

Audio file

[Interview with Constantine Albuns Side 1.wav](#)

Transcript

Speaker 1

And your my name is Nick Albans. Actually, it's Constantine Albans. But I'm called Nick Albins. I live in Bangor and I'm a school teacher at St. John's Junior High School on State Street. And during President Carter's visit, I coordinated the ticket lottery. For the year.

Speaker 2

Up there, do you know how they happen to pick a ticket lottery system? Why? Why didn't they just have open attend?

Speaker 1

Originally it was going to be in a much smaller auditorium than the one in which it was held, but they decided that. In order to keep it a true town meeting, that admission should be restricted to residents of the town itself. Well, there was a lot of protests, especially. By high Democratic politicians in the state of Maine, they wanted to open it up a little bit more. So the President staff agreed to residents of Penobscot County only, and for that reason there had to be some sort of admission policy to control, to control. Actually, the residence status of the people who got in.

Speaker 2

How? How did this water system work? How did you qualify other than being a resident of Prosperity County?

Speaker 1

Well, it was a true lottery. I have said before that I found it quite that difficult to believe that Democrats could get into anything. It was so fair and honest and above board. I say that humorously, but it was residents of Penobscot County. I had to send in coupons which were found in the local newspaper, which incidentally refused to print them free of cost the. Democratic Party had to pay for the ad.

Speaker 2

The Democrat, not the President, the White House, the White House, had to say.

Speaker 1

Well, yeah, was the yes, the White House. Yes. But I believe it may have been the White House or it may have been National Democratic headquarters. I'm not sure. I'm come to think, but I believe it was. The White House. They wouldn't. In fact, the Bangladeshi news wouldn't even print the names of the winners of the lottery without being paid for it. That's.

Speaker 2

That too.

Speaker 1

Yeah, I think they printed one day's free. The President actually wanted it printed on two days, but they refused to. That and there was no money available for it from presidential fund, so that was only printed the one day and that was only under duress. They they wanted money for it all the. Way so it was printed in the newspaper and copies of the ad printed newspaper were taken to area schools and universities and. Students who were residents of the county were encouraged to apply through that. Then people sent in their coupons. For the lottery. And it was surprising how how fair the thing was because we had a case of at least one person that sent in over a. 100 coupons I I'd say there were numbers of people that sent in over 20 and.

Speaker 2

In one envelope or in.

Speaker 1

Oh it. They came in all sorts of ways. Some came in one envelope and some people went to the trouble. Of paying the. Postage with one of the authorities and they would send them. In and the you. Know like this, we'll say Mr. John Jones wanted one. He'd send one in Mr. John Jones, Mr. John J Jones, Mr. Jay Jones, Jay Jones Jones. Mr. Jones. And this how I got involved. Ruth Barry of the White House staff, who was on the advance team. I I happen to know I had met her couple of years previous and when she was in Bangalore she asked if I'd come down and help us sort out the in alphabetical order the coupons well-being a cut type of guy I am I insinuated myself in the situation. Before long, I was in charge, basically because I do know. A lot of people in the. And what we did was set an alphabetical file up, and, for instance, Mr. John Jones, his name would crop up. There was no way he could escape him. We could see all of these because we did check them out. However, if there was any doubt, and there are cases where you have two people in the family with the same name, junior and senior, we put them in. Right. We did have the cases of a lot of people who put down Mr. and Mrs. John Jones or Mr. Mrs. John Jones and family or and family of five. In other words, they figure if they got drawn once they get tickets for every. One this was not so. What we did was took every we went to the trouble ourselves. If two people were listed, Mr. and Mr. John Jones, we would scratch off. For instance, the missus and write up an extra coupon for her and put it in. So they'd all have a fair chance in the lottery. A lot of people didn't realize it because, for example.

Speaker 2

All right.

Speaker 1

We'll say Mr. John Jones won. He come to get his ticket and say, well, I want 2 tickets because my wife was on it and we showed them where we put in a separate. One for his wife and maybe she didn't win.

Speaker 2

Those coupons on file right at the.

Speaker 1

Yeah, we did. We have and everybody had to produce 2 forms of identification to show that they lived in the county or otherwise satisfy the many volunteers who will be working there.

Speaker 2

Right. Someone they knew that they loved them.

Speaker 1

Yeah, right. And. They had signed for the tickets and those registers are still cap. They're obvious for security reasons. They want to keep until after the president left.

Speaker 2

Right. Were there many complaints about the system?

Speaker 1

Yes, there were some complaints, but once you explained the system, most people would just say, my gosh, it's fair. You know, there's nothing you can say.

Speaker 2

About it, isn't there one woman who who she lived in a rustic county.

Speaker 1

Yes, frenchville. What? What was the story? Well, it was unfortunate, Mrs. Collins. She'd applied for tickets and her name was drawn and. And one of the people. Who they have the drawing at City Hall was drawn by City Council, it said. Frenchville said Frenchville is not in the county and one of the city councilors know it. All incidentally said that. Yes indeed, Frenchville is in the county well. After the list was published, the The Lady, Mrs. Collins, I believe her name was called and said I'm coming to get my tickets and I said look, you don't live in Cobb, Scott County. I can't give them to you and it's as simple as that. I know you would run an error, but I I wouldn't bend the rules and she became quite upset. Call the paper and said at least she'd like the tickets to the souvenirs. And I did arrange to get her some souvenir. Tickets and send them to and she.

Speaker 2

Right.

Speaker 1

Seemed to be happy about. That I had a number of people, friends of mine, who came to see me. And you know, knowing that I'm secretary of the Democratic Party in the city, you know, come to see me behind the counter and said, well, you know, you got to take care of your friends. I lost.

Speaker 2

Right.

Speaker 1

Several friends really did. I really did that. I would not give tickets to anyone who didn't win them. Now the number of people got tickets who didn't win them in the lottery. There was another way to get tickets.

Speaker 2

Right.

Speaker 1

And that was the work. We did have, if they put in two days work as volunteers on the ticket coordination and on the many things we had to do to get the tickets printed to get them out, to get them distributed, to check on the, to validate them, we gave them a ticket and.

Speaker 2

Where were those? Where? Where, where were the tickets printed? I.

Speaker 1

Haven't the foggiest.

Speaker 2

No, no locally.

Speaker 1

Notion no, I don't know. They were given to me by one of the White House Secret Service men who they kept the tickets right till the last minute. And the tickets? As you can see, are all numbered right and we limited it. I believe to 2500 tickets. The tickets that you see here are numbered over 2500. We had a duplicate set printed in case the first set was compromised or we felt as some.

Speaker

Right.

Speaker 1

Had happened that they shouldn't be distributed. We would have gone with these tickets. I have no idea where they were printed. Well, I can see now on the bottom right, GP. All the government printing on.

Speaker 2

Government printing office.

Speaker 1

Government printing office. So they will obviously print it in Washington. I thought it was very fast situation.

Speaker 2

Right, we typed. How many? People applied and. Versus how many got in your system.

Speaker 1

There was slightly better than 50% chance of winning, so obviously about 5000, a little less than fewer than 5000 qualified applicants, right? We must got about 9000 applications including duplicate. Of which they were scared, right, which just goes. To show how a lot of you. Know forward the people looked at us, yeah.

Speaker 2

People really want to see the president do with the more or less than you would have figured that wanted to see the President, the.

Speaker 1

Town meeting for a town this size and with the limitations I would I figured about that many.

Speaker 2

Right. In short, county this side. About that many.

Speaker 1

Yeah, I figured we did figure pretty near right on.

Speaker 2

It what? What percentage people would you? Say, never picked up their tickets.

Speaker 1

90.

Speaker 2

Every single person pictures.

Speaker 1

Every single person picked up a ticket that I know of. In fact, a lot of people, it was announced in the paper that if any tickets were not passed out, they would be given out at 6:00 at 6:00, this weather trouble began. There were hundred a couple of 100 people waiting in line. At 5:45, I had 10.

Speaker 2

Right.

Speaker 1

Extra tickets. I tried to talk. You know, those people at the end of the line from leaving and they wouldn't. I said even if we give out these ten tickets, you wouldn't get. Then the last couple started coming in. I was about to give out the last two tickets to the 1st 2:00. People in line. Just as we were

shutting the doors and two people came in. Who Will Win it now? They weren't. We, incidentally did pick alternates too. So the tickets were all picked up either by the.

Speaker 2

Right.

Speaker 1

Actual winner are an alternate. All of them. I won't say the actual. Wind has picked. Up and everything.

Speaker 2

Out of how many total tickets?

Speaker 1

2500 I believe.

Speaker 2

Out of 25125 hundred people showed up.

Speaker 1

Is what, yeah. There are actually a few more because we did give. Away a few to workers. Right, bowing to some sort of pressure as the city councillors and a few I think the governor and the a few state level politicians did get some, but incidentally they were required to sit in a special section, right? We're not the best seats and they were not allowed to ask questions. They were.

Speaker 2

Must feel.

Speaker 1

They were not eligible to ask questions when the questions were chosen.

Speaker 2

I think they had two rows in. There on the. On the left, presidents left. Oh, right.

Speaker 1

Well, the City council's up in the back. Are they up in the balcony? They're actually the worst seats going. In fact, a couple of counselors who would won tickets in. Their own right. To decide to use their own tickets, the state politicians, I believe it was the Governor 2 senators and that was about it. Attorney General has sat with two rows to the left as the president spoke.

Speaker 2

Right. Right for any.

Speaker 1

Right. And the questioners were chosen at random by volunteers from the University of Maine, from the audience, and they were told not to go to those rows to pick questions.

Speaker 2

Right. Right.

Speaker 1

So I thought it was interesting and.

Speaker 2

Fair. Did you work at all at the town meeting itself? What did you do then? Yes, I.

Speaker 1

It was that sort of my own idea I when we drew the names of the winners, I I noticed I happen to know a lady who won. And I knew she was handicapped. I knew she had. She was wheelchair patient. I knew that the Bangor Auditorium was not an easy one to get in for wheelchair patient. There is a ground level entrance, but that's where the president was.

Speaker 2

Right.

Speaker 1

Coming in and I. Knew that the Secret Service wouldn't. Amen. So what I did was asked for and got permission to Secret Service to organize a small group of volunteers. In fact, they're from the Army National Guard to Warrant Officer Tracy and his son. And those people who were wheelchair bound. We took and carried downstairs and wheelchairs and arranged. Was seating for them. In fact one of those ladies that we carried downstairs, the lady that I knew was picked to ask a question. And so I did that, and I also helped in identifying what you know might have been considered some security risk. Some people did win tickets. Who we knew had either made general threats against, you know, political figures in the past here in Bangor. I won't go into any names, but one local character is always going to City Council meeting, threatened to shoot all the politicians and that he'd want a ticket or his mother had and.

Speaker 2

Right.

Speaker 1

A few others and you know who might have been considered risk? I was asked to keep an eye out for because I know a lot of people in town, and I did that. I also got shake hands with the president, which was.

Speaker 2

Did you? Yeah. When are you?

Speaker 1

Big but yeah. I when I was in the service 21 years and on several occasions I met Presidents of the United States, right, and even worked with him. I was. But this was different. I was just. Like a high school.

Speaker 2

Gym. You shook hands with him when he was leaving.

Speaker 1

Yes, yes, I I got all tongue tied. Yeah, yeah, yeah. I was introduced to him as the, I guess the President had remarked on one of his aides when he saw all these people in wheelchairs that, you know, had been brought in, he said that it's about time you guys did something. Mark, they changed and one of the aides said, no, it wasn't us, it was this gentleman sitting right here who did it. And he came over and there spoke to me and we. Shook hands so. I felt very nice about that. It's good, had another interesting situation. I teach at a junior high school and we have a very small school newspaper and that. When press credentials were the the announcement came out in the papers for press. Essentially, I asked us. I encouraged the editor of our school paper on 8th grader to apply for press credentials and he got them, was given a badge of press, badge was allowed. Full honest with the. Press and went. To the town meeting and the interviews and the and at the airport and everything. So they covered it for the school newspaper, in fact. And took pictures the first time that this movie graph papers ever had photographs, they were Xerox sent a copy to the president and we got sent 2 copies. And we got a copy back last. Week. Autographed. Yeah.

Speaker 2

Wow, it was nice. Yeah, so. He he got the full treatment of the press. Yeah, I thought. I thought so. What did you think of the questions at the town meeting? Do you think they reflected the views of of the interests of people of Bangalore this area?

Speaker 1

Well, a couple that was, you know, might have reflected the interest of an individual, the tool and the manual. There's one question about the Turkish Cypriot question, where everybody sort of, you know, looking around at what's that doing here. But it was the person's right. And there was another question by the high school student about the coal mine or the senator, which, you know.

Speaker 2

Right. Where did this question?

Speaker 1

I really couldn't figure out the intent of the. By and large I thought they did. There was an Indian question at Dickie Lincoln question.

Speaker 2

How was it working with the Secret Service? Craft, right?

Speaker 1

Yeah. Well, I had. Worked with him before, they said I had spent 21 years in the military, in, in intelligence and I had worked with him before. I had not worked with him since the assassination of President Kennedy. In fact, I had worked with him on a Kennedy visit just slightly shortly before the assassination. And I was impressed. With how much more efficient I thought they were anyway efficient without imposing themselves on people. And you know, leading to obvious crowd control things. They're very aware most of the work I did though was not with Secret Service. It was with the president's advanced people, the Advanced party. But very, very fine folks. And I don't know how they can do it with what little sleep they got. I was knocked out for a week.

Speaker 2

They wouldn't. They definitely knew what they. Were doing and they and.

Speaker 1

It had really the really looking at other parts of the president's visit other than the town meeting you did you go to breakfast the next morning? What did you think of that? That was well, I thought I wasn't going to enjoy because I was bushed. I hadn't slept for a couple of nights. Just, you know, it really took a lot of time. Go to. Not only did I work on technical coordination, they decided at the last minute they needed a backdrop with, you know, latticework backdrop with. Hours and well, I knew a few florists finally located one of those other half dozen small things that they wanted that really only local people had no. Way to get. Right. And so I didn't get much sleep. And I thought. I was going to be too bushed for that, but and when the President walked in, it was very thrilling, you know, really was. And it was different than any other president. I've ever been close to. You've got a warrant and you know what they say. He's losing his popularity a lot right now because of, you know, various political problem. I would say this if every if every American in the country could meet him, he would never lose another election. He does have a terrific magnetic warmth and it comes across even from a distance.

Speaker 2

Right, yeah. That's what impressed you the most about.

Speaker 1

Ohh yeah, no doubt about it, no doubt about it. Even you know, and that was with some pretty cynical people too, you know, who thought that this was, you know, really great. They acted like high school kids trying. To get a handshake.

Speaker 2

Right.

Speaker 1

And and it he did come across with it as a tremendously pleasing personality.

Speaker 2

Did you met the president before?

Speaker 1

Not yet. Oh yes. I met him in Bangor a couple of times when he was Jimmy, who in fact, I told him I wouldn't support him because I didn't. Think he had a? Chance. Yeah, he. He'd come here, I think Bangor was one of the first towns he'd ever come to. And we had breakfast for him as he sings. And we didn't really have a breakfast. We had coffee and doughnuts. We were going to split your breakfast.

Speaker 2

And you didn't think the man was worth having?

Speaker 1

A breakfast? No, not really. The he had been to Bangor as the keynote speaker on the in the Democratic Convention. I think in 72, right and he was 23rd on the list and he got to speak at about 11:00. And I walked out halfway through this. Yes. I met him before.

Speaker 2

And that was so that was the second time he actually spoken to Bangor.

Speaker 1

Yes, I was, yeah.

Speaker 2

You'll have to make the building a monument, I. Guess yeah, yeah. Did you what? What do you think of the family that? Was chosen.

Speaker 1

Well, I'd applied and that was.

Speaker 2

You did apply, yeah.

Speaker 1

Kind of helping. Oh, sure, yeah. And I guess you know, I I'm human and there are people who I, you know, you feel boy, you better not stay with them. That would be a mistake and attitude sort of thing. And there was a lot of that we we talked about it but when he chose the marriage one thing that was said that's absolutely true. Well nobody can complain about that family first of all the movies have been loyal. Democrats, when there were, you know, Democrats used to hold their caucuses and phone booths right around here, and they just happen to be the nicest people going there, really, but tremendously nice family. He couldn't have picked up better plays, one that nobody could complain about and one that was, you know, a family that was, you know, deserving of the honor. And it was an honor. And I've been speaking to them already since, and they were invited to the White House 2 weeks ago for that. Yeah. Yeah. And they. Went down there.

Speaker 2

I heard they did go and they go. To chance to meet the president? Yeah. And they were.

Speaker 1

Very thrilled with the whole thing too.

Speaker 2

They said they were more nervous about being in the White House with the president than they. Were in their own home.

Speaker 1

No, I I think that's a natural reaction, you know.

Speaker 2

Not being in the comfortable surroundings.

Speaker 1

No, no, I they couldn't have picked find a family in the marriage. They really couldn't. The whole visit was just tremendous. My daughter had a chance to work with them and she worked with the pressed people. She's a journalism major, the university, and she helped verify press credentials and she got a tremendous experience out of it. So. My whole family got to go. We they were either all ticket winners or qualified on the two tickets that I won so. All the family that's here that and Mary went on her own because she she got a press pass. She worked with him and my wife and one of the children one and I had won a ticket. So they all got to go. And I I got into.

Speaker 2

Right. Probably the whole family qualified for the two days work anyway.

Speaker 1

Right, they did. And in fact, my wife worked every night for for that week. And and you'd be surprised that people have come in just, you know, can we work just to get a ticket? The funniest thing that I can think of is I was working at the Holiday Inn. They had rented a suite of rooms there and they had White House telephones. And there were phone calls coming through all the time while we work. And I had the phone next to me, and I'd answer it, and yeah, I would normally answer it at White House advance group Nick Albans, a Bangor speaking. I really don't want to be put on the people that I was watching. I'd say Nick Albenza bang was speaking well. I answered the phone and it was.

Speaker 2

Right.

Speaker 1

One night and it was Senator Charlie pray for Millinocket, right state senator and a good friend, and I'd answered the phone that way, but apparently he just didn't hear the Nick Albans mango upon and he got into this, you know, little speech. Think about he was state senator from Maine represented a lot of

people, Millinocket. And if was there any way he could get in because his name wasn't Ron, he'd be willing to work very hard. Well, Charlie Cray owns the Big Eddie campsite, which my money is the best fishing spot in the state of Maine. And I fished there all the time. So I said to him, well, Senator pray, I said, I think there's a way you can get a ticket.

Speaker 2

You're right.

Speaker 1

You can come down and work for a. Two sessions. Oh, yes, I'll do that. But the other thing is I said you've got to have the Big Eddie campsite plowed by April the 1st, which is opening day and all. And he says you. Know how about that place? I said. I sure do, he said. I'll do anything for you guys from the White House. And I said, Charlie, this is Nick Owens, he said. Ohh. But I will say this. I went up on opening day. Then there was 8 feet of snow in the woods, and there was one campsite plowed out.

Speaker 2

And then he did it two days, right?

Speaker 1

Yes, it had and he got his ticket.

Speaker 2

Overall, do you think? Do you think the trip helped the president politically in Bangalore? Do you think the Democratic Party in? Bangalore is helping.

Speaker 1

Oh yes, there's there's no doubt about that. First of all, it helped us politically because money is politics and we needed some money. So we did get money from the breakfast. Yeah. Yes, we I think we got \$375.00 of the.

Speaker 2

You live 10%, right?

Speaker 1

Money raised.

Speaker 2

10% of the profit.

Speaker 1

That's right, yeah, or whatever, I don't know. Was it was a little over. \$300. And since that time I can, as secretary of Party, I keep the membership list, I can tell you that membership is increased. And not only has it increased, it's increased with active people, people who do come to our meetings. You know, we

used to have democratic meetings be four or five of us and we have breakfast meetings every month too. But we've been getting 80 to 100 people at the meetings. We have to take the higher, bigger room.

Speaker 2

You have a breakfast meeting once a month on Saturday morning. So now who will be your guest included?

Speaker 1

Yes, once one time said you want it. Well, we've because it's a primary elections coming up. We have asked that each of the senatorial and congressional candidates and gubernatorial and congressional candidates that count, but even our regular business meetings.

Speaker 2

Right. OK.

Speaker 1

That we hold. On, you know, like on Wednesday night are well attended.

Speaker 2

Right. You never expected you have the President of the United States or one of your breakfast meeting.

Speaker 1

No, we never really expected that. I will.

Speaker 2

Say and that was it was the Saturday morning. You know, when you usually. Have your breakfast party.

Speaker 1

Yes, right, right. We had, I never. Forget it. I think we had it on another morning that week because sometimes if we if we get, you know, somebody special coming through or request after all a presidential candidate, even if it is Jimmy who I we had it on.

Speaker 2

You did that also. OK.

Speaker 1

A weekday morning. But we didn't have regular breakfast. We only had. Coffee and doughnuts and we had to go out and drum up people and drag them into that breakfast. I think it was. In 70, I came up with it was in 75 or 70. Six, I don't. Really remember, I think it was the spring of 76.

Speaker 2

Yeah, I I. Remember myself being invited, not even having gone.

Speaker 1

And I do remember, however, that the Murray family were very early supporters of Jimmy Carter and worked hard for him when everybody else was, you know, supporting those who we thought had a better chance or the favorite.

Speaker 2

Right. Any other anything else you'd like to say?

Speaker 1

Gee, I can't think of you got any questions. I'll try either one.

Speaker 2

I think we've covered just whatever. OK. Thank you. Do it again.

Speaker 1

Yeah, I really enjoyed it. Might do it again. Oh, the one thing I did get a call from the White House 2 weeks ago, and they had invited. The Murrays down. For dinner and they kind of wanted lobster. Now, when the President was here before, he does not take any gifts. Whatever. But I had some young friends, loyal Democrats who live on an island off the off Mount Desert. And as you know, not too many Democrats down there. And they they're lobster fisherman, a young married couple. And they brought some lobsters. The President and I wasn't sure if the President would take them and they had slipped a little note in with the lobsters. And when I gave the watches, the president's aid, I said, well, just cook them on the plane and give them to him as part of the regular meal, the note. It got lost. I got a call from the White House saying the President enjoyed him and he'd like to. Send the thank you. Note and he did. Yes, he did. Yeah. And then they called back and said they would like to buy some main lobsters, you know, for the Murrays trip. And they couldn't find any, you know, lots is over \$4.00 a pound here now. And they're they're holding them off the market. So I got a call from the White House and I called those.

Speaker 2

He actually ate the lobster. Right.

Speaker 1

Friends again. And they did supply and they charged, of course President paid, but the lodge just went down with the Murrays and said that way I thought that was, you know.

Speaker 2

Right.

Speaker 1

Really interesting aside. Like they do remember these things they called up and said you had a fellow that got the lives this point and we get some more. This Ruth Barry. Hmm. Was this Ruth Barry that had? Ruth Berry called. Yeah, right. And and then I said, well, I'll have seated tomorrow. You bring them down? She said OK, would you do that? And you have that number. I said, sure. I've got the number. And

she said no, you don't because they had to change it since the president's visit. When I'm listed number. And I said, well, how am I going to get it? She said I'll give it to you. So I thought it was kind of a roundabout way getting my neighbors. Telephone number from the White House.

Speaker 2

Right, definitely. So you do think the presence visit was a?

Speaker 1

Success. Ohh, tremendous success. I wish you'd do it.

Speaker 2

Again, yeah. You know, maybe another year. Yeah.