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Goulet, Maurice oral history interview

Mike Richard

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Interview with Maurice Goulet by Mike Richard

Summary Sheet and Transcript

Interviewee

Goulet, Maurice

Interviewer

Richard, Mike

Date

July 30, 1999

Place

Harpwell, Maine

ID Number

MOH 130

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Biographical Note

Maurice Goulet was born September 13, 1923 in Portland, Maine, attended St. Dom's Lewiston High School. He lost his hand in 1942 while working at the Hyde Willis Company in Bath, Maine, worked at Brunswick Naval Air Station, and then was a special student at Bates College in 1945. He worked with Life/Group Insurance, Central Maine Broadcasting System, a Consulting/Construction Firm, and as a Real Estate Appraiser. He was appointed to the Planning Board under Roland Marcotte and was involved with the Housing Authority and the Zoning Board of Appeals. He owned WCME and made it an FM station.

Scope and Content Note

Interview includes discussions of: Waterville law practice; 1954 Maine gubernatorial campaign; 1957-1958 Muskie's second term as governor; urban planning and development; Democratic Party in Maine; community history of Lewiston; first industrial park in Maine; Bates Mill textiles; ethnic intolerance (specifically involving Francos) in Portland, Boothbay Harbor, and Lewiston schools (Irish v. French tensions); Model Cities program; Robert Couturier; Goulet's wife drove Longley's Winnebago during 1974 gubernatorial campaign; and Goulet was Frank Coffin's right hand man when he lost gubernatorial race in 1960.

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Transcript

Mike Richard: The date is July 30th, 1999, this is Mike Richard here with Mr. Maurice Goulet in Long Point in Harpswell, Maine, and the time is about ten o'clock. And Mr. Goulet, could you please state your full name and spell it?

Maurice Goulet: Yes, my full name is Maurice L. Goulet, M-A-U-R-I-C-E, L for Leo, Goulet, G-O-U-L-E-T. My home address is 9 Pagoma Lane, Lewiston, Maine 04240. I have a telephone at home, 784-4880, and the Ocean number here is 1-207-833-5824.

MR: And when was your date of birth?

MG: September 13, 1923.

MR: Where were you born?

MG: Portland, Maine.

MR: And how long did you live in Portland?

MG: I was just born and, with a name like Goulet, my father thought he had a better chance of survival by coming to Lewiston which is eighty-five percent French, and so I was probably only six to eight months old when I came to Lewiston, Maine. So basically I'm a Lewiston boy, I've been here ever since.

MR: Now had your family, as a French family, had they encountered any type of prejudices, or problems in Portland?

MG: No, I'm a first generation American, French-American. My people came from Quebec, and they came here and got married here in Lewiston, and basically I was brought up more or less in Lewiston. And I was involved in the insurance business for some twenty, thirty years. I was also involved in Lewiston Lumber Company, and if they bought my lumber, I would finance it through the Equitable Life, also would do the designing, and I was the credit manager there and enjoyed that tremendously. I was also the banker, more or less, in a way, a fashion.

And from the very first, I was very much involved in industrial development, and I and two others, one Mr. Poliquin, who's a banker locally has now deceased, but Jere Clifford still lives and he was very much involved in our creating the first industrial park in the state of Maine. And what we did there is that, we had no money but we had great ideas. The piece of land that I was involved in was comprised of seventy-eight acres of land. It was mostly resting on solid ledge and we knew that that would cost some money. We paid between a hundred and a hundred and fifty dollars per acre for the acquisition, which was fairly good. We needed some money to develop the park and at the time we were able to do something in Washington, D.C., and through Senator Muskie who was very, very helpful with us, we were able to get some money to get it going. And from there we went ahead and started building different businesses and factories and to this date it's about ninety percent complete. We have between fourteen hundred and fifteen hundred jobs, and what's nice about the industrial park, as it is right now, is that the businesses are mostly contained twenty-five, thirty, forty, fifty, or a hundred people. If something happens to any one of these businesses, it would not hurt our city in any way, shape, or manner. And that's basically the beginning of it. I'm now retired. But I still have a WalMart development.

Then downtown Lewiston, and I have all that information back home, including one page for these, I wanted to create a galleria downtown. The problem with Lewiston, Maine, as you traverse and as you go through our Maine state, is that it's not that great looking. It requires

some recycling. And so what I did in this particular case, I even went to Europe for four weeks trying to see what galleria they had there in Holland and also in Belgium, and I came back with a lot of information, I was all excited. I had a complete write up (*unintelligible word*) that I gave to the local clubs, the Rotarians and other clubs locally, and wanted to create this galleria. I was in Washington, D.C., met with Senator Muskie, we became very good friends. He had been, I had been involved with Ed Muskie before in Salute to Progress, which I will detail in a few minutes, and so he was instrumental in helping me with money to supply elevators that could be built and erected in between buildings, so that both buildings could be utilized by one elevator, and that the space second, third and fourth floor which is presently vacant, could be occupied by professional people. I wanted to create parking on the side of the canal, create an additional parking garage, and we worked at this for a long time and it failed, and I feel very badly to this date why it should have failed.

I was also very, very involved with Bates of Maine, which has just been sold. And Bates of Maine was owned by a neighbor of mine, Freddie Lebel, and he got into trouble. He had been with the company for years and he inherited a nightmare from the Chinese people that owned it before, they had bled it to death, had never done anything of repair or replenishment or equipment or machinery, and so he, he tried to keep this industry going. Because at one time Bates Mill was number one in the country in the textile. They employed sixty five hundred people. The building itself contains more space, one million two hundred and fifty thousand square feet, than there would be space in the South Portland shopping center, that's how much space there is in that building. And therefore, when he got into trouble I was able to, I've always been a good beggar, and I was able to pick up some money to get it going. What happened then is he picked up good accounts, L.L. Bean, J.C. Penney, big, big concern down south from Virginia to Texas, and that was Belk, B-E-L-K, and he started getting large orders. The problem with that is that if he had an order for two hundred and fifty thousand bedspreads, he had to manufacture, he had to pick up the materials, he had to deliver, and then he had to wait a hundred and twenty days for his money, so every new account that he got involved with, he got into more trouble.

I have a friend who takes care of my security part of it, also very, very close friend of my son Marc, and I got him interested and he bought the mill. And the mill at the time was doing four and a half million dollars, he brought it up to eight million dollars, and then we packaged the entire mill because he wanted to get someone stronger than he was to enlarge it. At the time, there was a CO of L.L. Bean who decided to get into that business. In the middle part of the country he had just bought one of the large woolen mill in the country, and he was now interested in Bates. And what happened is that he decided that he wanted to buy Bates of Maine, he wanted to procure new equipment, or good equipment, fix the place indoor, inside as well as outside.

The plant right now has many broken windows so there's a lot of work to be done, but I feel that within a year this new business, and I have it right here, this new business will probably be doing ten to fifteen million of production per year. Right now they have so much business that they're looking for the people to work twelve hours a day. I have a sister-in-law right now working there and she's working ten hours a day, six days a week. They want her to work twelve hours a

day six days a week. The problem with textile is that people back in the past think of it as a low paying job; that's not the case. The average people there right now are making twelve to fifteen dollars an hour, and they have all the fringe benefits and everything else that goes with it. So in time, what we have to do is to create a school to educate newcomers coming in to learn the business, and eventually I think we'll be successful. And therefore, when we do that, the people coming in won't have to work twelve hours a day, you know? They'll be able to work the eight hours, regular hours, but what they'll do is open a second shift and a third shift so that everything would work out very nicely.

So in this particular case, again, we've had help from Washington, D.C., we've had help from our local governor who is very, very well adverse for industry, and he's been very, very good to us. So that basically it, why don't you stop it now.

(Taping paused)

MG: All right, I'd like to take a little time at this time to speak about the industrial park that I helped create with the help of attorney Jere Clifford and also Mr. Poliquin, who is a local banker, very, very dedicated person. And what we wanted to do is to bring in, in this new park, as many businesses and industries as we could. We had to find a way that there would be special financing and that we had the labor, very good labor, we have probably one of the finest labor in this part of the world. And maybe I will devote a little time on the labor part of it. We've been successful in getting People's Heritage to come here, they have bought, since they came to the Bates area, many, many new banks. They could have expanded in Portland or Bangor or elsewhere, but they voted in doing it all in Lewiston, Maine.

Now I'd like to go back to the park. As we, we decided that one good form of advertising, getting the TV (by the way, I owned a radio station at that time in Brunswick, AM-FM), we wanted to make sure that we had the radio, the TV, the newspaper behind us, as well as the governor of the state of Maine and all officials, to come in under one big, under one big roof once a year and have a, and give out plaques and so on and really out-, really give credit to all the new businesses that was coming in. We invited Ed Muskie to be our head speaker, and he was so successful in that they made him a yearly event. And if anyone wanted to know more about financing help or anything else, he was made available and he would help everyone that wanted some help. And so basically, that would be a very quick synopsis of the industrial park. Want to close it?

(Taping paused)

MR: Well, I guess I'll ask a little bit about your family background now, getting back to that. You mentioned that both your parents came from Quebec originally?

MG: Yes, yes, my father's name was Wilfred, my mother's name was Almira. They both came from Quebec, came over here when they were quite young, got married here, and I'm the first generation Franco-American. My dad became a general contractor, my mother worked a good part of her life at Bates of Maine. And she was on piecework doing tablecloths, and she would

bring a little paper bag to work. She made as much money as the superintendent because of the piecework and so people didn't like her for that reason, because they were working by the hour. But that's when I started to know more and more about Bates and to this day, I'd like to see Bates prevail. They came here, he became a general contractor, he was involved with many, many of these businesses that you have here, in building them, and we had a very, very good relationship. My dad was very well liked, even though my dad only went to the fourth grade, when he passed away, he had the biggest funeral that Fortin's Funeral Parlor had ever had for a man who had just gone to the fourth grade. You looked at my dad, you'd think he was the governor. And he loved everyone, and he had a way with him that made it throughout his life.

MR: And how many siblings did you have?

MG: Well, there was only two of us, as far as I had one brother and that's it, who was younger than I am by seven years. I got married to Therese Goulet, who was an RN, fell in love with a nurse naturally, and we had five children. We started out with identical twins, John and James, then we had the little girl Marie who is presently in Savannah, Georgia and doing very well, then we had Marc who is the appraiser, the one that loves to hunt and fish, and he's the appraiser. And then after that we had Anne Louise who is an optometrist here in Portland, doing very, very well. And that's basically the family. And the family, I think in any family, if you can raise those kids to become part of your family, I think then you're successful. It has nothing to do with making money. They each come all the time, they have a home away from home. We love to see them, entertain them, and we love them all. So basically that's my family. When you have that family behind you, it provides you with that extra strength to make a go of it.

MR: Yeah, that's true. And what is your brother's name?

MG: Fernand, F-E-R-N-A-N-D. He owned the Flamingo Motel at one time in Lewiston, which has now changed name, and right now he's manager of Framier Auto Sale on Main Street in Lewiston. And like I say, he's seven years younger than I am.

MR: Now what were your parents' religious and political beliefs? You can start with either one.

MG: Oh, my parents were Catholic, very strong, devoted Catholics. And luckily the strain has continued. All of our children are Catholic and I'm a very strong Catholic. I was the first president of my parish board, which is Holy Family church. And I taught CCD with my wife for seventeen years at church. So we try to give of ourselves because if you've got it here and you don't use it, it's a waste. So all the days that we had available, we used it to the full extent.

MR: And what were your parents' political beliefs?

Female voice in background (Mrs. Goulet?): They were Democrats!

MG: Yeah, very strong Democrats. The Lewiston, see Lewiston is eighty-five percent French and eighty-five percent Democrat.

Mrs. G.: Well it was then.

MG: Yeah, back then. It was the biggest Democratic stronghold in the state of Maine.

MR: Now do you say that they were loyal to the party as such more, or were there . . . ?

MG: Yes, they were loyal to the party, I mean very strong affiliation, and very vocal.

MR: Now were their beliefs themselves more liberal or moderate would you say, or conservative even, or how would you characterize their actual social attitudes?

MG: Probably I would have to say middle way between conservative and liberal. They were brought up with nothing, so they were conservative in that respect, and they could . . .

Mrs. G.: They were Democrats but they had Republican views.

MR: Oh, okay, so moderate Democrats.

Mrs. G.: They thought that everybody should go out and do their thing and work, they got here and they worked, but they were Democrats. They wanted people to be all equal and work hard and get paid for what they were doing. They didn't necessarily care about giving, they were very fortunate in their way, they were giving people, but they felt that people should have a job and work. They didn't like no handouts.

MG: My dad had a saying that whenever he hired a new person, "Do as I do and I'll be very happy." He was not the type that could sit in a chair and dedicate work, he was there first even though he was the general contractor, and so that . . .

Mrs. G.: They were very industrial in their outlook, they were go get it, and they worked hard and they made it, you know, they ended up being in construction and they made it. But they worked hard.

MR: Now you mentioned that your parents left Portland when you were about six months old.

MG: About six months old, yes, and came to Lewiston.

MR: And . . .

MG: By the way, he was working while he was in Portland at the big railroad yard in Portland as a carpenter. So construction was back in his veins, way back then, see, so when he came to Lewiston, construction was easy for him to get involved with. And being French and knowing everyone, he got to know everyone. He did a good job. I used to get him all the jobs in Lewiston at Lewiston Lumber and she did the bookkeeping.

Mrs. G.: When he came to Lewiston, they came to Lewiston when you were just a little boy, nine months old . . .

MG: Was it nine? I told him six.

Mrs. G.: Well, it was six or seven, it doesn't really matter, but then they came to Lewiston because all their relatives are going to be here, you know, and they were all alone in Portland.

MR: So it was kind of to be with the French community or the Lewiston community?

Mrs. G.: Well, yes, they felt more at home in Lewiston. And then she went to work in the mills which she worked for forty years, she was an expert scallops seamstress . . .

MG: She was on piece work, I told him how she made a lot of money.

Mrs. G.: And, but then, then he went into business and got his father and mother and the rest of the family down from Canada. He and his brother went into business, so his father came down with the rest of the family. And there were several . . .

MG: They started by being in the ice, coal and wood business, and . . .

Mrs. G.: On Lincoln Street, and then . . .

MG: And the whole family was more or less working for him.

Mrs. G.: Is it after the war? No, no, it's in between there they went into construction.

MG: They had been in construction before, you know.

MR: So were there, did your family or parents have much interaction with the non French Canadian groups in Lewiston, which I'm sure was a minority then?

Mrs. G.: No, I don't think so.

MG: No, I don't think so. But they had the, while they were in the wood business they were involved with St. Mary's Hospital for instance.

Mrs. G.: Well no, he means, he means interaction with other nationalities.

MG: No, no, they were mostly interacting with . . .

Mrs. G.: Their own.

MG: . . . their own. Well, keep in mind my father couldn't speak English.

MR: Oh.

Mrs. G.: The mother could.

MG: My mother could.

MR: So you spoke Eng-, you spoke French all the time in the house as children?

MG: Oh, all the time, all the time.

Mrs. G.: So did I, you know, neither of my parents spoke English, so we learned our French. That's my inheritance, that's what I inherited from my parents, my second language. And I'm happy to have it.

MR: Did your parents, your parents also came from Quebec?

Mrs. G.: Yeah, in fact they came from the same, the ancestors came from the same island, came to France and went to, lived on the island which is the same island both our parents did. Isn't that funny?

MG: Isle of Orleans has seven parishes, and the first parish is St. Peters, and that's where the Goulet house is, and the Goulet house is the oldest building on, in St. Peter's parish.

Mrs. G.: Now, the Isle of Orleans is right here and Quebec is here, of course, and Quebec is a, the Isle of Orleans is just an island, but they'd come in, and they'd come in with the big boats and they'd take a *chaloupe*, or a little boat and they'd go on to the island, that's where they'd settle.

MR: Oh yeah, I had the opportunity to visit there, I remember that, that's a nice area, yeah.

Mrs. G.: Beautiful country, but everybody, they left it because everybody else had the same products they did, there was no, everybody was poor, you know.

MG: We brought our grandchildren, our daughter from Savannah, Georgia, Marie and her husband and the two boys had never been to Quebec City. They don't speak French, and the funniest thing, they came to Quebec for three days and now they want to learn French.

Mrs. G.: Yeah, they loved the people and they loved the . . .

MG: Yeah, they were well received, yeah.

Mrs. G.: We took them where, to see the ancestors' house, which is right next to the St. Lawrence River of course, they came in and they built next to the river, they needed the water, right? Not the water per se, but they had to protect themselves from the water and the, yeah, it was, it's interesting because the . . .

MG: The population of Quebec City now with Levis included is close to seven hundred thousand people.

Mrs. G.: It's a nice little, it's a nice city to visit. It's a lot smaller than Montreal, Montreal is a lovely place, too, but . . .

MG: But it's cosmopolitan, it is not as French.

Mrs. G.: Well, it's not only that, but it's bigger, it's not so, they have twenty eight hundred clothes, police, you know, plainclothes policemen and it's very safe. Oh well, anyway, I'll leave you to do this.

MR: It's fine. And so as children you and your brother, did you talk about politics with your parents much, or was it talked about at the dinner table?

MG: Yes, we did, we did. I had a grandfa-, my dad's father wanted me more than anything else in the world for me to be a governor. I did not want to be in politics, she didn't. I could have been the alderman in Lewiston, I was voted in, because someone left the post and they put my name in. And she says you, anything he wants to with politics, but you'll have to do it by yourself. When Muskie left as governor, going to Washington, D.C., he came over and he said, "Maurice, I'll help you, why don't you get into politics, and I'll help you to be the governor of Maine." I says, "I'd have to think about this," and she was with me, she says, not (*unintelligible phrase*), so that was the beginning of the end of my political, yeah. I was always close to them, but never ran for any offices. And so when you say about this board and that board, I was selected for those boards.

MR: Oh, those weren't appointed by the mayor or anything, those were elected positions.

MG: No, no, they were appointed by mayor, oh yes, yeah. Yeah, but what I say is that they were, they might have been political in a way, but it was a service for this board, and my doing a little service for that board, but they had nothing to do with becoming an alderman or a mayor or anything like that.

MR: And now, growing up in your neighborhood, what were, what are some of your recollections of what it was like, maybe economically, or?

MG: I can write a book on that one. I was raised facing the city park . . .

Mrs. G.: Well they were all poor, they didn't know they were poor.

MG: That's right. I had eleven friends and they, we were all very close . . .

Mrs. G.: You were all poor, you didn't know you were poor.

MG: No, I didn't know I was poor then. My dad had built me a spit shine, shoe place, that I would bring into the park and provide you with nickel spit shine on the weekend or after school. And I would bring the spit shine stand in between the two buildings and lock it up. When I wanted chocolate, we had Liggett's Drugstore downtown, Lewiston, that would display a beautiful chocolate . . .

Mrs. G.: You don't want that written down.

MG: No, no, it's not, this is strictly off the cuff. And I could see that they were discoloring. Pretty soon they would take this wonderful chocolate and throw it. I had to be there when they throw it, because that was my chocolate. For bread we had, we had Cushman from Portland. They would come in with stale bread on Lincoln Street, and we have to fight for the bread, they had long, a stick that long and you could get them for a nickel. So that was our bread. So we started out from scratch. I worked for the telegram company and I had a little bicycle and I would sing telegrams, and my God, I was getting twenty-five cents an hour then. Before that I had worked at Sanitary Market for ten cents an hour for twelve hours on Saturdays. And so I was at the very bottom scale wise, so I saw it go from ten cents to what it is today. People don't work today for fifteen dollars an hour. I had to work like hell for ten cents an hour. So we've seen the entire area of growing up from nothing to what it is today.

Mrs. G.: Well when you were young, Maurice, the city was booming. All the mills were working, they were, everybody had employment.

MG: Oh yes, everything was fine except the wages. The wages were still too damn low.

Mrs. G.: Well yes, well, they still complain that the wages are low today. I mean, not everybody makes fifteen dollars an hour. I mean, what is it, the, the basic they can make is it five fifteen, is it?

MR: I think it's something like that, yeah. It was four twenty-five, five years ago, and they upped it a little bit.

MG: Yeah, I think it's probably five fifteen now.

Mrs. G.: But I mean, everybody, you had a happy childhood.

MG: Oh yes, very happy, I didn't know I was poor.

Mrs. G.: No, everybody else was poor, your peers were poor. I mean, now it's a lot different, people are making more money and there's, . . .

MG: I would tell all my friends that they could all be wealthy and rich if they would follow a certain formula, and they would laugh at me. Now as I went through life . . .

Mrs. G.: He lost them.

MG: . . . and went up to the scale, to the ladder, I kept losing one and another because they became very, very envious. All they had to do was follow me. They didn't want to follow me. It's too bad they didn't . . .

Mrs. G.: Same thing's going to happen to you as you grow older, you know, some of your best friends are going to leave you.

MG: The most jealous people in the world by the way are French and Italian.

MR: Oh, I've got a bad time of it then.

MG: Well, I have to let you know in advance so you'll know. No. Well, it's not as bad today.

Mrs. G.: Now people are more educated and it doesn't work that way any more.

MG: Well, back then when I was in business, I think I've told you I had a radio station, people were not accepted in Portland, the city of Portland would not accept a Frenchman in any way, shape or manner. They had the big Cumberland Club, which still exists today . . .

Mrs. G.: I wouldn't name it, dear.

MG: Well, he's not going to put it on a thing, I'm just telling you a fact. They would not accept me because I was Maurice Goulet . . .

Mrs. G.: But that's not just you, that's any Frenchman, it's any Frenchman.

MG: . . . president of WCME in Lewiston. Yup. Then I went to Boothbay and tried to do the same thing, and they wouldn't accept me at Boothbay Harbor because I had two things against me. First I was from Lewiston and secondly I was French and I was Catholic. So, those things existed in my era. Today they can't do that. But it gave me a lot of strength because I was French. And I love to be French.

Mrs. G.: See, that's a part of you that you got to develop.

MR: Yeah.

MG: I went to school with the nuns, Dominican nuns, from Paris, St. Peter's and St. Paul. When I went to high school I could hardly speak English, but boy did I know my French and to this day I speak a very good French, and it's helped me. We got to Europe, you can go to Italy, and you can go to Spain and you can go to Italy and naturally Belgium, most of them speak French there, and I'm very proud of it that I can speak fluently, you know. I wish to God I could speak four other languages. She knows some Spanish and I do too, but not as much as we'd like to. You know, French, it's very easy to speak Spanish and Italian because they're fairly close.

MR: And they're useful skills to have.

MG: Very useful.

MR: And, so you mentioned you went to, through elementary school, you went to Catholic parochial schools?

MG: Yes, and St. Dom's, yeah.

MR: And St. Dom's. And then for high school, where did you attend?

MG: Lewiston High. Graduated in 1942, I think, yes.

MR: What was your time there like, it must have been . . .

MG: Oh yeah, 1942, Lewiston High School, yeah.

MR: It must have been very, well certainly very different from the parochial schools, going to a public school that was open.

MG: Yes, it was more challenging. And the fact that I could hardly speak English, they'd call me Canuck, which is not a very good word for being a Frenchman. So let me tell you, I had to speak English in a hurry.

MR: Were there, was there a lot of prejudice in the schools like that, did you notice with yourself and with others?

MG: Oh yes, oh yes, the Irish element would laugh at me and call me Canuck. But that gave me the extra strength I needed.

MR: Was that the other, well, one of the dominant ethnic groups that was going to the school? Were there also an English group, or an Italian group (*unintelligible word*)?

MG: Well you had the English group naturally, we'd call them the Yankees, they were a little prejudiced, they thought they knew everything. The problem with the French people back in those days is then they were never pushed to finish college and to become somebody. Now it's a different story.

MR: And what did you do, actually, what were some of your interests while you were in high school?

MG: To this day, I'll show you my paintings, I, you're looking at one there.

MR: Oh, neat.

MG: Yeah, I always loved, I love to draw, I love to paint. I was in mechanical drawing and I did so well there that I become the assistant to the teacher. And so, those are the things I loved, I loved development way back then. And I think there were some things, oh, it all started when I lost my hand, see I have an artificial hand, I lost October 10, 1942, and I lost it at Hyde Windlass Company in Bath. On my last day of work I had signed up for the Air Force and I had to work that day with a new shirt and it got caught in the milling machine and cut it right here. So I had some time to think in the hospital, and the president of Hyde Windlass Company would come to see me at the hospital and say, "Maurice, don't worry, as long as we're in business you'll have a job, even if it's sweeping. Even if it's sweeping." So naturally at nighttime I could dream of myself sweeping the floors. So next time when the president of the company came to see me, I says, "What would you do if you were in my shoes?" He said, "I'd get the hell out of here since I can go back to school?" and that's why I became a special student at Bates. But you see I wasn't prepared to go to college. But it helped me, I took the Dale Carnegie course, did so well that I become the assistant there, and I had to work my way. Oh, between the time I lost my hand and the time that I went to school, I was at the Naval Air Station in Brunswick here on inventory. I became the assistant chief at the base and I had Naval people working for me, sailors and waves, I had seven waves working for me, and so I was a self starter. So I got in from there to going to school, and from there entering the Equitable Life and being at the Equitable Life for twenty-three years I think. And then going from Lewiston Lumber where I was the sales manager, I was the credit manager, I made plans for nothing, that's where my occupation came in. If you want to buy my lumber I make all the plans for you, whether it was a warehouse or a house or whatever, and I would finance it through the Equitable Life at four percent.

MR: So that was your main job in Lewiston.

MG: That's right, and as a third job I built factories, I built twenty-three of them.

MR: Now you mentioned you became a special student at Bates? Was that through your involvement with the Naval Air Station, did they have a program that . . .?

MG: No, when I did that I had to start studying so that I could get in, and didn't know where I was going, didn't know which courses to take, so I went in as a special student. That's another story. I got out of there to get married, and I never married that girl. I had a high school sweetheart for four years. She says, "If we don't get married now, it's over." And this idiot here left college to get married and two weeks before, I receive a certified "Dear John" letter. Their folks were not about to let their little girl marry a handicapped person. Again, that gave me some strength, you know? I needed that.

MR: And then, what year did you graduate from Bates?

MG: I only went one year.

MR: When you . . .

MG: Yeah.

MR: So that was, but you spent some time in between high school and Bates as . . .

MG: Oh yes, I went to college, I was not young, I was probably twenty-two.

MR: So this must have been mid-forties was your year at Bates?

MG: If I was born in '21 and you think twenty-two, yes, forty-five, forty-four, forty-five.

MR: So you spent about two or three years with the Naval, Naval Station?

MG: Oh yes, yeah.

MR: And then after you got out of Bates you went pretty much immediately to business with Equitable Life?

MG: Yes, with Equitable Life, yes. Became a district manager with Equitable Life. They knew I was working at Lewiston Lumber but they never fired me because no one ever beat me, even though I was part time. So I went all the way from being an agent to being a district manager, while being with Lewiston Lumber, while building in the industrial park, my dad being the contractor. It worked out very nicely. Yeah, I can straddle three horses, I was going to say with one asshole. I love horses, there's a picture there with me on a horse, around the wall. Not many things I haven't done. I can ski with one ski, with one hand, I was the only one at Sugarloaf. We had a condo there, that I could ski with no poles, because I have bursitis with this one and don't use that one too well. People would say, "You lost your poles?" I would say, "Sure." But I enjoy the sport. I can even golf, but I have a mean slice because you need this here for control, but I could hit the ball as far as anyone with two hands. I love to sail, by the way, I sail. This is the place to sail.

MR: Yeah, this is the place to be.

MG: Casco Bay is right in back here and there's over . . .

MR: Oh, really?

MG: Yes, there's as many islands in Casco Bay as there are days of the year. And we're right in the middle of it here. They think of this town Harpswell, Harpswell probably has a hundred and ten miles of fingers back and forth, this is Harpswell, see all the fingers? It's a nice little town, very nice, very progressive and doing well. I'd love to stay here year round but she doesn't like to, she gets very lonesome in the winters. The, we're in the association here, we're thirty-seven owners, and in winter there's only seven, all the others move. So I don't think she'd want to stay so therefore we have to stay here right on through November 1st, then go back home. So I don't stay in Lewiston that long.

MR: Now, you mentioned that you were involved in building some factories?

MG: Yes.

MR: What was that, what organization, or how was that (*unintelligible word*)?

MG: It was Morse and Lane Associates, and that's in here. And all the businesses, Burton & Son Box Factory, Burton & Son now leased to Frank C. Myers, Lewiston Hardware No. 1, Lewiston Hardware No. 2, Lawrence (*name*), commercial distributor, Value House, I built that first building, Vincent Sullivan, Ace Electric Motor in Auburn, Sherwin Professional Building, 1111 Lisbon Street. Oh, I started on a bank, American Trust on Canal Street, State Liquor, they have a liquor store in Harpswell, I built the First National Store and our registration office. Then I built the biggest restaurant in the state of Maine in Portland, the Steerhouse.

MR: Oh yeah, I've heard of that. And so how would . . . ?

MG: That would sit seven hundred and twenty two people. That was a big building, a big restaurant, and a motel, a hundred and ten units.

MR: So, but most of your involvement with industrial development was in Lewiston itself, and there was some in Portland but mostly in Lewiston.

MG: Yeah, a box, a big box factory in Waterville, for Burton & Son.

MR: Okay, and who were some of the people that you worked with in getting financing for these projects and planning.

MG: Auburn Savings.

MR: Auburn Savings?

MG: They never said no to me. Whenever the building was too large, they would take me to Boston to a big bank there, and they would provide me with the funds.

MR: Okay, and you said in . . .

MG: I was on the board of Auburn Savings, just as a trustee.

MR: You said in the late '50s, early and '60s you were on the planning board on the Housing Authority in Lewiston, so how did you, well I guess it was probably the Planning Board, how did you, which mayor appointed you to that position, or how did you secure that?

MG: I think that, the one you mentioned a little while ago . . .

MR: Is it . . . ?

MG: He had the agency for the Chevy.

MR: Marcotte? Roland Marcotte?

MG: Marcotte, Roland Marcotte is the one that appointed me.

MR: Okay, and what was it like working with him?

MG: I had a mayor of Lewiston that was my uncle.

MR: Oh, really? Which one was that?

MG: Uh, just take your time and the name will come in.

MR: He must have been involved in the '40s, early '40s?

MG: Yeah, it's coming to me, I have to think of the years. Oh, when I had my radio station, I had a French program every Sunday that paid for everything I had, and he was on the program. Oh, my God.

MR: Well that's okay, we have a list back at Bates anyways, but that's okay. But, actually I'm going to flip the tape right now before we get any further.

End of Side A

Side B

MR: This is the second side of the tape of the interview with Maurice Goulet on July 30th, 1999. And we were just going to start talking about your involvement with the Planning Board, and you mentioned off the tape that through that you were involved in some, in the urban renewal program, the Model Cities program?

MG: Yes, Model City, especially on Lisbon Street, we wanted to create, I think I told you, a galleria. We wanted to do a whole lot of things there that would, that really helped our city. And we had obstruction after obstruction because, like I say, people believe in status quo, and every time that we try to get something across and went to City Hall, half the people would go against us, and so we'd get back to square one. And so it, we did not accomplish what we started out to do. Today it's a little bit different, I think probably the people today would be more responsive as far as that goes. And I think I told you about trying to help Bates as much as we could, you know, we started the development. We wanted to create a parking garage, and that we had to fight like hell to create it. Second time around, once we got Peck building sold to L.L. Bean, we had no problem creating a parking garage in back there. That came along very quickly, and that was different. And that is very, very helpful.

As far as the housing development, I was on the board from day one and we created the Housing

Authority. Eventually I was, I did make available some land on Rideout Avenue to build apartments for the housing authority, and that today is going very well. They have buildings practically everywhere, which they control quite effectively. At the beginning, the control was not very good, but that's been taken care of since that time.

As far as other boards in Lewiston, the Zoning Board of Appeal, I was on that board, I think I was on one of them for two years and the Planning Board the same way, and but we did accomplish some good things there. And I don't remember the people that I was working with at the time, because I, because, maybe because of my age I forget names. I don't forget faces, but I do forget names, yeah.

So that basically, this would probably give you some idea of what I did. The buildings that I built was on my own, and they were not particularly politically motivated. I wanted to build. I was close to some good names of different companies and factories, and I decided that I would build and lease them, like First National, the Lewiston liquor, Maine State Liquor Store, Burton & Son, Lawrence's Distillery, and all those old professional buildings, 1111 Lisbon Street. And those were different projects that I put together myself.

MR: And now we were talking about also off the record, you mentioned you knew Ernest Malenfant who was mayor back in the '50s . .

MG: Yes, well, Ernest Malenfant, did stuff, there was involvement of politics, he was a gate tender, and he was possibly the only mayor that I dislike because I didn't feel that he was qualified to be the mayor of our city. He incidentally called me one day, wanted me to be on the Finance Board, which I refused not because I didn't want to be on the Finance Board but because I didn't want to work under him. Other mayors I've worked with very well, there was no problem. Oh, by the way, Don Girard, my uncle was also mayor.

MR: Oh, it was Don Girard.

MG: Don Girard, and Don Girard was on my program every Sunday, WCME in Brunswick.

MR: And you also were talking about Louis Jalbert?

MG: Louis Jalbert, yeah. He was a very strong politician and while he was in Augusta on the board, he would provide you with anything you wanted except that he wanted money for it. So I didn't mind him but whenever I saw him I would cross the street. I just did not want to get involved.

MR: And what about, actually I'm not sure if this was a little later than this or not, but was Bill Jacques mayor while you were involved?

MG: Yes, Bill Jacques was mayor. He does all of my electrical, he repairs television, radio, VCR and so on, and he's still quite close to the political circle. I knew him as a friend and he did a lot for the city, he was very much involved.

MR: And what about actually Paul or Faust Couture, I don't know if you knew them through the radio business or . . . ?

MG: Yes, he owned WCOU and I was, he was a good friend of mine. He was in the radio business for a long time. And I was not really a competitor because he was doing his business out of Lewiston. I was doing business out of Brunswick. However I had more business in Lewiston possibly than he did because, to me, a station was not bounded by the city that it worked in or where the building was located. And so that's another story.

WCME, when I bought it it was strictly AM, had a potential of FM. It had fifty thousand Watts, and so I built an FM stereo station and we started putting the AM and FM together. And we started out by being the last on the totem pole as far as listeners were concerned, and when I sold the business we were the second best in the state. And we had a potential of background music, which I utilized when I started selling background music from Portsmouth to Bangor, and we got very, very successful at this. And we eventually sold our background music to, I call my company Musovation, by the way, and, I'm trying to think of the company I sold it to. But it was the largest background music in New England and they decided that they wanted to buy the competitor and I just made it available. And I sold it because I wanted to take that money and build a restaurant in South Portland, which is the Steerhouse (*unintelligible word*). So that gives you a bit of my radio background.

MR: And also, did you get to know Robert Couturier?

MG: Couture.

MR: Couturier.

MG: Couturier, yes, he was the youngest mayor in the city of Lewiston. He was very helpful to me. He's a local lawyer, he's still doing some business.

MR: And what about Mayor Cy Joly, Cyril Joly? Did you work with him?

MG: No.

MR: No, okay. Yeah, date's are a bit off.

MG: I worked with the present one, the present lady mayor, she's been on our committee. She's on the committee that we want to do something with the Androscoggin River, highlighting the falls. Also the mayor of Auburn.

MR: Is that called the Androscoggin River Committee I believe, or is it . . . ?

MG: Well, Ed Fleury is the head of that committee and he works at Bates.

MR: Oh, right.

MG: Yes, matter of fact I'm supposed to call him today.

MR: Okay, and, I guess we'll talk about your involvement with Democratic Party politics and especially Ed Muskie of course.

MG: Ed Muskie, I was not in politics at that time, didn't want, my wife didn't want me to join. But I was always friendly with the party. I'm a registered Democrat, by the way. You have to in Lewiston if you want to survive, you know. Baldacci, you know . . .

MR: Joe Baldacci?

MG: Joe [*sic* John] Baldacci. I was a speaker for Bates of Maine and Baldacci was there present, and he found out about all these things I had done, and he says, "Maurice, I want to, for you to meet me at the office in Lewiston," and he says, "I want you to get involved with something that probably would pertain to Bates of Maine." He says, "We grow a lot of potatoes up north, but we have a potential of flax. You can grow the best flax in the whole world in the our part of Maine." And you know what flax is, it's linen, okay? And so I get involved with that except that that was a complete failure because the people that were involved with flax went through bankruptcy, and so I was not able to help Mr. Baldacci too much inside this time. If flax had become a reality, we wanted to move all that flax into Bates of Maine so we would have had the textile, the cotton textile as well as flax, which would have created linen.

MR: And was this just in the, must have been in the early '90s you were involved, or?

MG: Oh this was recently, about three or four years ago.

MR: And what were some of the other projects you've been involved in, like in the past ten, fifteen years maybe, or recent?

MG: They're all listed here, Lewiston Hardware No. 1, No. 2, Geiger Bros. & Son, Hillcrest, oh, I brought Hillcrest Chicken into the Sea to Lewiston. Mr. Mendelson was from Union, Maine. His company had burnt to the ground in Union, and I was the head of the industrial park at the time, so I brought him to Lewiston, bought the land. I got very much involved in building chicken houses because I was in the construction business as well. So we, Hillcrest became quite large. And it's a shame that they eventually folded up because Perdue, you've heard of the word Perdue, put all the chicken industries in the state of Maine out of business. First they were hiring Black people, non-union, secondly, they were right in the middle of the market, secondly their pay scale compared to being unionized here was a big, big difference. They were close to the grain, the feed, and so all they had to do is sell just to break even, and if Hillcrest would lose a penny a pound per chicken, keep in mind we're killing a hundred thousand chicken a day. You can't, you're killing so many chicken you can't not provide freezer space for them until the market changes. So they brought them all into bankruptcy, all of them.

I also worked for Maplewood, part of the family, out of Belfast, and bought land for them in Bangor. The plant was completely paid for, they had no mortgages, but because of Perdue, they pushed them out of business. That's when I, while I was in Bangor I shared with the general manager, this is a political story in a way, I share an office with the manager, Mr. Goff, and shared his office because I did something with the base, remember I told you about creating a Hilton. Well, at the time, in Bangor, the mayor of the town was Mr., it was Bill Cohen, a good Republican. He and I became very, very good friends. Like I say, I'll always register as Democrat, but I've always been a damn strong independent.

MR: So you don't always vote just with the party line, you vote for people you think are competent.

MG: No, I have to tell you the truth, yes.

MR: Who were some of the, you mentioned Bill Cohen and Joe Baldacci, who were some of the other politicians you've gotten to know, just personally through your work.

MG: Well, the one that helped me right now is the, is our senator's husband who, see, I became a member of the board of New England College of Optometry, and I became a member of that board because of, oh, Olympia Snowe's husband [Peter Snowe]. He's the one that got me on the board. New England College of Optometry, that's another story, is the oldest college of its kind in the world, they're located in Boston. I became a member of the board only because New England College of Optometry is made up of New England states. A governor of each state selects a person to be on the board, and I was selected to be, through Olympia Snowe and the governor, to be on that board. And that's another story, and I enjoy that very much.

My daughter was going to that college, New England College of Optometry, and she wanted to make sure that all her friends there did not know that her father was on the board. Except on graduation, on graduation day, oh, come on, on graduation day, who was on the stage giving out the diplomas? Yours truly. Oh, come on, I have to show you this because I'm very, very proud of that. Oh, that was a miracle because, okay, now on a corner of this is the person that gives her the diploma. The problem with that, you have to prove everything you do, otherwise you become, see the guy on the left? That's me.

MR: Oh, that's great.

MG: By that time . . .

MR: You put the sash on her yourself.

MG: Yeah, yeah, by that time she had a fiancé and he was there with the entire family. In the first row I had my entire family, and here I am on the stage graduating my daughter.

MR: Oh, that's funny.

MG: She's a lovely girl, she's an optometrist in Portland, does a fantastic job.

MR: That's great. And, have you been, so you mentioned you got that position on the board through Olympia Snowe's husband?

MG: Olympia Snowe's husband.

MR: Did you also know the governor who was making the appointment very well, or was it more the connection through Mr. Snowe?

MG: Connection through her, yes. I have known Olympia since day one. And she's a Republican.

MR: How did you meet her?

MG: Oh, well, industrial development.

MR: Oh, okay.

MG: Met her also in Washington, Washington, D.C.

MR: And when were you in Washington? Was this several periods, several different periods?

MG: Oh, my God, four or five different times. Again, because of the industrial development, because of downtown, and I wanted to create a mall. And remember I told you I was a good beggar and I wanted to open as many doors as I could in Washington, D.C., it's a good spot to start.

MR: And who are some of the other people down in Washington that you got to know, that just were really influential on you, or that you maintained particularly . . . ?

MG: Mostly the, oh, yes, mostly Ed Muskie, naturally Frank Morey Coffin who's a politician, a judge. Besides Olympia Snowe. No, the others would have been governor for the state of Maine. I was elected on quite a few boards from the state governors, my wife would remember them. I was a (*unintelligible word*) Mainer, by the way, and who was the governor at the time?

MR: Was this Reed?

MG: No, no, after . . .

MR: Governor Curtis?

MG: Curtis, yes, Governor Curtis is a very good friend, a very good friend. Nice person.

MR: Did you get to know some of the other governors, maybe, Governor Clauson was not in

office for very long.

MG: No, no.

MR: There was also Governor Longley.

MG: Not Reed, not Clauson. Who?

MR: Longley.

MG: Oh, Longley. When you live at Bates College, see, I knew, he was my professor.

MR: Oh, he was?

MG: Yeah, Longley was one of the best, well-versed insurance guy in the country. When he ran to become governor, my rotten wife drove the Winnebago for him, we helped him all the way through. He was a very good friend. Very, very strong Catholic, too, go to church every day. Before he died, we spent a lot of time together, he had to put his estate and his business together, and he was a nice person. Very, very nice. I'm glad you mention that, because he was one good friend of mine.

MR: And let's see, was there anyone else, maybe Governor Brennan were you involved with at all?

MG: No.

MR: He was more recent.

MG: No, no, and didn't want to; never liked Brennan.

MR: Okay, and . . .

MG: Oh, I have to tell you why I hate Brennan. It was an opening for an industrial development man for Augusta. I don't know why, because I was making money on my own, I applied for it. I received a very nice letter, I should have brought it. And at the time Brennan said he'd do everything he could to get me the job. When it came time for the job, all of a sudden I don't hear from him again, and the guy he selects got a long beard up to here, except his father had donated twenty-five thousand dollars to his cause. From that time, I found out he was just a shyster, a cheap, cheap shyster. He would vote either way, you know, whichever way the wind blows. He was a true, bad politician. And to this day I still think of him as that.

MR: Oh thanks, and also some of the, some of the other Maine people who were involved in state and national politics, maybe George Mitchell, did you get to know him at all?

MG: No, no. I knew him but I was not involved with him at that time.

MR: Okay, well let's talk about Frank Coffin actually, you said you got to know him.

MG: Frank Morey Coffin I knew from the very beginning. Very, very well educated, intelligent man, became my lawyer. As a matter of fact, when he ran for state governor, I was his right hand man. I stayed with him to the last minute on Election Day when he lost. Funny thing that I haven't been in touch with him in the past twelve, thirteen years. He lives right nearby here.

MR: And also, well, let's talk about Ed Muskie then, which I guess, when did you first meet him, do you remember?

MG: When I created a park in '54.

MR: Oh, so you were in back when he started off as governor.

MG: Yeah, yeah. I used to ride with him in his limousine when he'd come to town. I always made sort of a parade going up to wherever we went, Holiday Inn or, where we had our meeting. And we made it right from the day, first day, I liked him, he liked me. I helped him in any which way, when he wanted help I was there. When I wanted help he was there. Wonderful person, by the way. He could have been the president of this country and done a hell of a better job than Clinton.

MR: And so what were some of the things that you got to know about him personally that most impressed you or struck you in some way?

MG: Well, first of all, he made it from a very small beginning. He was in Waterville as an attorney, wasn't he?

MR: Yeah. I think.

MG: Oh, there's a good attorney there, that's a good friend of mine, that's doing some work right now for Clinton. And from the time he became a governor, he just progressed right up. Became very well known in Washington, D.C., even as a governor, and that's how come he left to become a senator, he had no problem. He had made a name, he had a track record, and like I say, he started, he started many things, industrial wise, and I love what he did.

MR: And you mentioned that many of the projects, the galleria idea especially, you were working with him on?

MG: Oh he tried awfully hard to help me there. It's a shame it didn't materialize.

MR: Was that the main project that you had the most contact with him on in particular, or were there some . . .?

MG: Well, Salute to Progress, I had a lot of contacts with him over the years, but yeah, I think I

would say that the downtown galleria is the one that I had the most help, it's the one that I'd go to Washington, D.C. to see, for him to help me.

MR: And did you get to know his family at all, I mean Jane Muskie or his children or parents?

MG: My wife knew his, no, no, not too much.

MR: Did you continue to have a relationship with him past his senate years and secretary of state years, when he was at Kennebunk and around Maine?

MG: No.

MR: So it was more of a kind of a relationship working with him on the urban projects while he was senator.

MG: Yeah. The senator got older and he kind of fizzled out at that time, someone else took over.

MR: And actually, let's talk a little bit about . . .

MG: Have you been in touch with Mr. Gosselin?

MR: Yeah, Lucien Gosselin, I think we've either done an interview or we're about to do one if we haven't done one.

MG: He's very much involved with the park now, and he more or less has taken over after I dropped out. I'm trying to think of other politicians in Washington and right now that's all I can think of. The governors, yes, I knew quite a few of those. But the politicians in Washington, D.C., no. Oh, Hathaway.

MR: Oh, Bill Hathaway.

MG: Oh yes, yeah, Bill is a friend. You know, talk about, you know . . .

MR: Who was he like?

MG: Nice guy. He was not a Muskie, let me tell you, but he was a nice guy, yeah.

MR: I was just thinking of someone and now I can't think of him.

MG: You have to bring up a name and then I could tell you. Collins, by the way, I hate.

MR: Who is that?

MG: Senator Collins.

MR: Was he . . . ?

MG: No, no, the lady, the one that's there now.

MR: Was she, oh, okay.

MG: She turned coat, she went from a Republican to voting, to helping the Democrats. She tried to save Clinton's job. And I don't like Clinton, he's probably the person that's a politician that I hate the most in my life. He's a two-face, not only being a whoremaster, but I think he's a two-faced thief, he'll do anything that he can get away with, and that's a fact. And that's the one thing with me, I tell it as it is and I don't hide in back of anybody. I'm not worried.

MR: Well, I won't tell him that you said that. Let's see, where was I, so, yeah, let's talk about your involv-, at least you got to witness the Democratic Party and some people in it back in the '50s when it was making a resurgence in Maine. Do you have any stories about that? I know there were, maybe the TV programs you saw or what that was like to be around in that time of change?

MG: Well, you ment-, I mentioned one governor that I was main marker (*sounds like*) . . .

MR: Is it Curtis?

MG: Curtis, we did a lot of things together. We went on some, we went on some different locations throughout the country looking for industries, as a mark, mark, main, main marker. I have the letter upstairs on that one.

MR: But do you remember some times during the '50s maybe when, this is back when Muskie was becoming governor in '54, do you remember what the atmosphere in Lewiston was like at the time, the campaign?

MG: Well, in the campaign he did very well. I think his first, he was on the right side, certainly they got to know him, they knew he had been to Bates, and I think Frank Morey Coffin helped tremendously. Those two were together all the time. Like I say, Frank Morey Coffin definitely, positively should have been the governor of the state of Maine. They voted him out.

MR: Oh, and did you get to know, a couple of names here under, Dick McMahon was one of Muskie's closest campaign people?

MG: No, no, know of him, but never worked with him.

MR: Maybe Paul Fullam, Professor Paul Fullam, or John Donovan?

MG: No.

MR: Okay. All right. Actually, one question about Lewiston, how do you think Lewiston's changed over the years?

MG: Well, I think the city of Lewiston right now is going through a transition. I think the city of Auburn is closer to Lewiston than it's ever been before. Many, many years ago I wanted Lewiston and Auburn to become one, one government. I got laughed at at that time because of the politicians in our city. But I have an idea that if I lived another ten years that I'll see good things happening to Lewiston. I was involved with People's Bank, they had been in Lewiston. They had all of our employees Lewiston-Auburn, they knew that they could get their money's worth from their employees because, first, they were sincere, hard working people, and that's where we can cash in in Lewiston over any other city in the state. So once they decided to take that building of Bates, renovate it and from there, they picked up a site in industrial park, number two, the new one, that, doing something there, too. Now that they've bought four or five different other banks, all of the essentials that they kept from those bank on acquisition, the people came here to work. So labor wise, without trying to brag, I think we have the best labor available. That's one thing with our people, this is, they might not be the wealthiest, but they can be depended on and they're good workers, and that's important today.

MR: I guess one sort of finish up question: what would you say that Ed Muskie's legacy or, well political legacy for Maine and Maine politics has been?

MG: He was an innovator, he would stick to whatever he believed in. And in the industrial field that he pursued and the doors that he opened have progressed to this day, and they remember Ed Muskie as being the innovator.

MR: Okay. Well, is there anything that we haven't gone over that you'd like to talk about, maybe your own involvement with the city programs?

MG: No, no, I think that about wraps it up.

MR: Okay, great, well thanks a lot.

End of Interview