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Gray, Joseph oral history interview

Andrea L'Hommedieu

Interview with Joseph Gray by Andrea L'Hommedieu

Summary Sheet and Transcript

Interviewee
Gray, Joseph

Interviewer
L'Hommedieu, Andrea

Date
January 14, 2002

Place
Portland, Maine

ID Number
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Biographical Note

Joseph "Joe" Gray was born in Providence, Rhode Island on September 15, 1944. He grew up in Providence and graduated from the University of Wisconsin. Gray began working for the Model Cities program in Portland in 1969 and about a year later, transferred to the Portland Renewal Authority. He eventually became Planning Director and at the time of this interview was the City Manager of Portland, Maine.

Scope and Content Note

Interview includes discussions of: Model Cities Program in Portland; 1970s urban renewal; and Portland, Maine community history.

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Transcript

Andrea L'Hommedieu: This is an interview with Mr. Joseph Gray, Portland city manager, on January 14th, the year 2002, in the city manager's office at Portland City Hall. Mr. Gray, could you start by saying your full name and spelling it?

Joseph Gray: Joseph Gray, J-O-S-E-P-H, G-R-A-Y.

AL: And where and when were you born?

JG: I was born in Providence, Rhode Island on September 15, 1944.

AL: And where did you grow up?

JG: I grew up in Providence.

AL: You did. And when did you come to Maine?

JG: Came to Maine in the fall of 1969.

AL: Were you pursuing work at that point, or what brought you to Maine?

JG: I had submitted out, after graduate school, I was graduated from the University of

Wisconsin, and I sent resumes out to a variety of different job opportunities and the, I sent one to the Portland Renewal Authority, and the Renewal Authority said that they didn't think I was qualified for the particular position but they'd sent my resume downstairs to the Model Cities Program. And the director for the Model Cities Program called me up, wanted to know if I was coming back east at any time, and I said I was to visit my family so they, or he, invited me to come up, I interviewed for the job and about a couple weeks later had a job offer.

AL: Wonderful.

JG: That simple.

Jadine O'Brien: Yet he didn't plan on staying, however.

AL: No. Now, growing up in Providence, Rhode Island, what did your parents do for work?

JG: My father was a school teacher, he was the first male elementary school teacher in Providence. And my mother was, at that time when we were growing up she was just a homemaker, at home.

AL: Now you started with the Model Cities Program in '69.

JG: That's right.

AL: And you didn't plan to stay, but you did stay.

JG: Yup.

AL: What do you think kept you here all these years?

JG: Well, the job, professionally. I was able to, well, I started with Model Cities, I was there for a year or so while they got an urban renewal application funded, and then when it was funded I transferred over to the Portland Renewal Authority, which was a separate entity, to actually run the project. And with the Renewal Authority I was given different assignments over the years, and then the Renewal Authority folded probably late 1970s, and I came back to the city and ran different programs for the city, ultimately becoming the planning director and then a year or so ago becoming city manager.

AL: When you started on the Model Cities Project, who were some of the people you had contact with in the community that were important to the project?

JG: Jerry Conley was very active in the neighborhood association, became a state representative; Larry Caron was an individual who was a neighborhood activist, has since passed away, and ran an organization called LIP, which was Low Income People; Margaret Conley was a woman who was involved in the neighborhood for a number of years, and I think was chair of the Model Cities, wasn't she chair of the policy committee?

JO: She was secretary to the Portland West Advisory Committee. But she really ran the advisory committee.

JG: Right, the advisory committee was a group of neighborhood residents who reviewed all the applications, reviewed all the funding requests. So, she has since passed away as well, but was involved for many, many years in the programs. Who else? Nellie Talbot, who was a person who lived on Salem Street and ran a neighborhood organization in the west end, and unfortunately the name, I can see the building, it's right there on Danforth Street, and she ran that for a number of years, was involved.

JO: Now, it was a program that was based heavily on citizen participation. And we never would have gotten the money to begin with if we hadn't assured them, and had not involved over that five year period of time as many of the residents as we could. And there was money to do that, to transport them to meetings, to pay for babysitters, to provide meals. So there was an advisory committee I'm going to guess maybe of twenty five people, the majority of whom were residents of the neighborhood, of the Model Cities neighborhood. There were task forces, there was at least half a dozen task forces, each with at least a half of them residents. And a very interesting mix of, what you had was professional people, nurses, lawyers, religious leaders, and residents, and many times residents didn't know the lingo, or they didn't know the process. And I would say one of the strengths that came out of the program is the kind of empowerment that it gave to neighborhood residents, to speak, to be comfortable in front of the city council, then some of the eventually ran and served, both on the school committee and the council.

JG: Just to elaborate on what Jadine said, one of the interesting things about the Portland program was it not only included the low income neighborhood on the west end, it also included the Western Promenade. And so you had not only the Jerry Conleys and the Larry Carons and the Nellie Talbots who were involved more with low income organizations, but it had the Elias Thomases and the Widgery Thomases from the Western Promenade neighborhood who were also very involved in some of those early years in the program.

JO: And the hospital, Maine Medical Center was located of course in the Model Cities neighborhood, so you had, we had a great deal of input in terms of health issues from them. And a lot of social service agencies that are in Portland were located in the model neighborhood. I think day care, child care, is one of the real strengths of the program, and when you look at (*name*) Nursery, you look at St. Elizabeth, they were located in the district. The other thing that set us apart, however, we were a white city. Very, very unusual in the Model Cities Program.

AL: Oh, around the country.

JO: Around the country. Almost every state had at least one program, Maine had two, Lewiston was one as well, but for us, I mean the feds would come here and say, where are your black staff members. You know, we had, at that point in time less than one percent of the Portland population was black. We'd say, we'd hire them if they would come to us, but there were no blacks in Portland. I served at one point on the national board, I was the only white and the only woman on that board. All the rest were black men. Because when you talk about cities where most of those programs were held, i.e., Chicago, they were black. And that's

(*unintelligible phrase*). That helped us because Portland was and still is a city where national companies try, sample their products, if you will, you know, come and poll and sell things to see who's going to like what. And I think that helped us. We were on time with everything we did in that program, we got our programs in on time. You know, everybody else had to ask extensions. We finished when we were supposed to.

The other thing I have to say, we had (*unintelligible phrase*), because I wasn't a part of it until I came to work for him, was the city administration. I mean, the city manager at that time was John Menario, a wonderful city council with people like Harold Loring and Charlie Allen, I mean they were, they were very, very supportive and helpful. I can think of only one thing they turned down, and that was the children's allowance proposal. But other than that, it was a fight because requests were, you know, far exceeded what we had for money, but I think that city administration made a big difference in the success of the program here.

JG: And added to that, again, is something that distinguished us from a lot of other cities in that city hall actually ran the program. Around the country, the Model Cities Program, although the funds flowed through city hall often because of the politics of the neighborhoods in many of the larger cities, the actual administration of the program was turned over to non-profit organizations, community development organizations in the neighborhoods. And that was not the case here. The Model Cities director was a department head, all of the staff people were city employees, or, and everything was managed right out of city hall, which again was a different feature than you would find in a lot of other cities around the country.

AL: And could you get, being in city hall, did you get a lot of support, I mean administrative support being right here, rather than out at a non-profit agency somewhere else in the city?

JG: You'd have the public works department involved and parks and recreation department involved on parks and recreation programs, the health and human services department on any health issues, so yeah, you had direct links because you sat in on all of the city manager's department head meetings.

JO: And it worked both ways. The program benefited the city. I mean some of the money went into city departments to do city agency kind of things, so I think it was a good partnership. And it also gave us, I mean, we had, knock on wood, no problems. We had one sit-in, but other than that. But I mean, other cities and programs, you know, there was graft, there was corruption. I mean, none of that touched the program here. We were very fortunate. And we got it obviously because of Ed Muskie.

AL: Do you have a sense, I know you said you came in after the funding part of it, after the plan was submitted, but do either of you have a sense of, I want to say this the right way, a sense of what Muskie's influence was on getting it here and -?

JG: (*Unintelligible phrase*).

JO: Oh, I'm sure. I mean, because it was his state they were bound to have at least one program, and it went to Portland I assume because it was the largest city. I don't know if then

Lewiston complained, Lewiston had a much smaller program than we had. But we were early on, we were picked. I'm sure it was because of Muskie. I mean, if this had been Senator Strom Thurmond doing it from somewhere, they'd have said, you know, they'd probably (*unintelligible word*), although almost every state had a program.

JG: Yeah, I think that's the important thing. When Lyndon Johnson proposed the Model Cities Program it was to be a program similar to Clinton's Enterprise Zones, it was going to be very, very limited in terms of the number, and you in fact were going to have a dozen or two dozen Model City Programs well funded around the country. The politics of it was such that every senator wanted to have a Model Cities Program, and so when it ended up being approved by the Congress in the mid 1960s, it was approved that every state would at least have one. I mean, obviously the New Yorks and the Californias had many more than one. But, so that's how initially the door was opened, was because that's what Johnson needed to get it out of the Congress. And then Muskie's involvement in terms of directing it here in the state was important. And I'm sure, maybe you would know Jadine, but I'm assuming that when Portland knew that the money was available, because you got to remember, up until the early to mid 1960s Portland didn't go after a lot of federal money, in the fifties and what have you. They just did the old Yankees, they weren't going after a lot of money. So it was in the mid sixties that Portland got comfortable going after federal money, and I'm certain that at that point the local administration here at city hall went down and met with Muskie and were encouraged to put together an application for, what they did is they got money initially to do the plan, and then after the plan was approved then they got money to implement the plan.

JO: How much, do you remember, Joe? I'm guessing thirty million dollars.

JG: Over the five years.

JO: Five years.

JG: Yeah, yeah, it was about thirty million.

JO: Seems to me I've used that figure. And you think today, I mean, if anybody came to Joe Gray and said, are you interested in thirty million dollars being dropped on your doorstep to improve your neighborhood, he'd be in Muskie's office tomorrow, too.

AL: What were the most important successes in the program, both immediate and long term?

JG: Well, I think the immediate, over the four or five years in terms of the west end was it stabilized the neighborhood, which historically had been a very, very strong neighborhood, but by the early to mid 1960s the housing, the quality of the housing stock had deteriorated, the infrastructure had deteriorated, people were moving out of the west end at that particular point in time. And so it allowed the community to be able to stabilize the neighborhood. It also long term, though, as Jadine said, it really built the, particularly on the social service side, it built the social service infrastructure that largely has been intact for the last thirty years. The day care programs, the elderly support programs, a lot of the health programs that the city has continued to fund with the block grant money over the last twenty five or thirty years, had their beginnings

under the Model Cities Program.

JO: What's interesting is at the time there was some concern about using the money, which was only going to last for five years, to do anything that had an ongoing significance, because the council was very leery about funding something that they might have to pick up and fund down the road. They would rather have put the money in fire trucks, for example, if they could have. But I think, and I think Joe's right, I think child care is one of the areas where they probably, we made the most bang for our bucks in terms of what we provided to neighborhoods and low income people. We did build some housing, some (*unintelligible word*) housing, they knew they were not going to go to projects again, we were not going to build major housing projects, but we did some (*unintelligible word*) housing which still exists today. And the other thing is the involvement of the citizens. I mean, we got people to feel comfortable about coming to city hall, people who had never been in this building before, lived, you know, two or three blocks away, never been here before. We, you know, unfortunately in some cases made them too comfortable and they came and spent a lot of time, but they came to city hall, they went to school committees, they went to neighborhood meetings, and they were included. And people began to look at them, to serve on boards of social service agencies, so they knew, I mean we taught them how to vocalize, and I think that was important.

AL: What were some of the major problems that you ran into with the Model Cities Program?

JO: Not enough money.

JG: Yeah, not enough money. The fact that a lot of momentum had been built up around a lot of the initiatives, and then at the end of the five year period of time, and Jadine would have had more experience with this than I did because by then I was away in the Renewal Authority, but they built up certain expectation levels and after five years things to some extent stopped for a while until the block grant program came along, the community development block grant program. In terms of the ongoing problems that I remember was it was a very paperwork intensive program. There was tons and tons of reports that you were always having to fill out. I mean, at that point in time the feds loved a lot of paperwork, and so you had staff that was spending in retrospect an inordinate amount of time having to fill out reams and reams of paperwork connected with these programs that, with the programs that we have today from the feds you don't have to.

AL: Was this HUD that you had to report to?

JG: Yeah.

JO: Well, it's interesting because I, when I called the library, I was telling Andrea earlier, when I called the library, I described the book, she knew exactly what I was talking about. She said, big, thick 3-ring binders, and I said, that's right. We have to assemble those once a year, send them down, and somewhere in the bowels of this building was a big green turnstile table, a motorized table, that you were supposed to be able to put things on and the table moved and you collated, you could stand it, well, unfortunately we never got it to move so we moved around the table. I mean, the whole staff would spend days and days putting it together. I often wondered,

we kidded about putting dirty jokes in the middle of the book, or blank pages in the middle of the book, to see if anybody, I mean, I'm talking books this thick, did anybody ever read them. I mean we were, the feds did do, you know, an evaluation and they would come periodically, go down to DeMillo's for lobster, and leave. But there was a lot of paperwork. Staff, Joe, I guess there was about thirty staff at the height of the program (*unintelligible word*)?

JG: Yeah.

JO: We had interns, we had college kids, we had student interns, neighborhood, you know, employees who were residents of the neighborhood was a must. And we brought a couple of people along who had, who ended up with really good jobs with the city, like Pat Holt who went to work for the police department after she left, she was a secretary and left us and went to the police department.

JG: You left and you went to work for Governor Brennan, didn't you?

JO: No, I left to run for Congress.

JG: Congress, that's right, that's right.

JO: (*Unintelligible phrase*). Then I came back and went to work (*unintelligible phrase*).

AL: Those were some of sort of the, did the, you know, the paperwork problem, were there any what you would look back on, say, were failures of the program?

JG: No, I don't think that, I think, you know, there was an expectation level built up, as I said, and the issue as the program wound down was how could you continue meeting some of the expectation levels. Because when the block grant program came along as a substitute, the block grant program could be used in much, much broader geographic areas, so the very, very intensive spending just in the west end was automatically diluted because the other city councillors wanted to have a share of the pie in their districts that were eligible for it, so -

JO: But it did give those people who'd worked on Model Cities an edge in lobbying, if you will, for their piece of that pie. It may have been less money, and it had to be spread over the entire city, but, and I didn't vote because I was no longer here either, but I'm sure they learned how to come and make their wishes known about what they needed. I think it was a success. I mean, we had none, as I say, none of the corruption and stories that you heard from other cities, we were on time, we spent the money properly, and we had good fiscal oversight, I mean every penny, we knew where it went and how it got spent. And a part, as Joe said, because we had the city organization behind us. I mean, we ran things and the city would run them.

AL: Do you think that accounted for most of it, or were there other factors you'd put in (*unintelligible phrase*)?

JO: I think it was a good deal with it. I mean, I can only imagine if we were running, let's say we were the Portland West Neighborhood Center with all this money, and running it out of the

neighborhood center, the skills wouldn't have been there, the backup wouldn't have been there. I mean, we had a corporation counsel, we had an attorney's office here that we could go to when we needed help, an accounting department if we needed it, the public works department, and all those things that I think made a big difference. Then the fact that, yes, we had poverty, but we certainly didn't have the kind of poverty that other parts of the country had. I thought of those people, George Bovil, Reverend George Bovil, Sister Martha, Sister Jean Little, again, the whole religious community. Peter Plum, an attorney with, a number of nurses, we had a health station on Danforth Street. That's the building that Nellie Talbot ran. I think it was just the Danforth Street neighborhood center. And public health eventually took that over, and I'm struggling to remember the woman's name, I can't, but you know, we put a health center in there way before anybody talked about having health centers or clinics or that kind of thing.

AL: What happened with those programs after the funding? Did the city pick it up and keep going with it?

JG: Yes.

JO: The city does have a public health program.

JG: Yeah, we did. The block grant program came along after and I talked, we were talking about the legacy for Model Cities in terms of the social service infrastructure, and about a third of the block grant program, and we get about two and a half million dollars, so about seven or eight hundred thousand of it now goes to help fund social service activities. Some of them continue the out-, some of them are continuation or the outgrowth of the Model Cities Program.

AL: How did working on the project affect both of you, individually? What, did it in any way enrich your lives?

JO: It was a great job.

JG: Well, it was an interesting job as my first full job, so it was night to have a check and the very basics. And I had been to graduate school to get a degree in planning and that, so this was an opportunity to use in a practical way the skills which theoretically, you learn theoretically in school. And it was very much a hands on job. As Jadine said, you did everything including helping to collate applications, you were always out in the neighborhood meeting with people, and there were always endless meetings, it seems every night of the week there'd be some meeting out somewhere.

JO: City council meetings, always at city, I knit a full afghan sitting in the back of city council chambers. I mean, those days we'd go, when it was funding time we'd go two or three o'clock in the morning, city council.

JG: So it was, if you were interested or you were a personally attuned to that, it was a very interesting job because you had the ability to be able to work, obviously, at city hall but also very much a hands on job working out in the neighborhood.

JO: And I'm a big fan of John Menario, I think he was a great city manager at the time. Even though I was the only women department head at the time, and that was a tussle once in a while with the city, but I got, I had come from college administration into the city. And I just loved it, I loved being part of the city, and miss it. Served on the planning board when Joe was planning director, and that was another part of my city life. (*Unintelligible phrase*).

AL: Now, in terms of, I know you mentioned your interactions with HUD were exchanging a lot of paperwork and sending in reports. Did you get from them any strong impressions of their attitude towards the program, and towards Senator Muskie at all, specifically?

JG: Not at the level necessarily of the individuals that we were dealing with, because you were dealing with just field representatives from the department and -

JO: Manchester, New Hampshire, (*unintelligible phrase*).

JG: Yeah, and it used to, initially it was New York that we dealt with, and then it became Manchester, and to the field representatives, you know, they were dealing with all these cities all over New England and to them it was a Portland, Maine and it was a Burlington, Vermont, or a Manchester, New Hampshire, and it really had nothing to do with the senators. The only, when you got up to the appointee levels, the people primarily out of Washington, or when you got to the region and you dealt with the regional administrator, who was always an appointee of the, a political appointee, you'd have that sense and understanding of the importance when the senator's office would call on an issue. Again, Jadine would have more sense than I would at least initially, because by the time I came along and took it over, at that higher end of the administration, (*unintelligible phrase*) the Nixon administration and so the regional administrators and the assistant secretaries and what have you down in Washington were all Republican appointees. Although, again, it didn't matter to them in the sense that if they got something from, you know, they may have given more of a preference to something that came in from Senator Smith's office than something that came in from Senator Muskie's office, but they gave deference to both. But I don't know if you recall before, because . . . .

JO: No, when Senator Smith was running for election she came in to meet all of the staff in the Model Cities, she came to city hall and toured city hall. I remember when Hubert Humphrey was the vice president, his coming to Maine to speak to one of the Democratic conventions, and talking about Model Cities. I mean, that was a big part of his speech. Unfortunately, I also remember that he spoke for sixty minutes which, you know, he was known to be a little long winded. And then more recently, some time in the recent past, Dick Gephardt was here on some kind of a campaign swing as a political guest, whatever, and he got engaged and for some reason Model Cities came up, and he didn't think very much of the program. And I was offended, of course. And I said, "Well I'm sorry you didn't know what the Portland program was like. I don't know where you're getting information or what happened in your state, but I can tell you in this state we think it was a success."

JG: I mean, again, I can only hypothesize but I'm, because I wasn't here then, but I assume that in getting the planning money for the program, which would have been during the Johnson administration, that Muskie would have been very active. And the final amounts in terms of how

much money they were going to get for the grant, Muskie would have been involved in that at that point in time, and then of course the '68 election happened and, you know, there was a change in the administration. But at least in terms of planning for it and the, at least the initial awarding of funds, because I assume that those initial awarding of funds must have come out before the '68 election.

JO: And we were never decreased. I mean, whatever they said we were going to get over that five year period, there were cities that got cut off, that got shut down, we got the money that we were promised regardless of the change.

AL: Now, you went from the Model Cities to the urban renewal program. How did the Model Cities program affect your attitudes towards your future -?

JG: With the urban renewal?

AL: With urban renewal and urban planning in general?

JG: Well, what I, when I came into the Model Cities Program there had been an application that had been turned down for an urban renewal project on the west end. And so what I had to do was revise the application, and we submitted it in and it got funded, and that's when I transferred to the Renewal Authority. But essentially I worked in the Model Cities neighborhood, I was a project director for the Renewal Authority, so the Reiche School, the Danforth Heights housing, we cleared a site for Mercy Hospital, anticipating that they were going to expand and they didn't do it. And we did housing rehab programs, and we did public infrastructure, streets and sidewalks and sewers in the urban renewal area. They carved out an urban renewal area in the larger Model Cities neighborhood, and so essentially for, I can't remember now, I guess it was five years, five, four or five years, I just, I worked in the neighborhood as a project director doing a lot of land acquisition, relocation, site clearance, work for the school, which a lot of Model Cities programs went into. The housing, you know, Model Cities helped us with the housing when we built the housing down there. So even though I wasn't officially on the payroll, if you will, of the Model Cities Program, a good part of my work for that four years or so, four or five years, was directly related to what the Model Cities Program was trying to do more broadly in the neighborhood.

AL: How did you get interested in urban planning? I know you said that's what you studied in school.

JG: I always had, I grew up in a city, I went to college in New York City, and I worked in Washington, so I had always been around cities and just kind of got interested in it, seeing how things, the communities were changing over time is just something that caught my attention and my interest.

AL: Did your father have an interest in it at all?

JG: No, no, my father was a school teacher.

JO: If you listen closely, though, you can hear his Rhode Island accent come through. His other love is baseball.

AL: Were there other people that you worked with on Model Cities that I haven't mentioned today or that we should mention (*unintelligible phrase*)?

JG: Sure, there was, I was thinking about it after you mentioned it, there's Jerry Conley, Sr., who became then president of the senate, he was on the city council, he was mayor, he was in the state legislature. You'd have a better sense than I do. I mean, Joe Brennan was the Cumberland county attorney, district attorney.

JO: He worked on Muskie's campaign; Jerry Conley worked on Muskie's campaign.

JG: But I mean, I don't know how much (*unintelligible word*), Joe Brennan was Cumberland county district attorney at that time, I don't know whether or not he had much involvement at all in any of the criminal justice things that the Model Cities was doing.

JO: Primarily (*unintelligible phrase*) the Portland police department.

JG: I'm trying to think, who else would have been some prominent people? I mentioned Widgery Thomas who was at that time the president of Canal Bank. He's still living. In fact he's living back here in the west end.

JO: Is he?

JG: He sold his house. I saw him this last week, he just went to Florida for three months, I saw him last week. And he now -

JO: You get used to that (*unintelligible word*) at city hall.

JG: Oh gosh, who else?

AL: So Widgery Thomas would be somebody we could contact.

JG: Jim Oliver, who served in the legislature and ran Portland West neighborhood organization, he also came out of some of those later Model Cities years.

JO: Larry Connolly's gone, but Nancy Connolly's still here.

JG: Nancy Connolly, Nancy as well, and she was involved with him, she was involved with the low, LIP, Low Income People, and she was the head of the YWCA here. She left that position about a year ago, and she lives up on Salem Street.

JO: I was trying to think of all the Muskie people, you mentioned earlier how many Muskie, how many interviews you've had with however many people, and look for that connection, too. I'd have to say that many of those, and this is a real broad statement, many of those activists were

Democrats, were liberals and were Democrats in those days. And the Larry Connollys of the world would have been Muskie people to some extent.

AL: Did you have any interaction with Henry Bourgeois from Lewiston?

JO: (*Unintelligible phrase*).

JG: Yeah, I did but not through the Model Cities Program. I mean, I knew him, but I've had a lot of interaction since then with him through the Maine Development Foundation.

AL: Right.

JG: But it wasn't at that point in time in terms of the Model Cities Program. Although he goes back to those days.

JO: He does indeed. And I have followed his, I've had the interaction the same as Joe has had with him over the years, primarily through the legislature and his foundations, tours, and so forth. But I think at the time, we thought that was such a small program over there in Lewiston, I don't know what they had for money compared to us, but I know it wasn't as much, and we were just bigger and better. And I told Henry that once.

AL: I bet he enjoyed that. I wondered if there was an interaction. I got the sense there wasn't a lot of interaction between the two programs, but (*unintelligible phrase*) only two in Maine.

JO: There was. Roy Whitcomb worked for the Lewiston program, he did their press for them for a while, and there's an old political name. But I don't, I mean, I don't even remember, I certainly never went to Lewiston and looked at their program, I don't believe their staff ever came down -

JG: Ken Curtis had a cabinet meeting, and I was only here for, I think I was here for two months, and he had a cabinet meeting to which the Model Cities staffs from both cities were invited, and I just remember that all the staff were invited up there and the two directors made a presentation to the governor and some of his cabinet people, and frankly I was too new to know who anybody was. To me it was just a -

JO: I don't even remember that.

JG: Oh, I remember driving up with Pat O'Regan.

JO: I'll be darned.

JG: And it was really one of my first trips after I'd been here up to Augusta. And that's the only time that I can remember that, during that period that I was with Model Cities, that we ever had any face to face contact with the people from the Lewiston program. I'm trying to think, Charlie Micoleau didn't have anything really, he was on Muskie's staff at that point in time and I don't remember that he had a lot to do with the program, you know. There was, once these

things get funded, what happens is if there's issues, you're not, you're dealing more with the staff people that handle the different federal departments of the senators or congressmen, so if we had issues or if they had inquiries, it would come to us from the staff person who handled HUD, for example.

JO: And we gave them very little problems. You know, again, we ran it as it was supposed to be run and didn't have a lot of problems. Got what we wanted for mo-, I mean obviously we had requests, every year we had far more requests than we had money to give out. And you had to prioritize and that was an antsy time of year, I mean you had agencies competing against agencies, and not everybody was happy. But other than that we seldom had any, I don't remember any major, we had one sit-in and that's all, in all that time.

JG: You should talk to, if you haven't, John Menario because John would have been here as city manager, and John would have been the person who would have been involved in deciding to go after the money and he'd certainly give you an idea of who he dealt with, or who the city council at that time dealt with in terms of the application and who they were (*unintelligible phrase*).

JO: He would have had to have signed off on it, and council would have had to have voted for it.

JG: John is semi-retired, but lives in the area. And I think he still does some work with People's Heritage. He left here and went over to the chamber of commerce for a number of years -

JO: And I hated him for going to the chamber.

JG: And then he went right to People's Heritage. He's been with People's Heritage for ages.

JO: Except for a small point when he ran for public office.

JG: Well that's true, but then he also, oh, he also had his own consulting firm for a while. But anyway, People's Heritage would be the place that you might -

AL: The way to get in touch with him?

JO: Yes.

JG: They'll tell you how to get hold of him.

AL: Now, do you have any memories, have you ever, did you ever meet Senator Muskie, and what was the occasion and what was your first impression?

JG: Oh gosh, I did meet him but it was not with the Model Cities Program, it was with the Urban Renewal Program. We were trying to get the FHA, Federal Housing Administration, to fund the housing up on Danforth Street, or provide the insurance for the funding of the housing

up on Danforth Street. And we were running into all kinds of issues with FHA, and the FHA director who, I can't remember his name [Dick McMahon], he was from Bangor, he was very active politically in the Democratic Party, big, big husky man. He arranged a meeting in Washington.

JO: Big buddy of Muskie's.

AL: Mike Aube?

(*All speaking together.*)

AL: Oh, oh, oh, I'm sorry -

JG: He came from, he didn't live here in Portland but whenever he, he hated the Bangor office, he hated being up in Bangor running the FHA office, and he used to take a hotel room in Portland and he ran the FHA office out of the hotel room down here in Portland.

JO: Don would know exactly who it is because he used, the guy used to campaign with Muskie. They'd go around the state together.

AL: I know who you mean, I'm drawing a complete blank.

JG: Well anyway, he [Dick McMahon] was the FHA director. And so he arranged a meeting and we went down to Washington, I met with him, and then we had, we went around to the other delegation. I remember Peter Kyros because Kyros was bored stiff, could care less at that point in time.

AL: Peter Kyros, Jr.?

JG: He was a congressman.

AL: Oh, senior.

JG: Yeah, he was the congressman. I remember that meeting better than I remember the Muskie meeting. But Mukie listened, you know, like anything, you deal with the congressional delegation, they listen, they listen very attentively and they give you the ten to fifteen minutes. And that's essentially, that was the first time I met him. And then there would be other times when he would be here in the city, when the fish pier got funded in I think it was 1977 or '78, he was involved in all of that. In fact, that's a person you should talk to that can (*unintelligible phrase*) in terms of his involvement with the fish pier in Portland, probably Clark Neiley would be the person to talk to.

JO: (*Unintelligible word*).

JG: Well, Clark was a staff person.

JO: Oh, I know, (*unintelligible phrase*).

JG: But, and, well no, John had left city hall by then, so John would not. Because set up the, Muskie was instrumental in getting the Portland fish pier funded.

AL: And Clark Neiley?

JG: Clark Neiley.

AL: How do you spell Neiley?

JG: N-E-I-L-E-Y. He lives in Gorham. He's probably in his late eighties, but boy, he's as sharp as a tack, Jadine. I saw him last year at Bob Gammon's funeral and I tell you, he's -

JO: He'd love to talk to you.

JG: But that's a project, when you talk about having a significant, another significant economic impact, the Portland fish pier. And Muskie was very, very instrumental in helping that funding. But anyway, I, you know, I met him at those occasions. I mean, I didn't know the man personally, Jadine knew him far more personally than I did.

JO: And do you have some of his campaign memorabilia?

JG: Oh, (*unintelligible word*).

JO: Joe collects campaign buttons and so forth.

JG: I've got a lot of his, including his presidential material from '72, and some of his posters.

AL: Oh, neat.

JG: But, I mean, he didn't know me, at committee I was just a city hall person that he had to be courteous to and, they all are. I mean, Olympia Snowe was in here on Friday afternoon, I had a (*unintelligible word*), she came in, she had the terrorism -

JO: Friday afternoon?

JG: Well, she had her terrorism task force and she came in here afterwards to pay a courtesy visit, and she said, oh, she said, “This is a beautiful office,” she said, “this is nicer than my office in Washington.” And I said to her, I sat her down in the chair, I said to her, “Senator,” I said, “you look good now in that chair,” I said, “I'll swap jobs with you.”

JO: (*Unintelligible phrase*).

JG: But Jadine would have had more personal recollections than I do.

JO: I can remember taking my kids to Washington, I don't know, they were, you know, yeah high, and making the call. He was so good to my children. I mean, obviously he was nice to us when we would, you know, Mainers and so forth, but he went out of the way. I mean, my kids (*unintelligible phrase*), and they couldn't have been more than five and seven or something like that, how good Senator Muskie was to them. But yeah, political, I mean, you know, I've been a Democrat ever since I've been here so I've been to every J & J, and every Democratic convention, to his home in Kennebunkport for the fund raisers that used to be there. And again, Jane was always the perfect hostess. Ed didn't remember your name, but, of course I also ran and so I think, you know, when I ran for Congress, but I mean he remembered at least part of me. I'm sure he never voted for me (*unintelligible phrase*). He's a great big guy.

JG: I think that was the thing, physically he was, I remember, we have a summer home on Peak's Island and I can't remember what the event was but, oh, there was a, she's since passed away, a woman by the name of Bea Chapman, and Bea Chapman, in one of the years that Muskie was running for reelection, convinced him to come over to Peak's Island. And it was a project that this woman was involved with, and he came over and the thing that really struck you is his physical presence, because he was such a big boned man, I mean physically, he was a very, very big man. And so consequently he would, just his physical presence was something that immediately struck you on terms of dealing with him.

JO: I told her about driving him home -

End of Side A
Side B

JO: . . . convertible, and I pushed that passenger seat back as far as it would go, thinking, is he ever going to get his long legs. And I was so enthralled to be asked to do this, I mean I thought it was a big deal, they thought it was an imposition. And when I drove him, he fell asleep (*unintelligible phrase*). He could tell tales. He loved to sit late in the evening with a drink in hand, and probably a cigar or a cigarette in those days, and tell stories.

AL: Do you ever remember what sort of stories he would tell, or?

JO: I don't, I mean I was just, I was just on the real fringe. I remember being in one of the old hotels in Bangor, it's now a senior citizen project.

JG: Bangor House.

JO: Is it the Bangor House? And the dim, must have been the dim, dark bar, when he was holding forth, you know. I was what, thirty years of age and kind of hanging back there, but, and I was duly impressed to be in the room.

AL: Is there anything that I haven't asked you that you feel is important to add to this record today?

JG: No, I think as Jadine said that one of the, to us at least when we think back on it, one of

the legacies of it is what it's been able to give us in terms of building a social service network in the community. Certainly the west end as a neighborhood as a whole is a much stronger neighborhood. It contributed, I think, to one of the things that I've always said is important in older northeastern cities, when you think of many of the older northeastern cities the neighborhoods directly around the downtowns are often pretty bombed out, when you go to the Hartfords and the Springfields, and that's not the case in Portland. And we certainly in the west end and the east end, one of the reasons why we never saw the disinvestment take place in the west end neighborhood, and the abandonment, we don't have a housing abandonment problem. We may not have enough housing, but we don't have plots and plots of vacant buildings that you see in many, many other bigger cities. And certainly that's I think one of the legacies of the Model Cities Program, because the west end neighborhood at that point in time, mid to late sixties, was kind of at that tipping point where there were people moving away, there were a lot of housing issues and, you know, you could see a potential there, if something hadn't happened, for it to accelerate in terms of the disinvestment. And I think the money that this put in really helped to stabilize that situation. So I think to me, those would really be the lasting legacies, the social service and the stability to the neighborhood.

JO: It (*unintelligible word*) jobs, you know, a number of people got training and got jobs, and went on to jobs after. I mean, they got jobs with the program, but also in the agencies. And day care, again, because they had someplace to put their kids so they could go to work. We'd do it again in a minute, wouldn't we, Joe?

JG: Yeah, yeah.

AL: Thank you very much.

End of Interview