And so, I would get on the color car if you please. Sometimes I was the only one with a Negro. And they had reed chairs upholstered with nice red velvet. And I had the grandest time. I would get there, take the ten-cent carriage, and they were open at night the jewelers—most every night. I’d land at my father’s. He almost had a litter of kittens.

Halperin: Laughs.

Hebert: No wonder je suis débrouillarde—I had to be.

Halperin: You had to be.

Hebert: And I had the grandest time, travelling all around like that. Then, finally, I decided to stay. And then, first, Papa had the accident—four people got killed—and he never was the same. I mean, he had chronic meningitis. So I was his right arm. And he sold the store to his cousin, and of course, Papa Chevalier stopped barbering too. He sold cars—Nash cars. He sold his barber shop. And that’s how I became so friendly with the Chevaliers.

And then, I brought up my brother. When Mama died, we had a nice house. Pine Street was residential—a lovely house with nice.... Still there. And, we had help, but we didn’t keep ‘em. Not because we were difficult, but you know, they always had something. “My daughter’s having a baby,” or, “I don’t feel well enough,” or, “It’s too hard for me to do,” and so Henry went to Canada with my father’s people. And I lived with the Maillets, and that was Dr. Beliveau’s wife. And J. B.’s wife. And I lived there until we got married, because Mignonette and J. B.’s wife were like a sister to me ‘cause I lived there for years. And she married a Martel. J. B.—so we were sisters-in-law. And Jeanne wasn’t related, but we looked upon each other all the time as sisters.

Halperin: Are all the Martels in Lewiston related? Are they all from the same branch?

Hebert: No. They’re not all related. No. Far from it. Papa Martel—you’ve read Papa Martel. Have you read the book, Papa Martel? Well read it. It’s easy to read and it’s about Lewiston— the Canadians in Lewiston. You should read it. I don’t have it ‘cause I lent somebody. I took it with me. Everybody’s read it up there. It’s not our family. But I had relatives like that. I did. The Hamels. And it’s not our family but. No. They’re not all related. The only relatives there, I would say, was Robert, who just died. He was Charles’—the brother’s grandson. His father was Cyprien, and you see the influence of
the Spanish. Cyprien, Cyprienne--and one of the girls was called Cyprienne--and there was Robert, and there was Cyprien Louis, and who else was there? Oh, Charles. Charles, whose mother is with the Daughters of Isabella—they live in Leeds now. She has a son who is a priest. He calls himself C. J. Martel, and he’s a priest in Mexico. As a matter of fact, I went to Mass there with my girlfriend Debbie last weekend. We saw him there. He had been ill, and he just got back to Mexico, and he said Mass, and we talked together. And that’s about it. Of course, Robert’s children. Robert married a woman that worked at the Sun office and she is an aunt to Dr. Beaker’s wife and he has children—whom I don’t know ‘em—because now it’s getting to be er,

Halperin: Three generations.

Hebert: Yes. And besides, I’ve been away.

Halperin: What kind of person was Robert Wiseman—Dr. Wiseman?

Hebert: Dr. Wiseman was a very loveable person. He was much ahead of his time too, and he—well, I don’t know how to describe it. He never was where he was supposed to be. That’s it. And he was a good doctor. And you know what he used to do? He used to make his patients get up after two or three days. He was a surgeon—operations. And the Sisters used to pull their hair out. But wasn’t he right? And I don’t think he died rich, first of all, he had a big family, and he was another one that didn’t collect. That didn’t get paid. And he had the drugstore too. I was with him seven years. And I knew more about the Wisemans than anybody. I used to call George, Uncle George. Ann—my father, my father courted her then, and he also courted Sylvia Robie Roy. You don’t remember that. And also Summer, er, the florist—Summer Saunders. Those were all his age. He never remarried, but he escorted them, and we had fun together. And George Wiseman died the same day my father died. They were buried the same day. And Ann always sent me flowers, and Miss Saunders, and Ann was always very friendly. And I used to call him Uncle George. They were, they had the ice cream. John I didn’t know very well—but Ann, very very well. And Uncle George. And of course, the city bought everything from Uncle George when they could. He used to have a shoe store. There was a poor farm then, and it was young Cyrille Labranche’s grandfather who was at the poor farm. And my father was instrumental in all of this, because he had been alderman, president of the council, and he was everything. Very very French. Never made it. Never said boo. We thought he was an Englishman—not an accident—always dressed in plaid suits. He and Louis Brann, they made a good pair.

Coming back to the doctor. It was Dr. Martel who was instrumental in sending him to college. I don’t know. I don’t think he helped him financially, but he was instrumental. He went to Bowdoin College, and I understand he used to take care of the furnaces there. I think he told me that himself, the doctor. And then of course young Robert became health officer under his father, and the doctor used to make his visits at twelve o’clock at night. He spent all day talking like I am now, telling stories. He was very funny. And of course whether he was funny or not, we all laughed. You know, there was an unwritten
rule. And he came to the office late at night—I hardly ever saw him. The day before the inauguration, I used to spend all day, all night writing, taking notes, writing his inauguration speech. And everything went through his office. As I told you last night, he wore those narrow, Nathan White neckties, and there came a time when they have anymore. He bought that by the yard. And I used to go to Boston a lot, because my husband was going to school there, and I used to go a lot—drive—weekends, and so forth. And I used to buy—we could find it in Boston. And I was very friendly with Priscilla, of course. She was more a little young girl. And he was a good mayor. And they loved him. They named the bridge after him and,...but he wasn't there very much. Many times, I could only reach him to take notes, you know, for letters. And he always carried his correspondence in his pocket. His coat pocket. To me, he was always barging in with letters we should have answered.

Halperin: Yuh. Yuh. We should've answered, yuh.

Hebert: And I almost ran the city during the day. And of course, he wasn't there much, and I used to say, "Well, he just left. He just left." And I'd say, "Well, I'll take care of it. And I did, and we got along very well. And, of course they used to meet him at the hospital, and they never could find him. And he had a little Ford—a two-seater—and they never could find him, and ....

And Mrs. Wiseman, long after I wasn't working there, she said, "I don't know what she did, but she'd always find him. But do you know what I did? I would call the police station downstairs, and I would say, "I need the doctor. He's needed at the hospital. Right off. So they'd ring all the bells, and all the policemen would watch, and the minute that darn little car came along, they stopped him.

Halperin: Laughs. That was a good way to do it.

Hebert: And that was so easy to do. And I never told her. Probably she knows. Of course, she's gone. Probably they knew. We were very friendly, Priscilla and I. When I was coming from Canada, you know, to visit in the summer—during summer vacation, I spent all my vacation here—they had, they called the Automobile Club—and they had, all the French people who had cars, we used to go out, fifteen miles, and when we went for a shore dinner, you know, we had done something. And that was with Dr. Wiseman, and that was us, and there was the Chevaliers, and there was Dr. Marcotte, and there was oh, the people that owned where the church is—now Holy Cross—that farm. They were, and there were Mr. & Mrs. Hubert Dionne—they had a store similar to Berry Paper on Lisbon Street, and there was Mr. & Mrs. Larocque—he was a photographer. You remember that. Henry Larocque. And there were the Hines girls, and there was one who married Dr. Brown, and they were very fashionable—she had a hat shop and everything was..... And there was another girl who wasn't married. She went with the dentist. It was a French dentist, and I was afraid of him. I never wanted to go to him.

I went to Lefond. Then Dr. Lefond came in. Dr. Lefond came from Canada too, and it was Dr. Martel who brought him up, and he was just a young starting doctor, naturally
when he was starting, so Charles Martel had a two-family house and Mrs. Napoleon, my mother-in-law lived upstairs, Charles’ family lived downstairs—and they had a little apartment on the third floor—a more-or-less apartment—and Dr. Lefond stayed there for years because he was just new and then he married. His wife was the daughter of a judge. And she was very nice. We were very friendly. And they came too. And another one that came was Annette Couillard, they belonged, and I couldn’t, oh and George Cloutier, and Anna Cloutier and Dr. Roy, Georgette—that was Georgette Cloutier who married Teets Lebel. ‘Cause we were neighbors the Lebels and us. Teets and I were always very friendly. As a matter of fact, we went out together quite a while. I liked Teets alright. And there was ... the Maillets(?). And we used to go out and have a real good time.

Halperin: I bet you did. Oh, that’s good Germaine.

(End of Interview.)