

**Interview with Pauline Perry  
by Tina Nobel  
April 1999  
Transcribed by Betty Lebrun and James Myall**

Tina Nobel: Well, what is your name?

Pauline Perry: Pauline Perry.

TN: Where do you live?

PP: 82 Acadia Ave, Lewiston, Maine.

TN: Do you like it here in this fine city?

PP: Yes, I do, very much.

TN: Okay.

[Break in tape]

TN: Okay. We have been here, a good hour anyways, with the microphone shut off but we are going to try this again and we are going to talk about politics and the [President Bill] Clinton. Pauline likes to debate.

PP: Yes, Pauline does.

TN: Tell me about how you feel about Clinton.

PP: I am very disappointed in him, very sick and tired of him, wish he'd be out of there, should have been impeached. First of all, should have never been elected. We elected a man who refused to go fight for his country, who experimented with drugs, and we're proud of that? We were so proud we elected him twice? What is the matter with us?

TN: Who did you vote for?

PP: First time I voted for [President George H. W.] Bush 'cause I really, really, liked the man, and his politics, his issues, his morality, which we're out of now. The second time I voted for [Senator Bob] Dole, I still thought he was a better man than Clinton.

TN: Wow.

PP: Oh, yes, he had experience. He was not my favorite choice but he was certainly better than what was there, yah, yah. I'm just amazed at the United States citizens that we have this great privilege of voting and we choose people that don't make any sense.

TN: I think too a lot of people don't realize what a privilege it is to vote.

PP: That is true, it has always been there so it's taken for granted, should not be, it's very important. I go vote every time.

TN: Common sense, isn't it?

PP: Common sense.

TN: Tell me about your common sense.

PP: I think if you use your common sense, it's the best thing that you could ever do for yourself. You don't need a lot of education, you don't need a lot of experience, you just stop and look at both sides of an issue and go with what you feel is right, then how can you go wrong?

TN: Right, no questioning that.

PP: If you do go wrong, you learn from it.

TN: That's right.

PP: I think that is the best approach. My children would tell you if they were here, I've always preached to them, "use your common sense." If you are in a position you don't know what to do, you are not sure, stop and think. Use your common sense.

TN: And that has gotten them to some really healthy –

PP: I think so, I think that they are doing well and I'd like to think that a lot of it is because of that.

TN: What does – how old are your children and what do they do?

PP: My son is 35 and he builds computers, flies all over the world. My daughter, Maureen, is 31, she lives in Boston, works at Boston Conservatory of Music and [unintelligible] college, both in the libraries. She is making inquiries into going for a PHD.

TN: You're very proud, yes?

PP: Yes, I am, yes.

TN: And your own education, what did you do?

PP: I have an associate degree in radiologic technology .

TN: Where did you go to school from five years old up?

PP: Martel School, then eight years at Holy Cross, four years at Lewiston High School, two years at St. Mary's Hospital, with an internship at Pratt Diagnostic Clinic in Boston.

TN: Wow. And how was it for you when you went to public school for the first time?

PP: It was very difficult. First of all, I did not fit in because I didn't have the – I was very naïve for one thing. I also did not have the clothes. That was a big thing in those days.

TN: Now it is, still.<sup>1</sup>

PP: Yes, I did not have the clothing and it took only three days, when I was a freshman , for them to find out that I only had one blouse and one skirt, because that is all I ever wore to go to school. My mother washed them, they were always clean, but after 8 years at Holy Cross in uniforms, you didn't have a whole lot of clothes.

TN: So when did you first go to public school? How old were you?

PP: I was 13.

TN: Wow.

PP: The day I went to kindergarten – but that – everybody, no, didn't know any better.

TN: Right.

PP: Didn't know anything.

TN: When you went to kindergarten was there a language barrier?

PP: Yes, because I did not speak any English, spoke only French but I learned.

TN: They encouraged you to learn English.

PP: Yes, very much so. I always spoke French at home. After awhile when I learned English, I spoke English to my father and French to my mother.

TN: And you Mom today?

PP: Speaks very little English, mostly French; prefers French. Nut if she has to she will speak a little English, get by. She is a very forceful lady.

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<sup>1</sup> This sentence is unclear.

TN: That's good.

PP: Yes.

TN: So, tell me about your experience with becoming a nun?

PP: Oh! I was in the seventh grade, walking around recess. It was a privilege to walk right next to the nun, who had a nice big cape. You held on to the cape and that was such a privilege. That day I felt so overwhelmed, I felt that I had to tell her that I wanted to become a nun, and I was serious about this. It was no kidding, I wanted to become a nun. So I told her, "Sister, when I grow up, I'm going to be a nun." She stopped and looked at me and says, You, Never!" "Ok, in that case I won't," and I never did. But I remember being so hurt by that.

TN: Had you told many people about your aspirations?

PP: No, no. I talked to my mother and father but they thought it was just a –

TN: Phase

PP: Oh yah, "She'll get over it." She did.

TN: Real quick, wow, just like that.

PP: Just like that. I guess, you know they say that you get a sign or something and I guess that was my sign, hit me over the head and I'll know that that is not the thing to do.

TN: And your experiences the rest of the time at Holy Cross were –

PP: Were very good except first grade.

TN: What happened?

PP: Well, we sat the boys on one side of the room; the girls on the other side. And if you were bad, your punishment was to go sit on the opposite side of the room from what you were. Like, if you were a girl and you were punished, you would go sit with the boys. Didn't take me long I thought that would be fun, so I decided I was going to be bad. So I had a handkerchief, this is real bad, I had a handkerchief and twisted it around my finger all the time, all the time. The nun would say, "Miss Collette, you stop that or you'll get punished." And Miss Collette knew that if she got punished, go sit on the other side of the room with the boys, so kept right on going. It was fun – until she told my father. Then that wasn't fun anymore.

TN: What kind of experience was it to sit on the side with the boys?

PP: It was fun.

TN: Privileges?

PP: It was fun, talked to the boys. You always talked to the girls because they put the girls on one side, boys on the other and I was an only child so I thought it would be fun to talk to the boys.

TN: More so than the girls?

PP: Yes!

TN: How come?

PP: It was just fun, was different.

TN: Yes.

PP: Yes!

TN: The unknown.

PP: The opposite sex, starts at a very early age you know.

TN: Yes.

PP: But that was, that was fun, but then after that, well, I behaved cause I was kept busy. I took piano lessons from them and I was in every play that they had.

TN: Any starring roles?

PP: Yes, yah, quite a few.

TN: Were you encouraged to continue theater or –?

PP: No, no.

TN: but you had many opportunities for performing, like in your own family culture.

PP: Yes, yes. I had a grandmother on my father's side who insisted that we meet every Sunday night. When we did, everybody had to perform. So every week you performed and also my grandmother was a very, very, proud lady. I guess that is where I take my pride from, which I was accused of in school, I had too much pride. My grandmother was very proud, a very domineering –

TN: Matriarch.

PP: Yah, yah. She raised two boys and a girl. My grandfather worked on the Maine Central Railroad as a cook, so he was never home. So she was really keeping everything together. Used to have a French program on Sunday noon in town here, if you were had a talent of some kind, you could go on that program and perform and dedicate the number to a certain person. Well, the first I know that I am to be performing on this show. I was 6 years old and it was for my grandmother's birthday. So, they got me all dressed up in this fancy little dress and little patent leather shoes and down we went. I played my little piece for grandma and oh my, you know, everybody loved it. I was 6 years old.

TN: You were playing piano too?

PP: On the radio. At 9 years old I performed in Montreal on the radio station in Montreal.

TN: Did you really?

PP: Played the piano, one piece.

TN: Wow, kind of like a child prodigy!

PP: Not really, no, far from that.

TN: Not very common to see such young people taking up with music.

PP: Well, where you are an only child and your father had aspirations of being a concert pianist, of course you're going to take piano lessons. I started at 4 years old. If you're asked to perform, you perform. I was bought up to do what you're told to do, whether you wanted to or not, you were asked, "Do you want to do this?" Today you see a lot of parents asking kids, "Do you want to do this?" Today, you see a lot of parents asking kids. No, "Do you want to do this?" In my days you did not want to do this, you just did it. There was no question about it and after I played on the radio that one time for my grandmother, oh well, every time there was an occasion, it was Mrs. So-and-so's birthday, well we had to go play and dedicate to Mrs. So-and-so. That was all through my grandmother.

TN: Did you sing too?

PP: No. I sang in all the choirs from many years. At times, yes, I did sing, a little bit. I had to take voice.

TN: And you can carry a tune?

PP: Yes, I can. My daughter cannot and she wishes she could. She loves to sing, she sings all the time off-key. We are in church and she'll sing every single song off-key. I feel so bad for her. I'll turn around to her and I'll sing the right key and she'll have a couple of notes, then she will go back down there! Poor Maureen, ah.

TN: She tries.

PP: She tries, she loves it.

TN: That's wonderful.

PP: Of course, where she is, there's all kinds of opera stars – not stars – opera students performing.

TN: She has a little bit of a music in her.

PP: She has the love of music, yes, not the training, but she has the love. She did take some courses in college but she just cannot perform. Loves to dance, takes modern dancing, things like that, she loves that, but she just can't sing.

TN: So, tell me about the time that you were on Channel 17.<sup>2</sup>

PP: Ah yes, yes, local TV station up the hill here, Pleasant St. They had a show where you went and performed. If people voted, you either won or you didn't. I won and then I became the accompanist for the station. I was a junior in high school at that time. So junior/senior year, and then the first year out of school, I performed on Channel 17.

TN: How much did they pay?

PP: I think it was around 10 or 12 dollars per episode, no more than that

TN: And how many –?

PP: One a week. That was fun. I think it eventually became Channel 8. I'm not positive of that but I think it started, same people, camera men, and electricians, and electronics people think eventually people went to Channel 8, or it started around the same time, but we didn't survive.

TN: That's too bad.

PP: Yes, it was.

TN: Where you there right up 'til the end?

PP: Yes, yes.

TN: Then one day –

PP: That was it, we're not on the air anymore.

TN: Wow.

PP: So, go to something else, yah.

TN: And you had other jobs at this time?

PP: Oh yes, I was a cashier at the different theaters, movie theaters, in Lewiston. I also played piano in a dancing school.

TN: What did these jobs pay?

PP: Minimum.

TN: Which was?

PP: 75 cents an hour.

TN: Oh my!

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<sup>2</sup> WLAM-TV. The station broadcast from November 22, 1953 through March 25, 1955.

PP: Oh yes, my first paycheck from the dancing school was \$25.

TN: And how long did it take you to accumulate that?

PP: Oh, I think it was about two weeks or so. There was a coat in the store window on Lisbon St, Benzers, and oh I thought that was the most beautiful coat. So, my father said, "Well, you've got money now you can buy it if you want it. I wouldn't buy it if I were you," but I wanted it. The coat was \$24.95. We had no sales tax then. So, I took \$25, gave it to the clerk. She gave me 5 cents back and I hated the coat ever since.

TN: How come?

PP: Because it cost too much money.

TN: Oh, yes.

PP: And it looked stupid. You know, you want, you want, and then, eh.

TN: Quite a lesson, huh?

PP: Yes.

TN: Thrift stores from then on?

PP: Yah, yah. The funniest part in those days that whatever you didn't wear anymore, we used to send to Canada. We had a lot of relatives that were not rich and we'd send clothes there. The mothers would make other coats or dresses or whatever for the kids, all big families. So, the coat went to Canada. One day we go Canada and one of my aunts is wearing this dress and it was the coat. Oh!

TN: Did it look good on her?

PP: Not any better than it did on me! I just hated it.

TN: How big was the family in Canada?

PP: Huge. My grandmother, who died at 102, had 13 children, 87 grandchildren, and I lost track of how many great, great, whatever, but I was the only one born in the United States. So, they had no family here but everything in Canada. I used to love to go there. I would have moved there in a minute.

TN: Wow, still?

PP: Yes, yes, 'cause – not in the same part, not in the Quebec province, today I'd move on Prince Edward Island. I love it there.

TN: What stops you?

PP: My mother, who is 88 years old, lives upstairs and would never go back to live in Canada.

TN: She has different memories than you.

PP: Yes, that's right, and I can understand that. I'm the only child so I can't leave her here.

TN: That's right.

PP: And my mother-in-law, who is still living at the age of 98, is in nursing home here in Lewiston. She only has one child living, who's my husband. We can't leave her either.

TN: Responsibility.

PP: Yes, yes, big time.

TN: Part of the extended family.

PP: Yes, that's how it goes.

TN: So when you'd meet everybody on Sunday evenings, where would you get together?

PP: We would have different venues. Sometimes it would be at my grandmother's house, sometimes here at our house, my uncle's house, a cousin's house. We'd go around, spread it around. I had a cousin, who is six weeks older than I am, and he was learning the mandolin. He would play the mandolin and I'd accompany him on the piano. After awhile he graduated to the Hawaiian guitar and I followed him and played piano. We'd play whenever there was a function within the family, we'd play. When my grandfather remarried, we played the whole wedding reception. That was quite something. That was fun.

TN: Did you ever get paid for any of that?

PP: No, oh no, that was family and there was never a question of – didn't even think of it.

TN: Did anyone ask to ever hire you out?

PP: I played for quite a few functions, yah, made a little bit of money, not that much.

TN: But it was fun?

PP: It was fun. I was offered a job once, I was 15 years old, to play piano at the cocktail lounge at the Dewitt Hotel, corner of Park and Pine, the place in Lewiston.

TN: Is it still there?

PP: No.

TN: What's there now?<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> The Lewiston Sun-Journal newspaper building replaced the Dewitt Hotel.

PP: A bank, I think. I think so, and I wanted that job that paid but my father said, "No, no no. You are not going to go play piano in a cocktail lounge at 15 years old." So I didn't go.

TN: Oh, to bad huh?

PP: Yes.

TN: 'Cause you wanted to.

PP: Oh, I wanted too, yup, I enjoyed it. I loved performing. I was not bad at it and I enjoyed it.

TN: Yes.

PP: Are we okay on that?

TN: We are.

PP: Alright, We're on.

TN: It's actually running more smoothly this time.

PP: Yah, well, you get the same information.

TN: Yes. So tell me more about Lisbon Street?

PP: Oh, yes. Lisbon Street, it was so much on Saturday afternoon to go down. Everybody dressed up, still. I remember I used to wear hats, gloves, not matter what age you were and everybody went up and down Lisbon Street. There were all kinds of shops, and you knew people everywhere. It was social event, you know, and then would go to somebody's house, or came back home. There were people, of course my father working on Lisbon Street.

TN: Where?

PP: At Senter, Giroux, Canniff, which was a department store, very, very nice store, very busy, beautiful lines of clothing, quality stuff, toys. My father started there as an elevator boy. When they closed, he was manager, department manager. He was window trimmer, used to go to New York on buying trips. It was a nice place. I was brought up really in that store, knew everybody, everybody knew me. So, you miss things like that, don't have that anymore.

TN: They really had an elevator boy?

PP: oh yes, oh yah.

TN: How many floors where there in that?

PP: three, four if you count the basement. The elevator took care of four, four floors. After awhile my father had employees that worked for him. One of them is the owner of Korn Haus Kellar Restaurant today, Ray Comeau. He started as elevator boy for my father. Yah.

TN: Oh wow. I – Korn Haus Kellar, is that a French German?

PP: It's really Franco-American people that run it, the Comeau family. I don't know how come they come up with that name, that is a German name. Yah.<sup>4</sup>

TN: Yah.

PP: They just did.

TN: Just one of those things

PP: Yah, one of those things.

TN: German food in at that time or?

PP: NO, never.

TN: Did they have German food?

PP: No they don't. I don't know how it came about, I will have to ask Ray.

TN: That would be an interesting thing.

PP: Yah, yah, but today on Lisbon street, you walk down, matter to fact my husband and I did last Sunday. We went to lunch at Marcois then walked up and down Lisbon. There is nothing, just empty store front windows. It's sad.

TN: Was it nice looking back then?

PP: Yes, yes. There was so many little shops of all kinds, and jewelry stores, and hats, store just for hats.

TN: Everybody had to have their hats.

PP: Oh yes, I hated hats but you wore them. Yes, then there were shoe stores, yard goods, you had a lot of department stores. It was nice, there is nothing today.

TN: It's amazing isn't it.

PP: Yes

TN: when did all this start going downhill?

PP: I would say late 50s, early 60s, when the malls opened.

TN: Which was the first to come? Do you remember?

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<sup>4</sup> Kornhauskeller is German for "warehouse basement" or "granary cellar."

PP: I think it was the one in back here, the Lewiston Mall, if I remember. That was the first one, then we had the Promenade Mall, which today is a mess.

TN: Where is that?

PP: Across,

TN: Yah, Bradley's, Lisbon Street.

PP: Miss that. We used to have Bradley's in there, we used to have Service Merchandise, and then everything went to Auburn, now Service Merchandise is leaving.

TN: So do you feel that that has really devastated Lewiston?

PP: I think so, yes. People went to the malls because it was more convenient. You had everything together and you had parking places. Parking, I think, is a big thing.

TN: Yah.

PP: Yah, everybody's got cars.

TN: Did they used to or did they –

PP: Well, we had bus system for a long time we used to have a bus every 20 minutes around here.

TN: [unintelligible]

PP: No we don't even have it here.

TN: Not here on the street, is that what you mean?

PP: Yah.

TN: They haven't closed the Hudson Bus Lines.

PP: Yah, but I think as you say every hour or so and they don't cover what they used to.

TN: Right, which is so too bad.

PP: 'Cause I remember we had the buses would go up on Webber [Avenue] and come back down on Acadia [Avenue]. I remember when World War II ended. I was 10 years old, I think at the time. Everybody was trying to get on the bus to do downtown because there was such a big celebration. There were parades and everybody was just wild and I remember that so well. My father and my mother says, "Well, let's go." It costs five cents to go down on the bus, and waiting and trying to get on the buses. They had buses running all the time to accommodate people 'cause everybody was going everywhere.

TN: Oh wow.

PP: Yah.

TN: Tell me about this festival for the end of the war.

PP: It was wild. On this street here I remember the day that they announced that the war was ended. I remember that some of the neighbors who had sons that had gone to war or worked still overseas, walking up and down the street here with pots and pans, just making noise and laughing and dancing. That was quite something.

TN: Prior to that time was –

PP: It was devastating, it was, well, everybody was gone, all the men. Then you all of a sudden you would hear that one of them got killed. I remember someone living across the street and their uncle got killed, that, I will never forget that, the feeling. I knew him, but not that much, but still.

TN: Feeling of your neighbors.

PP: Yah, and knowing this is real and all the ones that you loved, they were gone. Are they going to come back? Is that going to happen?

TN: Did you know anyone personally?

PP: Yes, I had an uncle, matter of fact, I had three uncles that were in the war. But I had one uncle, my favorite, he was with General [George] Patton.<sup>5</sup>

TN: Really.

PP: He was in the infantry on medical corps. He fought Germany, France, invasion of Normandy, yah.

TN: Was he over there with the allied troops?

PP: Yah, yah.

TN: To help free the concentration camps?

PP: He was with General Patton, yah. Of course, my father didn't go to war but he went to work at the ship yard in Portland. If you didn't go to war, you did that. That was kind of hairy also because a lot of people got killed there.

TN: Really, how come?

PP: Oh yah, they would fall from very high stories, get hit by girders, they were not trained people to work in those jobs, but it was the war so you did what you had to do.

TN: Right, and a lot of women.

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<sup>5</sup> Commander of the Seventh, and later the Third, U.S. Armies in Europe.

PP: Yes, I had an aunt that went to work, used to call them Rosie the Riveter, that 's what they used to call the women.

TN: So how was it when the boys came back in finding a job?

PP: It was hard for awhile but then the other jobs started, building and different things. My father went back to Senters. He had left there to go to South Portland for the shipyard. Then went back there.

TN: Had the store remained open?

PP: Yes, yah, yah.

TN: Where he was a man, was it kind of mandatory that he went to the shipyard?

PP: It was either that or go in the service. He was a married man and had a child so they needed some over there. It was better for him to do that then to go to war.

TN: There wasn't a choice back then?

PP: No, not really. If you didn't, then you got drafted.

TN: Until their jobs were held open for them on return.

PP: There were no men around so.

TN: Right, then the women had to –

PP: had to pitch in, yup.

TN: But lose their jobs when the men came back.

PP: Yes.

TN: And how was that for women?

PP: It was hard, it pushed back women but women were so happy that men were back, that this phase of their lives, was settling down that most of them just dropped everything, went back into the home so there was not a progressive thing. We went back.

TN: Did your mom work?

PP: No, no, she stayed home. She babysat a lot of kids.

TN: I'll bet.

PP: Yah and made sure we had a garden. She has always kept very busy. She did not go to work until I was a freshman in high school.

TN: Wow, what kinds of positions did she do?

PP: She was doing some cleaning at St. Mary's Hospital in the nursing home as my mother had no schooling, so.

TN: Do what you know.

PP: Hey, as long as it works, yah.

TN: So, what have you done for different occupations throughout your life?

PP: Oh well, I started first, I was 8 years old, babysitting. That was quite an experience.

TN: So tell me.

PP: You babysat, I babysat from 5:30 at night to 4am in the morning for a dollar and a chocolate bar.

TN: Oh my, every night or?

PP: No, Saturday nights. My father would not let me go during the week cause I had my studies.

TN: Why till four a m?

PP: People went out and didn't get home before.

[End of Side 1; break in recording]

[Side 2]

PP: Which is upper Lisbon Street here and ran to Auburn to go to work there, worked till 9 o'clock at the dancing school, crossed the bridge, in those days you could do that. My father and mother were not worried about me.

TN: Bet you were slim!

PP: Yes, I was. Run up on Main Street, take the bus, come up here, do my homework, go to bed and start the next day. Then I kept that up all through high school, that job. I also sold tickets at movie theaters, sold in three different movie theaters. That was a cute little job, I liked that.

TN: Yes, I bet.

PP: Yah, saw a lot of movies, yah, and then of course, I –

TN: Was this before TV?

PP: TV was coming in at that time but the movie house were still very busy. Yah. Today they are all closed.

TN: How much was it to get in to a movie theater?

PP: Oh my goodness, If you were under 12 it was 10 cents. I was under 12 for a long time! [Laughs] I was a little peanut, you know, I could get by. Then I think it was 20 cents, I don't really remember to much. Different rates during the week, different rates at night. First show was one rate, second show was another rate. Yah, you had movies almost all day and there were people going.

TN: All day sometimes.

PP: Yah, that was a good little job, I enjoyed that but I worked seven days at a week at that.

TN: Wow!

PP: Saturdays, Sundays, that's what you did.

TN: What did they pay you there, 75 cents an hour?

PP: I think it was 75 cents; I'm trying to think, I think so. It had to be, yah.

TN: So you were doing okay for yourself.

PP: I'll tell you, I was rich [laughs], but I did ok because my senior year in high school, they had a class trip to Washington D.C .and my father said, "You can go if you pay, if you can pay." So, I saved all my money, bought myself all kinds of stupid-looking clothes but in those days they were nice, a hat. I had to bring a hat.

TN: With netting or without?

PP: Oh, with.

TN: And gloves to match?

PP: Oh yes.

TN: Handbag?

PP: And the shoes.

TN: Of course!

PP: Oh, yes. I remember we are all lined up for the bus to take off with our luggage and everything and the lady that I worked for at the dancing school, Clara, came over with a gardenia corsage, I was the only person with a corsage. I never felt so embarrassed and I didn't want to not wear it and hurt her feelings, so I wore the corsage.

TN: Big gaudy flower.

PP: Oh yes.

TN: You're so good.

PP: I felt stupid, but you know, looking back now I say, now if it happened today, I would wear the flowers proudly but in those days, whatever everybody thought of you – and I'd have such a hard time.

TN: I don't think it has anything to do with just with the days, people still go through this, with church.

PP: I think so, huh, yah, want to be accepted so, but that was a great trip.

TN: I bet. Why did you, were you the only one to have the flower?

PP: nobody else was given any flowers.

TN: But why you? How did that work for you?

PP: Well I was working for her and that was her way of wish me a nice trip, so she gave me gardenia corsage. First corsage, no it was not the first corsage of my life, my father used to buy me one every mother's day. My father would buy a corsage for my mother, a little corsage for me, and a boutonniere for him. We would all go to church Mother's Day morning, we all had our flowers.

TN: Oh yeah, you are an only child.

PP: Yah,

TN: That is lovely.

PP: Yah, yah, that was nice. That's what it was. You couldn't see a man wearing that today, wearing a boutonniere to go to church except when he got married, and even that.

TN: It would be kind of awkward .

PP: Yah.

TN: [Unintelligible]

PP: But that's what happened and Easter morning we all had new clothes. That was very important, again with the hat and the gloves and the shoes and, that was very important. If you didn't have something new, boy, were you deprived!

TN: Yes, I bet. Then after you got out of high school you went on to the radiological school.

PP: No, I worked a year.

TN: Where?

PP: I worked at Bates Street Cigar

TN: Doing what?

PP: Office work. I didn't like it, I wanted more.

TN: More?

PP: More training, more out of life so I applied at St. Mary's school and I was accepted. I went in to training and I was there two years before I graduated. I interned in Boston. Looking back, that was a great, great time.

TN: While you were an intern in Boston, How did your French heritage help you?

PP: We had patients that came in from France and there was a language barrier, they had a hard time explaining their problem. It was known that I was French speaking, so I was called in two times to translate – interpreter. I did that on a few trips to Canada with groups. Went to Gaspé Peninsula, Main Line [Bus], was the first time my husband had been on a bus trip. We always drove. When you are driving you don't see much of anything. It was for our 35<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary, I gave him that and I says "You are going to try the bus trip." He says, "Ah, I don't think I'll like it." I says, "We'll take this trip, we'll see." Well, we left here, went through New Brunswick, and went to Gaspé, beautiful, beautiful country. He enjoyed it 'cause he was able to look around and see things. Well, on Gaspé Peninsula itself, the restaurant where, the place where we were staying and the restaurant, the waitresses did not speak English at all and there were a lot of people on our tour that did not speak French at all. As soon as it was known that I spoke French, well I translated for everybody! That was fun.

I did that another time we went, oh this was great, we went to Magdalen Island.<sup>6</sup> I don't know if you ever heard of that. No. It's in the province of Quebec but it's in the middle of the St. Lawrence River, between Prince Edward Island and Newfoundland, far, far away. Well, the Holy Cross seniors decided they were going to go there. When I found out, I told my mother and my aunt because my grandmother was born on that island. Everybody wanted to go and see if there was any relatives or anything going on there. So, my mother said, "Well, we'll go." I says, "Well, I can't really afford that " so she paid my trip. My aunt paid my cousin's trip and we went the four of us, the two sisters, the two cousins, the two daughters, it was great. There again, we got on the island and nobody spoke English, very, very, few did. On the trip, again, there was a lot of people that did not speak French. The bus drivers did not speak French so I was called to translate for them.

TN: Isn't that interesting, you would think that would be mandatory for them, the bus drivers.

PP: It was the first American tour on the island. They had never had Americans tourist, well they had some but not tours, per se, and we were two big buses.

TN: You were in high demand that day.

PP: Yah, very busy. We took a boat from New Brunswick to Prince Edward Island, traveled the length of the island, took another boat, a five and half hour trip, in the middle of the ocean to get to that island. We were there four days, had the time of my life.

TN: Oh really, what was there to do.?

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<sup>6</sup> More properly, the Magdalen Islands (*Îles de la Madeleine*), an archipelago in the Gulf of St. Lawrence.

PP: Ah, very little for most people but for the four of us, there was plenty because I went out and found relatives. I inquired here and there, from the pastor of this church that we went to. He says, "What time are you coming back to the motel?" I said, "4 o'clock," he says, "We'll be there." Sure enough, he was there with cousins. My mother, how am I going to say this, hold on, my mother's godparents were from that island. She was not baptized on that island. She was baptized closer to Maine but one of the relatives that was there, that attended the baptism, we met on this island. He was 93 years old. Then the pastor let me have his car so the four of us traveled all over the island. That was not too well received.

TN: Why?

PP: Well, the others didn't have a thing to do. Two buses of people doing very little.

TN: and you guys were going –

PP: Yah, we are going to eat here, this relative and eat there at that relative. It was, fun, good time, good time. The Gaspé trip was very nice because of the way back we stopped at Rimouski and there they had just completed a cultural center with a hotel. They offered me a job. They heard me speak French to my husband and I was speaking English also. This manager came to me and says, "You want a job?" I says "Huh?" He says, "You could be coordinator because I spoke both languages" and there was nobody in the area that did. If you are going to have a cultural center, you need –

TN: you need to be able to converse with the culture.

PP: So, I was proud of that, I couldn't take it but, hey, it was offered. I liked that.

TN: All your excursions up to Canada have been really positive.

PP: Yah, been a lot of fun.

TN: Tell me about your interviewing experience.

PP: That was terrible until the age of 42 I never went on an interview.

TN: 'Cause you had been working.

PP: I had one job after another. People offered me work and I never was interviewed. At 42, I lost my job so I had to go out and try to find one.

TN: What year range was this? The 60's, the 70's?

PP: It was '78, 1978. Of course I went to different interviews. I've had some very nice ones. I was propositioned at one time. I could have the job providing I "delivered." I said, "No thank you, I was not that hungry." The guy was disgusted – was disgusting.

TN: Wonder if he ever found anyone to fill his position?

PP: He probably did, unfortunately. Unfortunately, he probably did, sad, but it's life. Sometimes you do things you don't want to because you have no choice, but I had a choice and I took it. Now that interview, I was asked if I'd had a hysterectomy and no one has the right to ask you that. I refused to answer so naturally I did not get the job and that was alright. Then I went on another interview, I did not get the job because I had an accent but I was so happy because it was at Hillcrest Poultry, they process chicken, and it smelled horrible in that place.

TN: Is it still there?

PP: No, it's out of business. I don't know what's there anymore. It's not far from Korn Haus Kellar, long, long building. You are at the College? When come down towards Lisbon Street where Korn Haus Keller is and Channel 10, well if you look straight ahead you are going to see a long, long building.

TN: Right there on Westminister [Street]?

PP: Ah, it's across, crossing Lisbon Street.

TN: Ok.

PP: You are looking ahead. I don't know what's there anymore but.

TN: Do you know anything about that old poor house,<sup>7</sup> do you know what I am talking about?

PP: Oh yes, yes.

TN: Can you tell me something about that?

PP: We used to go sing there at Christmas times. There were indigent people that lived there and they worked the farm.

TN: Was there a farm there too?

PP: Yes there was. They would go around, they raised pigs and chickens. I think they had cows, not sure, but the city of Lewiston would pick up the garbage, not trash, garbage all over town and deliver it there.

TN: What's the difference between trash and garbage?

PP: Garbage is food.

TN: Ok.

PP: Trash is whatever but I got potatoe peels, banana peels, orange peels, anything.

TN: And people would separate this?

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<sup>7</sup> The Lewiston City Poor Farm.

PP: Yes, you have certain buckets, put your garbage on the street at a certain day. All that went to the Poor Farm, used to call it the Poor Farm.

TN: For what?

PP: To take care of the animals.

TN: Not for the people?

PP: No, no, no, no, but the people were fed from the animals.

[Gentleman enters] Hi, home early? Oh, ok.

TN: He likes to stay away?

PP: He volunteers at the Holy Cross School Cafeteria.

TN: Oh, what a neat thing to do.

PP: He loves it and the kids love him so. That is what the Poor Farm was. Mostly elderly people who were on their own with no place, no family, that is where they lived.

TN: Before nursing homes.

PP: Yes, yah.

TN: When did that close down, do you know?

PP: Early 60's, I think.

TN: What happened?

PP: It just became a different way of life.

TN: Oh, welfare too.

PP: Yah yah, I remember when I was in the choir here, at grammar school, we used to pick names for Christmas, names of these people and we would buy like tobacco, pipe, chewing gum, candy, handkerchiefs, make a little package for Christmas.

TN: Oh, that's nice.

PP: for these people. They had very little. So, that was the Poor Farm.

TN: Yah, I know that is unusual now cause of the asbestos content but it's a wonderful building. I toured through it before, 'cause it was open, I don't think it was supposed to be, but –

[Birdsong]

PP: Oh yah, there goes my clock

TN: Does that mean it's noon?

PP: Yup.

TN: We are almost done. Have we covered everything that we covered before? Do you remember? We didn't really touch upon you last job. I know that you talked about –

PP: Oh yes, yes, no we didn't touch that. My last job I was the first business manager in the state of Maine in the Catholic community, the largest Catholic Parish.

TN: First business manager or the first woman business manager?

PP: The first business manager as well as woman, which made it difficult because it was unknown. Business managers, there weren't any around here, everything was done by the priests. But, there are less and less priests, so the laity has to step in and do like the administration. That we can do. The religious aspect, the spirituality, that has to be done by the priest but the laity can do the administration. I had a very progressive pastor who had gone to New York and seen the concept, brought it back, offered me the job, and no job description or anything, just walked in and it grew, boy did it grow.

TN: So you knew that there was a position open?

PP: Yah, well I was working there at the time. I had a little job but that's when I left my real estate job and went there full time 'cause I used to work morning for a real estate agent, Marcel Morin, the afternoon I worked for Holy Cross, little office jobs, you know. Little things. He offered me the job as business manager and I said, "Oh sure, why not," little did I know! It grew and grew and it was very, very, hard because I was a woman. I was not accepted but the chancery, that is the office that leads all Catholic churches in the state of Maine, that's where the bishop works out of.

TN: By accepting, you mean recognition?

PP: Recognition, co-operation, anything. I'd call for certain things and I would never get answers. I'd have to call so many times. Eventually some secretary would talk to me. I just couldn't get the big guys. Eventually, I did but I just didn't give up.

TN: That's good.

PP: I figured, hey, I've got the knowledge, I'm doing a good job; God doesn't care if I am a man or a woman. He doesn't care, why should you?

TN: That's right. Yes.

PP: I don't want to take over your job, I just want to do mine.

TN: How long did you do this job?

PP: 18 years, I retired six months ago today. Yup, I turned 62 October 15<sup>th</sup> and retired October 16<sup>th</sup>.

TN: Wow, [unintelligible].

PP: didn't lose any time, went right out.

TN: And have you been enjoying your retirement since then?

PP: I'm starting to now, it's taken me quite a while. It's such a change. I went from working 60 to 65 hours a week, to nothing and that has been a traumatic change on me. I've been going on adrenalin for so many years and all of a sudden, it's not there, so your mind reacts, your body reacts. It's taken me a while.

TN: Do you think you'll pursue any more –?

PP: I would like to have a part time job, I would love a part time job, but not committed five days a week. Do you know what I mean?

TN: Mm-hmm.

PP: If I'm needed fine, I'll go. Like I did that at school about three weeks or so ago, they were having registration and I've done that for 18 years, so they called me in. I enjoyed that, got me back with the people but I don't want something that is a commitment all the time. I've done that; I've been there.

TN: Right, it's time for you to choose.

PP: I've been there, yah, but I like to be able to go out and see people. I miss that, the interaction.

TN: Right, the elder-mentor kind of a person.

PP: Right, now I am to this new person that replaced me because there was just no time for training and this is a very demanding job. I'm sure that lady had no idea what she was getting into because they gave me everything. I was managing the cafeteria, the daycare, the church, the convent – had six nuns there that depended on me. I had 62 employees and two schools, so that's a lot.

TN: Did you teach too?

PP: No, no – no time! I did payroll, I did budgets, I hate the word budgets. I will never, never do one again, audits, everything. The priest, something came in and "Go see Pauline, go see Pauline. " If the custodian needed something, "Go see Pauline "or the Father would leave me notes and make sure this is done, that is done, this is done, turned around and grabbed everybody and go. At one time I hired my husband, I fired him a month later. I did. Seriously.

TN: Tell me about it.

PP: We needed someone to work the grounds and I asked him. He had just retired. Norm, do you want to come and do that? "Yah, Ok," he says. He started, everything was not bad. One week he mowed the

lawn and didn't do a good job of it. I told him, it's got to do this again, not right. He wasn't going to do it, was another week, that's it. Goodbye! If you ask him, he will tell you that it's the happiest day of his life! Well, I had a boss too, you know. Husband and wives should not work in the same place.

TN: No, that's just common sense.

PP: Like he said you've got her all day and have her all night, it's too much, especially when you're the boss. That was fun.

TN: If you had anything that you would want to give to people, anything that you would like to say that you could be remembered by or a bit of advice, what would that be?

PP: Advice, it would be to do the best of whatever you're in, use your common sense, and be compassionate. I think that is the big thing too. Understand, listen, not everything is black and white. If you think that, you're going to be hurt.

TN: That's good, sound advice.

PP: I try to live by it. That's pretty much what I would say.

TN: You've had a very interesting life.

PP: I think so, yes.

TN: Lot of accomplishments.

PP: Lately I feel a little out of it. I got to find work, find something, something, besides all my knitting.

TN: Right, besides solitary.

PP: Yah.

TN: Could you show me?

PP: I only have this much to show you. It's a baby crib blanket.

TN: it's baby rainbow colors quilt.

PP: That's what I am working on.

TN: This is knitting? Crochet?

PP: Crocheting, and I have done a lot of crewel like that picture on the wall I've done. That's embroidery and I have some all over the house.

TN: That is time-consuming.

PP: But that is how I develop patience, I had no patience and that takes a lot of patience.

TN: You need patience.

PP: Yah, it's good. If I didn't have patience, I could not have done the last job I had, no way!

TN: I thank you so very much.

PP: Well, you're welcome, it was a pleasure for me too.

TN: I learned a lot, learned a lot about this community.

PP: If you want to your report and need clarification or something, give me a call.

TN: And this tape is going to be submitted into the Franco-American Archives and you are part of history now.

PP: Yes, I was told to give a good interview because of that, said I would try. Madeleine<sup>8</sup> told me that.

TN: I think the initial practice tape was 'helpful.

PP: I think it will help the whole thing, cause ah, I used to do interviews for the church for annulments and I used to use tapes and also memory. You look at a question and it comes back to you.

TN: Divorces, yah, many of those?

PP: Yup, yup.

TN: That is so silly, an annulment after consummation and all that.

PP: It's a process that is available and I was one of the auditors. That was interesting, sad.

TN: Have you ever denied anyone?

PP: I didn't make the last decision, but I did give some comments and gave the opinion if I thought it was a sham, it was a sham.

TN: What would a sham be?

PP: Making up stories.

TN: Like maybe they could work it out and they just...

PP: Oh, its' not all one sided, you know. If your marriage didn't work because your husband was going out but then so were you – oh, come on!

TN: Common sense.

PP: Yah, yes.

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<sup>8</sup> Probably either Madeleine Giguère or Madeleine Roy – both were directors of the Franco-American Collection.

TN: This has been very good and I thank you very much.

PP: Well, you're welcome.

TN: I got to shut this thing off now.

[End]