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## Micoleau, Charlie oral history interview

Don Nicoll

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## **Interview with Charlie Micoleau by Don Nicoll**

*Summary Sheet and Transcript*

### **Interviewee**

Micoleau, Charlie

### **Interviewer**

Nicoll, Don

### **Date**

March 24, 1999

### **Place**

Augusta, Maine

### **ID Number**

MOH 078

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### **Biographical Note**

Charles J. "Charlie" Micoleau was born on February 2, 1942 in Englewood, New Jersey. He attended Bowdoin College, graduating in 1963. He earned a master's degree in International Relations at Johns Hopkins University in 1965, and received his J.D. from George Washington University in 1977. Micoleau worked in Maine for an anti-poverty program in 1965, and eventually worked his way into the Maine Democratic Party ranks. He was a scheduler for Senator Muskie's 1970 Campaign, and became the Administrative Assistant from 1975 to 1977. He currently practices law in the firm of Curtis, Thaxter, Stevens, Broder, and Micoleau.

### **Scope and Content Note**

Interview includes discussions of: personal background; 1960s Maine political recollections; 1960s Maine Welfare Department; 1965-1966 Maine Legislature; Ed Pert; Ken Curtis' political battles with the Legislature; Ken Curtis; Democratic Party progression; creating a slate of Democratic candidates; Humphrey-Muskie; 1970 election; and discussion of Muskie as a campaigner.

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## **Transcript**

**Don Nicoll:** Okay, we are in the law office of Curtis Thaxter with Charles Micoleau. It is Thursday afternoon, or excuse me, it's Wednesday afternoon, the 24th of March and about four fifteen P.M., and we're interviewing Charles Micoleau. Charles, you want to spell your full name and give us your date of birth and place of birth?

**Charles Micoleau:** Charles Judd Micoleau, M-I-C-O-L-E-A-U. A war baby born in Englewood, New Jersey, February 2nd, 1942.

**DN:** Tell us about your parents?

**CM:** New Englanders. My father's side I'm more familiar with and have taken a great interest in. But he was from Maine, or his family was from Maine in Augusta and Portland. In fact, I think there's even a United States senator back in there somewhere. And rumor has it that, in the family, that he quit after a year because he didn't like the heat in Washington in 1840 or something.

**DN:** In the days before air-conditioning.

**CM:** That's right. And, however, my father was born in France. His father came to this country from France at age sixteen, and, to teach. And when I was in college at Bowdoin I met Mrs. Casey Sills who grew up with my grandmother on Deering Street here in Portland, and claimed that this dashing French, Frenchman came up from Boston or Providence and swept all the young ladies off their feet at a meeting of the Alliance Francaise. But it was my grandmother that he became attached to.

**DN:** And she was from Portland?

**CM:** She was from Portland and grew up with Mrs. Sills and, Casey Sills and a whole gang of them down on Deering Street in the shadow of Thomas Brackett Reed's house. But a, my grandfather taught at Deering High School at one point in 1903, no, in that era, pre war.

**DN:** Was he teaching French?

**CM:** He taught French. And my father, he served in the French military; he had his universal service, or France had its universal service. So he went over and it was during a period when he was training, I believe, that my grandmother went over and stayed with him. And my father was born in Toulouse, but my uncle and aunt were born here in the United States subsequently. And then my, but my grandfather went back during WWI and did not return. And so my grandmother raised my father, uncle and aunt in Maine and in Providence with the help of her mother and father. So. . . .

**DN:** When you said he did not return- he was killed in the war?

**CM:** Killed in the battle of the Marne, and so he's. . . . One little personal side note here: I have, when I first came back here, actually second time I came back here after leaving Washington, I met two or three people that knew my grandfather, which is more than my father did. So they were able to describe my grandfather in ways that my father couldn't. And by sheer coincidence, we moved to a distinguished neighborhood in Portland near your house, Don, and, but it turns out it was within fifty yards of where my grandfather and father had lived in 190-, let's see, it would have been 1911. That was the period he was teaching at Deering. He lived on Belmont Street, and I can see his house out of my bedroom window. In any event, my father, (I had come up here summers), my father had gone to Bowdoin. In fact he was a teacher, was taught, he was an economics major, and was taught by [Albert] Jim Abrahamson in Jim's first year at Bowdoin, in 1928 or something like that. And Jim Abrahamson was one of those that encouraged me to go to Bowdoin.

My father couldn't find work in the Depression, though. He got out in 1929, in Maine. He worked here very briefly and, reminds me of my, in some sense, of my daughter's experience when she got out of college, coming back to Maine during a recession in the 1990s. But he worked his way down to New York City and, where he was an economist for General Motors for almost forty-five years, and has now returned back to Maine. But it was that Maine and Bowdoin connection through my father that led me to choose to go to Bowdoin.

**DN:** So you grew up in the New York metropolitan area, and you had one sister.

**CM:** A sister and a brother and we're all here in Maine. Though to begin to put this into a broader perspective here: I'm of an age where my brother, who is five years younger than I am, yeah, five or six years younger than I am. . . . That is, differences, that gap is as wide as the Grand Canyon in terms of our relative experiences when we left school. I was still at a stage in 1963 where you got excited about the government; the war hadn't begun. And by the time he got out it was exactly the reverse; you were disgusted with the government and you fully expected to be shipped off to Vietnam momentarily. So one thing led to another, but he took

early retirement from the General Motors at age twenty-six and moved to Camden, where he was unemployed for a year almost, nine months, and then got a job with Sheperd Chevrolet as a bookkeeper. But he is now here in the Portland area. My sister is still an organic gardener and Zen Buddhist up in, somewhere in central Maine running sweat lodges and she's an artist.

**DN:** Well you, your brother followed your father's footsteps for a while.

**CM:** A year.

**DN:** Well, about a year.

**CM:** Maybe two.

**DN:** But he trained as an economist?

**CM:** No, my brother's had his own store, actually, at one point. I mean he's just sort of (*interrupted - tape turned off*).

**DN:** Charlie, you were talking about your brother who worked for GM for a short time.

**CM:** No. He eschewed a, he studied business as an undergraduate, but he had his own business. He had the F.A.O. Schwarz of Camden for a period of time and learned the difficulties of trying to have a small business on the coast, that you might as well shut the shutters down for three months a year. And [he] is now down in the Portland area as a, working in a construction supply, the accounting side of the construction supply company, and quite content.

**DN:** Was your family apolitical, or did you have lots of conversations about politics growing up?

**CM:** No, I think the politics, political interest on my part came really at college as a result of a teacher and the environment of college. Family was political but not in an activist sense, and very, I was going to say very Republican. But after all, that was when Nelson Rockefeller was governor and I'm not sure you count Nelson Rockefeller as Republican in the benefit of hindsight.

**DN:** Some would not.

**CM:** Yeah. But, no, so politics was not at all a factor until really I came to Bowdoin. And then there's a gentleman that you know, or knew well, Dave Walker who was a professor at. . . . I majored in economics, government and sociology, and Dave was a very inspirational figure as a teacher. And somewhere in there I actually, a couple of my friends and classmates were interns in the Senator's office, so I went down, and you and I may have met. I know I met George, I met Chip. . . .

**DN:** Chip Stockford.

**CM:** . . . . Stockford at the time. And then following Bowdoin I went to graduate school in Washington, D.C., and then that's where I, that's worth commenting on because it was a real exposure to what was going on at that period of time, which was. . . . So to put this into perspective, or a time perspective, I got out of high school in 1959 in a town, in a school called Pleasantville High School. It was very black and white. Life was simple at that time. So the college experience was '59 to '63 and, let's see, John Donovan had not, he was down in Washington I believe at the time. But I can remember Frank Coffin came and lectured at one point and the big political event of that time of course was the Nixon-Kennedy race. And I can remember going to Lewiston on that election night and sitting there. I mean, the stories others have said was everybody sat there cold and waited until two in the morning and I just remember sitting there with a six-pack of beer as a Bowdoin student. But [I] did wait until whatever hour it was.

**DN:** It was about two in the morning.

**CM:** (*Unintelligible word*) to hear Ed Muskie and John F. Kennedy speak. Though in all fairness to my political exposure I can also remember that same period going down to Biddeford or Saco or Portland and hearing Nelson Rockefeller speak, who was campaigning for something at that point, I don't know what it was, but that was that same college era. The difference between the gentlemen, however, was that when Ed Muskie and Jack Kennedy said, "I'm delighted to be here in Lewiston", it sounded a lot better than when Nelson Rockefeller said, "I want you to remember I was born in Maine at Seal Harbor, and I'm delighted to be here in Saco (*pronounced S\_co*)".

But it was, that was the era of the Cuban Missile Crisis and the enthusiasm for a president you could identify with and, if for nothing else than a sense of humor. And, let's see, I guess I actually got to hear Kennedy speak as president in '62. Yes, because I have some photographs; this was at American University. He gave a foreign policy address. And that was when we were still trying to sort out our foreign policy in terms of the. . . .

**DN:** Now at that time were you on an internship?

**CM:** No.

**DN:** You just happened to be in Washington.

**CM:** No. It may have been that same occasion that I was visiting some of my Bowdoin friends who were interning in Washington. And I just went down, because spring in Washington as you know is a lot different than spring in Brunswick. In any event, I got interested in international affairs while at Bowdoin and having participated in a summer student exchange program in France, came. . . .

**DN:** Who stimulated your interest in international affairs?

**CM:** I'm not entirely sure whether it was that or just the lark of getting paid to go to Europe, but it did grow out of the economics department. And there was, there is still a pretty effective

business oriented student exchange program, where they have a giant job swap. And we would arrange jobs for unnamed foreign students, summer jobs in business, in a business setting. And kids from all over the world were doing that and there'd be a big exchange. And so it all sounds very logical except I had picked England, France and probably Sweden or something like that as my first choice. And I was initially assigned to Sardinia, where I knew nothing about the language.

But ultimately I ended up in France and spent a summer working in France and being exp--- . . . .  
And again that was an interesting time; you couldn't avoid the government if you were in France in 1962, because that was the summer of the generals' revolt in Algeria. So every time you turned a corner there'd be a tank or some serious looking young man with a machine gun. But De Gaulle was in power and there was the, all the assertion of French primacy in the Western world, coupled with the year that Marilyn Monroe committed suicide, so there was a lot going on in France in 1962.

But for whatever reason I, that, the combination of things led me to apply to graduate school in international studies. And I had a Hobson's choice, I had a full fellowship to a brand new program at the University of Hawaii with a assured second year in Asia, which is sort of my interest I thought lay, because I had a high school friend's parents who were with the Ford Foundation in Indonesia. So I had this all worked out. So that was one leg in the choice. The other was to go to Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies in Washington, D.C., which is a much more obviously established institution.

And I chose the latter and arrived in Washington in the fall of 1963. And that was a fascinating time to be in Washington. It was a, if you'd come from a liberal arts background in, at Bowdoin, and not having had a lot of international studies, you were sort of thrown in to a rather high-powered environment with a lot of people who'd majored for four years at big universities around the country in international studies, or had worked abroad or lived abroad. And of course SAIS had a school, had had a school in Burma and some of the faculty taught there, but also had and continues to have a school in Bologna, Italy. And so, the class plus the environment was not only intellectually fascinating, but there were only a hundred and twenty-five students on site, and it being the inaugural year of the new building that had been constructed for SAIS. The kickoff of the inaugural series of lectures included Adlai Stevenson, Dean Acheson, Christian Herder and, who was the incumbent Secretary of State in 1963?

**DN:** Dean Rusk?

**CM:** Dean Rusk spoke, so needless to say and Henry Kissinger was a lecturer as was Zbigniew Brzezinski. And so it was, and across the street was the Brookings Institution and so it was a wonderful time to, in terms of the pursuit of an interest in government, to be there. And then of course the, what was going on at that time was the escalation of the war in Vietnam and, you know, within eight, seven weeks of graduate school was the assassination of Kennedy, President Kennedy. And it was traumatic I suppose for anyone that, at the time, but to be in Washington was, had its own added dimensions to it.

Although I must say that aside from the personal feelings you have, there was this, the third day,



second day, third day, I stood; I happened to live at 1825 M Street, a block off Connecticut Avenue on M Street. And few people in Washington know this but those of us from Maine know that, in that little intersection is a statue of Henry Wadsworth Longfellow and it is, that is identical to the statue in Longfellow Square. And I can remember standing on that statue watching this parade of world leaders come up to the walk of Connecticut Avenue to the funeral service at St. Matthew's in the Church or Cathedral. And there was de Gaulle<sup>1</sup> and Adenauer<sup>2</sup>, who was Germany's leader at the time?

**DN:** It would have been [Konrad] Adenauer.

**CM:** Adenauer, and anyway, everybody that you studied if you were in international affairs sort of walked by your statue if you were standing on Longfellow's knee at that time. But then the debate within government of course was how to conduct in this escalating conflict in Vietnam, and that debate was very much a part of daily life at the graduate school, needless to say. And in my recollection of that period included that very famous speech by President Johnson at the Homewood Campus of Johns Hopkins University, in which he tried to buy Ho Chi Minh, in effect promising massive public works assistance and foreign aid and education and everything that had worked in east Texas, west Texas, he promised to the people of Southeast Asia. That was rather a glamorous if fruitless offer that was not taken up by the other side.

But if you were, at the risk of over-dramatizing the phrase "defining moment." But if you were to focus on: what are the things that motivate you as a young person? You've got to think of the summer of '64. And, which was the summer I worked in New York City in what I perceived to be this hermetically sealed thermostatically controlled room on Park Avenue, which was First National City Bank of New York in its international division. Well, that same summer was the (*unintelligible word*) summer in Mississippi where friends and classmates were down getting their heads bashed in at Mississippi in pursuit of civil rights, trying to do nothing more than enroll people to vote. I also had some acquaintances that were coming back with these very gory tales, for a twenty-two-year-old, of what was really going on in Cambodia and Vietnam with obviously very active combat. Although they were just advisors, and they were the same age. And there was some related occurrence where I met someone that happened to be a New York City policeman and to hear him describe, and again we were the same age but just totally different life experiences, to hear him describe what it was like to really have to go out and try to stop somebody for probable cause and make a decision as to whether you're going to read your Miranda warning or get shot.

So all those types of experiences that summer combined sort of convinced me that I should get more directly involved in government and politics. And then it became sort of interesting because at that time, and it's still very true, most of the graduates of Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies went abroad and went into careers, life-long careers, in either business or government but pretty much went ex-U.S.

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<sup>1</sup> Charles-Andre-Marie-Joseph de Gaulle, 1890-1970. French general and politician; president of the Fifth Republic (1958-1969).

<sup>2</sup> Konrad Adenauer, 1876-1967. Chancellor of West Germany (1949-1963).

And I did the, concluded that was not what I wanted to do. I wanted to come back to Maine and get involved in domestic politics. And I can't say I, in terms of my exposure or to the Muskie office, I think I stopped by and met people but never worked up there or anything like that. Although one of my SAIS classmates, as you may know, was Maynard Toll. And Maynard and I were pretty good friends, though he went on, up to Micronesia to get a Ph.D. or something, and I went back to Maine. But what I do remember is sitting down with you and Chip Stockford consulting as to whom I should talk to if I really want to kick this tire of going back to Maine. And it was a cast of characters that not surprisingly included George Mitchell and John Donovan and others.

So in 1965 I secured a job with the anti-poverty program in Maine and moved to, first serious excursion north of Augusta or east of Augusta, aside from a couple of forays into unlawful entry into dormitories at Colby College. But [I] came back and worked for the then Health and Welfare Department on a one-program element of the war, Johnson's war on poverty, and worked in Machias and Rockland. The upshot was spent in Augusta, sort of a quick immersion into the Down East Maine culture. I can still remember the same week I embarrassed myself with my wingtips in the Narraguagus River somewhere, chasing a salmon fisherman to get some advice from. . . . actually [he was] a doctor who was fishing for salmon, but claimed he had some advice to give me. [I] got almost thrown out a window at, by, must have been Alger Pike, one of the Pikes.

**DN:** Algernon, yes, Alger would be living there then.

**CM:** Whoever was running the last Pike sardine factory.

**DN:** Oh, that was Moses.

**CM:** It was Mose Pike then.

**DN:** Moses.

**CM:** [We] got into some argument about whether the government should be helping him or continuing to put him out of business, which was his view. Had dinner with Indian chiefs, saw a reversing waterfall, and dated Miss Blueberry Blossom who was just fresh from her victory at Unity Racetrack of something, wherever the Blueberry Festival had been held. So it was a grand time but you also saw a great deal of poverty and unemployment and hard jobs. . . .

**DN:** What were your responsibilities for the poverty program?

**CM:** It, you know, aside from the sort of exciting opportunities because we were, had few rules as to how to spend the money. . . . But it was a job-training and work experience program for mostly women, AFDC recipients. Ninety-eight percent of [i.e. AFDC recipients] whom are women because we did not permit under Maine's rules to have unemployed men or unemployed heads of two-person, two-parent households at that time. So we started, we ultimately had about four hundred unemployed persons enrolled in one type or another of work experience or training.

But if you think of it as a job placement program that could provide the ancillary services of medical care and adult education and literacy training and clothing, if that was necessary, and transportation. And all of it sounded pretty good until you went to Washington County, and said, “Okay, where are you going to get all these resources?” Because there were no, insufficient number of teachers, there was one dentist in the county. And medical care, we set up the first roving part-time clinic for medical care in Danforth.

So some of it was humorous in that we probably trained more small-engine repairmen and licensed practical nurses than, at least ten times more than there were jobs for. And some of it was fairly tragic when you think of the living conditions of some of the families we were dealing with and what limited opportunity there was for the children.

And some of it was very rewarding in that years and years later, I can remember being at a Democratic State Convention running for Democratic national committeeman and someone came up to me from one of these counties and said, “I can remember you being in my kitchen and I was a little kid at the time and the help that program gave to my mother was sort of,” in this person’s mind, a real turning point in their family lives.

However, what it really, my unofficial job at the suggestion of the Commissioner of Health and Welfare was to demonstrate through this program the wisdom of the legislature adopting a bill that he had in mind to expand the definition of, or eligibility for, the federal welfare AFDC program to include unemployed fathers. And somewhere in the course of this two-year experience I got acquainted with the legislative process and began promoting as, with all the appropriate parameters of a paid civil servant, educating the legislators and in particular a gentleman that you may recall (*unintelligible phrase*), David Kennedy was speaker at the time, and of course that was an area we were operating through. You had to be very cautious about how this anti-poverty program operated in his backyard if it was to have any likelihood of universal adoption.

**DN:** Who was the commissioner at that time?

**CM:** Dean Fisher, a venerable gentleman that was, I was trying to think whether he, he was probably working in state government when Ed Muskie was governor.

**DN:** He was Commissioner of Health and Welfare, as it was called in those days, under Burt Cross and quite possibly before Governor Cross.

**CM:** Yeah, he may have, I think his entry was, he came in as the head of the Bureau of Health within the Department of Health and Welfare. And that was a period when state government as you know was run by mandarins, these career civil servants that really were, made a major contribution to the state. And he was among those and they stayed on for many years. And they knew more, the smart ones knew more about how to get things done and what had been tried and failed in the past. Dean Fisher was all that was left that, he became Commissioner of the Department of Health and Welfare and then left the position of the Bureau of Health director vacant, so he was unchallenged in his. . . .

My actual, the person that hired me was Steve Sanders who was head of the Bureau of Social Welfare but then went on in a Democratic federal administration to become the national whatever the title was, head of public assistance programs around the country, and then came back and served in the legislature. Dean Fisher was a fellow that not only knew how to run a bureaucracy but he, somehow between the two of us we came together, because I knew where I could find him at five o'clock at night which was up at the Holiday Inn cocktail lounge. And he and I spent a lot of time off-site sort of plotting and planning a lot of things, but in my case it was a chance to test out a number of radical theories of how to bring about change in Washington County, to bounce them off someone that had a lot of insight into the behavior of Maine people and Maine politicians. Gus Garcelon was another partner in that same consp-, coconspirator of that, and another. . . .

**DN:** That was Dr. Alonzo Garcelon of Augusta.

**CM:** Of Augusta.

**DN:** A dentist.

**CM:** A dentist and a, at that time I think he was about to become President of the National Rifle Association. He was a black powder advocate, who also brought the first rural mobile dental clinic to Washington County back in the 1930s, if I'm not mistaken, when he was but a young man. And [he] was a leader of the big political, he learned in Augusta when he got, left Washington, that the major issues were a little bit different than they were in Washington. And the evils that confronted the citizenry of Kennebec value included Communism of course, but zoning was high on the list. Augusta had none and wasn't about to get it, which explains a lot about the physical appearance of Augusta, and fluoridation was right behind Communism. Gun control was in there, too, and among the many curious political plots that were hatched at the Holiday Inn and other places with Dean Fisher and Gus Garcelon was a, using modern campaign techniques to promote fluoridation, referenda campaigns.

Now, why is this relevant to Ed Muskie? One of Dean's approaches toward this fluoridation initiative was to hire a director of one of Lyndon Johnson's other programs which was totally self-defeating, but it was called The Services to Armed Forces Rejectees. So, if you flunked the exam to get drafted, you could be directed to someone who would help you, rehabilitate you so you could pass the exam. And the gentleman who ran that program in Maine was in a seasonal employment at the time and was hired in the off-season. And his name was Ed Pert, who had been seasonally employed as Secretary of the Senate in the hundred and, no, ninety, what was it that the, hundredth, hundred and first, 1964 to '66, or '66 - '67?

**DN:** Sixty-five, '66, yeah.

**CM:** Yeah, when the Democrats briefly regained control of the legislature. So Ed Pert and I had a desk opposite each other, and so my meanderings through eastern Maine began to include Ed Pert who meandered the same ground looking for rejected draftees. Something was wrong with that program because the first feeling you had if you got rejected by the draft board at that time was not one of dejection; it was rather elation. And, but we spent a number of evenings

together in the coastal region in Penobscot County. And every town we were in, after hours of course, he would introduce me to some Democratic usually defeated politician and we'd talk about how to organize legislative initiatives and how to, the plight of the downtrodden Democrats in Maine. And you can answer me a question I couldn't answer earlier in the first interview, and that was the sequence of full-time executive directors. Ed had been an executive director of the Democratic Party and I just couldn't remember whether he followed you as the first or whether there was Ed Schlick or somebody in between.

**DN:** I think Bob Hughes was the second, and then I believe it was Ed Schlick and then Ed Pert, or vice versa.

**CM:** Vice versa, it would have been Ed Pert and Ed Schlick while Ed Pert was in the Senate.

**DN:** And we were called executive secretaries, which shows that we hadn't advanced to executive directors yet.

**CM:** But that was the environment which I came to Maine, traveled around Maine and began to know some of the civic life of Maine. And in 196-, and, let's see, in the meantime now I was rooming with then-Governor John Reed's press secretary and young fellow older than I was that we stole from Winslow High School to come to work in the anti-poverty program who subsequently became the president of the Maine AFL-CIO, Chick O'Leary, and lived out in Readfield.

**DN:** Who was the secretary?

**CM:** Tom Shields. John Reed, that was, the governor's office at that time in '65, '66 only had a staff of four people or something like that. It was Ken Curtis that dragged the state kicking and screaming into the twentieth century, including vastly enlarging the staff of the governor's office. So Tom Shields was press secretary, a guy named Jeff Acker that I associate with health care, but I've lost track of him, was some sort of an aide, and I've forgot the gentleman who was administrative assistant. That was pretty much the staff right there of John Reed. In '66 John Reed was def-, there was a gubernatorial election; I had missed the '64 elections in Maine but was very, following the '66 election very closely, and Ken Curtis came into office. And it was Ken's arrival on the scene. . . . George Mitchell became state chair, Democratic Party chair. Ken had some frustration in the support and advocacy of his agenda in the halls of legislature, and more interestingly he had some extra money and so in what seemed at the time to be a fairly straightforward proposition. Ken asked George to, through the party, to use this money to hire someone to come to work in the legislature. . . .

**DN:** This was campaign money that was. . . .?

**CM:** It was just excess campaign funds, or, you know, post-campaign funds. There was other things that were supposed to be. . . . Shep Lee I think provided a van or a truck from Giant Advance Auto Sales for voter enrollment. . . .

*End of Side One*

*Side Two*

**DN:** Okay, we're on the second side of the taped interview with Charles Micoleau on March 24, 1999. Charlie, you were talking about Governor Curtis getting you involved in an effort to drum up support for his legislative program. And that was undertaken with the Maine Democratic Party, I take it?

**CM:** That's right. And Ken was frustrated because he, among other things, felt that, Ken, as many Democrats before and after, believed strongly in building the party and had a notion of how to go about that, and this was part of that. But his immediate frustration was he couldn't get his programs adopted. And he had won election 1966 with this, the Maine Action Plan. And those of us who have read it realize how rather, I don't want to say empty, but it was a ra-, how abbreviated it was, particularly as you got to some of the last couple of chapters written the night before the election. But he was very much of an activist governor and had a lot of ideas and generated a lot of ideas and couldn't get them passed. So his frustration was, among other things, that he needed more support.

And he felt that what the party should do is hire someone to research the issues, work with his staff which, again, was quite small at the time, and articulate his goals and defend his initiative. And so I was hired and left the anti-poverty program in '67, special session. At that time they had a long regular session and a short special session, you know, so it must have been the regular session, '65, '66. . . .

**DN:** Sixty-seven.

**CM:** Yeah, but I'm trying to figure out what period it was in that. It, '68, no. I tell you what, it was probably the latter part of '67. . . .

**DN:** After the first session, after the regular session.

**CM:** After the regular session. And it was his first regular session that Ken became convinced that he needed this kind of assistance to mobilize the support, and, because I had spent that first session working, successfully I might add, to get this legislative enactment to extend eligibility for welfare assistance to include unemployed fathers. And so the upshot was Ken came up with, sounded real simple, he came up with part of the money. And it was only after I'd accepted this position that I realized that what they were saying was, I had to go raise the rest of it. And George Mitchell was very, very, Shep Lee was very clever in that they came up with enough money to, I could work two days a week, but then I had to raise the money for the other three days, which I did, I mean, we all did.

The anecdote here really is, I forget, I think it was Ed Pert that brought to my attention that this Democratic Party was going to be looking for such a person. And Ed helped me write a letter explaining what I would do if I were king, or, what are some of the tasks that should be undertaken by the party if this position were to be filled. And it was rather brash of me if you think about it, because I was from out of state, and young, had done nothing active in the Democratic Party. But I think Ed had lots of ideas of course, but I think he also took this

vicarious pleasure in seeing put in writing and subsequently in action some of the things he would have done if he were back as executive secretary of the party. But Ed helped me write this letter and I can, I've heard, I heard subsequently from Shep Lee that they couldn't resist interviewing me, if not hiring me, because of this foolish letter that, here was this plan that had been laid out over three or four pages of what to do to accomplish the mission.

So in any event I was hired, and it was assigned to work in the legislature. Keep in mind now that you had no staff in the legislature. There was one person in the Office of Fiscal Analysis. There was no Office of Policy and Legal Affairs or Legal Analysis. The only staff were the clerks of the committees that shuffled the papers. There were no counsel or staff directors to lead in the leadership offices. And what the hey, the governor's office, until Ken Curtis came along, only had three people in it-, why should the legislature have any? So it was very much of a citizen part-time legislature.

And so my assignment was to sit in the office of the minor-, distinctly minority leadership, Elmer Violette and Emilien Levesque and Joe Brennan and, I forget what, Gerry Conley, (I think Gerry was the Senate minority leader) and help them with research and analyzing, prioritizing, establishing an agenda liaising with the governor's office. Well, in the space of about a month I was able to report back with great confidence to George Mitchell and Ken Curtis that the governor's problem was not a lack of enthusiasm or ability of Democrats to defend his programs or articulate his vision; his problem was he didn't have the votes. The Republicans controlled the legislature; they weren't about to give Ken Curtis what he wanted. And so the job quickly became renamed from Legislative Research Director to campaign, Legislative Campaign Stalwart or something, Director.

**DN:** But working for the State Committee?

**CM:** Again, working for the State Committee in this late, latter part of '67 moving in to '68. And Ken, I'm trying to remember when the, that was '68 when the income tax was. Yeah, the income tax was the big issue of, of the, that special session. The special session ran, I think they were beginning to stretch out but I don't think they extended to more than three months, probably January, February, March. The Republicans controlled, it was back in the days when, to put this into a context, they, we have just gone from a two-year governorship to a four-year. Ken was the first four-year, four-year term.

**DN:** Governor Clauson had been elected for four years, died after one, so John Reed filled that full term and then was elected to a full term.

**CM:** That's right, and Ken's slogan was, or the Democratic slogan was "Seven not eleven," for John Reed; that's right. So, it was only recently that there'd been a four-year term for governor where a governor could really get a handle on programs and budgets and moving with, the state forward or backward as the governor may choose. But it still was sort of over the, if you were a Democratic governor at that time, and Ken Curtis, it was over this continued opposition of Republicans who controlled the legislature.

Not, there was vigorous debate; I don't mean to sound like it was all one-sided, but the context

was much different. This was when the legislative leaders led, and they led through a process of controlling not only committee assignments but they, the budget and the tax process. So anybody that wanted anything done in the legislature as a legislator, all their pet projects were held up until the last day. And then there was always, it was arranged to have enough money available to take care of those who were willing to support the leaders in the budget, all of which was enacted at the same time, the taxing program, the spending program and the special appropriations table.

If there is a major difference, there are a lot of big differences in the way government was operating in the '60s versus Saco, versus today. But the biggest is they, that process has totally collapsed because of a variety of factors, not the least of which was there's no money to pass around. The other element, dominant element of course was all your commissioners, not all but most of your com-. Well, every appointment had to go through the executive council, which was this creature of history, that vestigial appendage that was hung over from the, leftover from the colonial days. It was peopled by the persons of the opposite party in Ken Curtis' case, but there were no "terminus terms." So the governor took most of his four years to get to the point where he could appoint people that were, as commissioners willing to support his programs.

So meantime, my job got very much involved in '68 with campaigning and increasing exposure to Ed Muskie directly. That was the year of the, for me and in Maine, a period of great excitement as a Democrat because of the initial prenational convention phase where there was the prospect that Ed Muskie could become chosen by Hubert Humphrey. Hubert Humphrey came to Maine, spoke at the Democratic state convention. That was the year of course that Bobby Kennedy ran, and Lyndon Johnson withdrew. And, you know, it was, and I was in Wisconsin, Milwaukee, Wisconsin of all places, brought out there by the Democratic National Committee with a lot of other young Democrats to campaign for Lyndon Johnson in the final days of the Wisconsin primary. We arrived just in time to turn on the television, had Orville Freeman turn on the television, and watch the President withdraw from the race. But since we were out there on the Democratic Party's nickel we continued to campaign for another twenty-four hours, professing that the President had been misquoted. But in any event, it was an exciting time to be involved in Democratic politics.

**DN:** Were you involved in the Democratic State Convention in Maine of that year?

**CM:** Very much so because, I'm trying to think of the timing, when George Mitchell was still state chair. That's right, and he left that position and became Democratic committeeman at the National Convention in Chicago in August. And so there were only two of us that were regular staff to the Democratic State Committee, and that was Ed Bonney and myself, and so our job was to organize that convention. And I had some considerable sympathies with Robert Kennedy and the candidacy of Bobby Kennedy as it related to Lyndon Johnson and Eugene McCarthy. And Ken Curtis supported Bobby Kennedy and of course they'd all gotten very confused because in Maine the issue, the dominant political motivator that spring was making sure that Ed Muskie, that nothing happened that would upset Ed Muskie's chances to be considered as vice-presidential running mate to Hubert Humphrey. And so that led to some awkward moments, to say the least.



But I happily as a staff person was largely able to duck. And, but it was a period, a fascinating period because this was Eugene McCarthy's candidacy and a lot of student activism. And, you know, [there was] the pushing and pulling of, of any pre-presidential campaign, or pre-convention presidential campaign season. And, but some of the things that were going on in terms of that nascent vice-presidential candidacy, I was not a party to. But as I say, it was, this whole year was a period when I got to see Ed Muskie and work more personally with him and you and others than ever before and organize dinners and events and schedules and things like that.

**DN:** Was your principal focus in the '68 campaign in Maine on, with the legislative races or on the general campaign? Because we had congressional races.

**CM:** The, it, my focus was on carrying, developing and carrying out a plan intended to take control of the state legislature by the Democrats. Which really had been put together, or we all worked on it but it grew out of George and Ken Curtis. And it really went back to the fall of '97 [*sic* '67] when I first came on, early in '9-, late '97, early in '98 [*sic* '68]. And it was, became even more important because we really had a chance of doing this with Ed Muskie and Hubert Humphrey at the top of the ticket, or Ed Muskie at the top of the ticket. And let's see, what did we have at that time? Peter Kyros [Sr.] was an incumbent? He got elected in '66?

**DN:** Yes, he was elected in '66.

**CM:** Yeah, you had an incumbent and Bill Hathaway was elected in '64?

**DN:** Sixty-four, yeah.

**CM:** All right, so you had two incumbents; they could run their own campaigns, and Ken was not up for election. And so there was a lot of reason to think that with the right kind of effort and some targeting and some focus and some real assistance that had largely not been provided, I'm sure that wasn't the case. . . . But we had more resources to provide assistance from the state headquarters to Democratic candidates, starting with a governor that was personally involved in recruiting candidates, which itself is a chore. As, or it certainly was a chore back then to recruit someone to run as a Democrat for the state legislature. So that was my principal focus.

The excitement of course was in the national campaign and particularly after the convention. But my focus was on, that fall, taking advantage of the enthusiasm, the momentum and the resources, financial resources frankly that were available in the Humphrey-Muskie ticket. Largely through the Muskie portion of the Humphrey-Muskie ticket [I] was able to raise some money for the State Committee that arguably in amounts that hadn't been committed to state legislative races before. So it was a grand time. It was also, you'd have these terribly compressed moments or events when Ed Muskie would come back to Maine either before the convention, and then of course I was staff to the delegation to the convention; that was very exciting, but, in Chicago. And, but I'd have to go back and check the details. But the senator came back, what, twice, three times, four times maybe in the course of the. . . .?

**DN:** About four times I think.

**CM:** And, you know, we worked very hard to take maximum advantage of that, notwithstanding the grumpiness and tiredness of everybody associated with the Humphrey, I mean the national campaign. It was at the conclusion of that, let's see, '68, and then the party ran out of money. We spent it all, good Democrats that we were; there was nothing left in the till.

**DN:** Let me take you back into that campaign. This was a time of great turmoil nationally on the civil rights front, on the war particularly; what was it like in Maine working on legislative campaigns with all of this storm whirling around the country? Did it really affect those local races, or not?

**CM:** It's, it's a very, it's a good question because the party was getting torn apart. Now here, a lot of people spent a lot of time building the Democratic Party in Maine, and what held the party together was its minority status and the fact that you'd, you know, we'd all unify behind the notion that we can do it. We were the little train that could, "little engine that could", to the point where there were victories. I mean, Peter Kyros is in Congress, and you had Bill Hathaway in the Congress, Ed Muskie in the Senate. Margaret Chase Smith was, to a Democratic partisan, a younger one, appeared vulnerable. Never was, but appeared vulnerable. And Ken had got elected. So here you were as a minority party, still of minority status in terms of enrollment and any other measure of it, but [you had] a real chance to carry out a program and win some victories.

It all began to fall apart. You can't imagine how divisive it was at that time and particularly among my age group. I mean here are the people that had built the party. I mean, the party in Maine, at least, was built by appealing to ideas and young people. The ideas were becoming increasingly perceived and debated as being bankrupt because of the war. And we had a leader of the party that was very difficult to support. And if you were a politician, loyal partisan, one thing you learn pretty quickly is that you don't easily turn your back on your leaders. You may say some things privately but you don't publicly turn your back on your leaders.

Well, that was an extraordinarily difficult time. And then you take Hubert Humphrey as the man who was caught in this terrible position of how do you be your own person while at the same time supporting a president, when in fact you had been the President's most enthusiastic public spokesperson and supporter for his policies, with McCarthy winning in places. And in the state of Maine you had this strong attraction of McCarthy and Bobby Kennedy. And you think about Maine, the politics of the Democratic Party in Maine: the strong Irish presence in some parts of the state, to which Bobby Kennedy appealed. With Ed Muskie and George Mitchell saying, "Support the President", and Eugene McCarthy reaching out to the intellectual side of the party, yeah, it was a tough, a tough time. So to personalize it. . . . Oh, and it was also the time when if you were a young activist, teach-ins and what did they call them? Talk, they were teach-ins. . . .

**DN:** Teach-ins, yes.

**CM:** . . . . were extending off campuses into the oddest places, but particularly Democratic town committee meetings. And so you'd have these evenings when they would bring together someone to oppose the war and someone to, or support the end of the war, policies to that end.

And they'd inevitably say being good Democrats and since George Mitchell and everybody else is supporting the President, you'd invite the other side. Well, I drew the short straw for many occasions. And, you know, my own evolution, my own thinking was, you know, I'd become increasingly disenchanted with the war also. But it was the topic of table conversation.

And one of the things I had to do that year, not had to but chose to do, was to go, put together, revitalize the Young Democrats of Maine. Well, the goal of course in the eyes of the state chair, George Mitchell, was to support the President and Muskie. And you try going onto campuses in 1968 trying to recruit people to be Young Democrats to support Lyndon Johnson. It, I found them but it was not necessarily my greatest contribution to the public good. But we did have a Young Democratic Convention that year and we had some people that are still involved.

Interestingly enough, the real mission if you think also within the Democratic Party of 1968 that the other debate was opening the process, allowing people in. That's what from a party point of view the whole McCarthy, thrust of the McCarthy campaign was was to open up the process to allow people presumably to express their will and get away from unit rules and bullet voting and all the mechanisms that supposedly were denying, crippling participation. And of course Mayor [Richard J.] Daley of Chicago symbolized all that.

Well, the fun thing, to go back to your original question: how did it play out at the legislative races? Well, the good news was it didn't make a damn bit of difference in the legislative races. People running for legislature still ran on the hot buttons of truck weights and general purpose aid to education and how we're spending too much on welfare and things like that. And it was more important in a party unity, party organizational, party-motivating sense than it was to the average state legislative candidate. Not always the case, but for the most part. Besides, the last thing they needed to do was run on a war platform when they were trying to seek office as a Democrat in a Republican district, or an anti-war platform. They just stayed away from it. But within the party it got fascinating because by the time you got to the fall a lot of enthusiasm for Ed Muskie, the whole moment-, change in voter attitude toward Humphrey-Musk-, Humphrey in particular, after, particularly after his speech in October.

But I can't tell you the number of occasions I had where the debate was some young person or activist or family saying, "The trouble with the Democratic Party is you're shutting us out; you won't let us in." Whereupon I was able to pull out a list of vacant town chairs and vacant Democratic committee members, and say "You name, tell me where you live and I'll give you an assignment and you can take over the damn party. You can have it all to yourself. Just call in every now and again after you get somebody elected." And we were able to recruit in the fall a lot of people with that kind of message

And, I'd have to go back and double check the numbers; my recollection was we made modest gains in the legislature. You know, you don't, turns out revolutions, if you don't have a, more weapons than the other guy, then it's hard to win them all in one fell swoop. It's a steady erosion of this aura of Republican invincibility in the state and '64 was an aberration. But we came back and every year there were more candidates, every year there were more winners. And it, that was '68 I think, we, what was it, gained control of the house in like '74; somewhere in there, I've sort of forgotten.

**DN:** Yes, just about.

**CM:** Somewhere in that time period, so it took a little bit longer than we thought. For me the interesting thing that sort of led me to your doorstep, Don, was, the Democratic Party spent it all; we had no money left, which meant that for one reason or another the better part of valor for me was to go find employment elsewhere. I worked, went back to the anti-poverty program briefly, worked for Ben Dorsky, the then-president of the Maine AFL-CIO who, did you, were you able to interview Ben in some. . . .?

**DN:** No, no.

**CM:** At some point there ought to be an effort to. I know he has been interviewed for the Maine Labor Oral History Project. You ought to dovet-, see if. . . .

**DN:** There's an effort, by the way, to coordinate the collections and cross-reference them.

**CM:** That would be excellent. But Ben Dorsky is a whole separate story, a real character and personality, and a wonderful man to work with. So Charlie O'Leary, my former roommate in the other program, and I went to work with Ben Dorsky. I commuted from Augusta to Bangor. The job was to recruit high school dropouts, unemployed high school dropouts for the Job Corps using volunteers out of the local labor unions. And it was a wonderful exposure to the labor movement, because it was all over New England and a real opportunity to meet and become acquainted with the heart of, you know, the soft-sided heart of the labor movement. Wonderful people who really came to believe in that program. No difference; Nixon killed it after about four months, but I was paid handsomely for the few months I was in it and actually managed to negotiate a termination contract that lasted longer than the actual program to see that these poor kids weren't totally abandoned here.

And it was back and f-, so I was still doing a lot of traveling in the state and then worked, I may have come back to the Democratic Party briefly in the fall. But it was in December of '69, in that year, that I believe you all, the Muskie staff, were gearing up for the '70 race. And it was then that, I honestly forget the sequence, but I can remember meeting with you, I bel-, well, it was probably earlier than December, it was probably like October, November, discussing the possibility of joining the staff and the campaign. And presumably what I brought to the staff was a recent experience trooping around the state trying to, sitting in those Democratic, poor, sparsely attended Democratic committee meetings at the town level waiting patiently as the guest speaker while they debated for an hour whether to accept the treasurer's report, when there was only sixteen dollars in the treasury before you got a chance to speak and tell them what the latest debate on truck weights and hunting licenses was in Augusta.

**DN:** Now you, when you talked to the Muskie staff in the fall or early winter of '69, was that talking about working in the campaign or working in the Senate office, and then working. . . .?

**CM:** It was both because a. . . . You're probably in a better position to judge this, I was all in Maine. [The] 1970 election was looming, Ken Curtis was in terrible shape. The income tax, his

tax had been enacted by the Republicans who then proceeded to hang it around his neck like an albatross. And my recollection was, sometime around January, February there was a poll taken that showed, that I can remember going to a meeting with, (who was the . . . ?) Oliver Quail, (is that the pollster?) in which he said, “You know, I’ve seen a lot of races, taken a lot of polls, but I’ve never seen a governor, an incumbent governor with a lower favorable job rating or approval rating than Ken Curtis had at that time.” But in any event, I, so there were two things going on, the, it was clear you’d have to gear, there was a reason to gear up in Maine for a Senate reelection campaign: it wasn’t going to necessarily be that easy. And Nixon was in the White House then and so Republicans were gloating, a lot going on at that time in that regard.

Now at the same time and this was, I wasn’t party to that but it was very, you know, there was a lot of gearing up for what-, well, I’m not sure “gearing up” is the word; it was a lot of being buried by the enthusiastic response to Ed Muskie that the country and its politicians in the Democratic Party showed in 1969, post-‘68, which caused its own set of pressures on the senator and the staff and everyone else. And what I’m leading up to is, I was hired, came to Washington in December, started working in January if I’m not mistaken, (maybe it was December of, December ‘69, January of ‘70), with the notion of going back at some point in the summer, (which was the, sort of the pattern I guess of staffing congressional and Senate campaigns at the time, going back when the campaigning really hit its stride and working full-time, going off the Senate staff and onto the campaign staff at that time.

But the immediate task was there was at least two boxes of unanswered invitations to speaking engagements from all over the country under a desk in, outside Senator Muskie’s office, or your office too for that matter, that had to be dealt with. And so I joined the Senate staff in Washington at a time when you all were trying to sort through just what, how do you respond just logistically to this attention. While, at the same time, there was increasing acceptance of these invitations to speak and get known and in some organized, semi-organized way, of prioritizing where to go and whom to see as an evaluation took place, or assessment of Ed Muskie’s chances to seek the Democratic nomination for president in ‘72.

**DN:** So you and your wife moved to Washington.

**CM:** And Tyler, our son.

**DN:** And Tyler.

**CM:** Our little son, born in September of 1969.

**DN:** He was very young and. . . .

**CM:** Went to his first Jefferson-Jackson Day dinner. . . . Let’s see, he was born September 22nd. When were JJ dinners. . . .?

**DN:** They were usually late in the fall.

**CM:** Yeah, October sometime? So I think he couldn’t have been more than three weeks when

he went to his first Jefferson-Jackson Day dinner and probably met Ed Muskie at that time.

**DN:** So your first, the first job was dealing with the flood of invitations, handling that kind of . . . ?

**CM:** Invitations. And when a flood of invitations arrives by mail and are not answered, there then ensues a flood of phone calls. And coupled with the fact, I'm trying to think of this, how this worked. It was primarily out-of-town scheduling; I was not at that time involved with. . . .

**DN:** The Maine. . . .

**CM:** Well Maine was included, but I was trying to think in terms of Washington, D.C. office scheduling I think. Goodness, I don't think I had that responsibility. It was more the travel scheduling which. . . . It was bad enough in terms of dealing with Ed Muskie at that time because you'd have to go; if you were going to try to organize this you had to look ahead a few months. And if you were going to look ahead a few months you had to sort of say, "Will you agree to go to something two months from now?" "How do I know what I'm going to be doing two months from now?" So it was phone calls, invitations and at that time, yeah, right, maybe even before I arrived we were advancing trips. We actually had a volunteer go out and frequently, if not typically, there would be a request to the host to cover the traveling staff with the senator for an appearance, and also someone to go out ahead of time. I think that's the way it worked; I've sort of forgotten at this point.

But the Muskie operation, organization then had experience in the '68 campaign with advance staff, and presumably there was experience before that. But there were actually advance people, enthusiastic people like Mike Casey and Rich Evans in particular, and some others, that made themselves available. That was. . . . so this sort of was the exposure, my initial exposure to the national scene, was to crawl out from under this mountain of mail working with volunteers on trips, trip planning, actual events and then building more and more attention to the Maine schedule and the Maine campaign plans, although there was no full-time staff at that point. And moving toward March 31st, if I'm not mistaken, of '70, which was the deadline for the filing of nomination papers for candidates for all the offices is my recollection. So that would have included who was going to be Ed Muskie's opponent, who was going to be Ken Curtis' opponent, if you enjoy opponents. . . . Ken Curtis had primary opposition as well as an incumbent Democratic governor. He had challenges from within his own party.

And this sort of dual mission or balancing act of taking steps to seek a, the largest possible victory in Maine for Ed Muskie. While at the same time he would somehow find time to continue to speak out on national issues and more importantly campaign for colleagues around the country. . . . Whereas as you get into March, you weren't quite sure what kind of a race he was going to have in Maine. So as it turned out, a gentleman by the name of Neil Bishop, (I must say I can't remember his background, what the heck he was doing). . . .

**DN:** He had been a school teacher among other things, a farmer, dairy farmer and he formed a (*unintelligible word*) the legislature. . . .

**CM:** Farmer, dairy farmer.

**DN:** And he had been one of the most active Republicans for Muskie in 1954.

**CM:** You know, the impression, what impressed me the most about him was none of the above. It was the fact that he looked more like Ed Muskie supposedly looked like than Ed Muskie did. If you took the expressions, old moose jaw and craggy face, they, Neil Bishop looked more craggy-faced and more moose-jawed than Ed Muskie ever thought of being, and more Lincolnesque. And it would be interesting to scruffle through the files and see what the polls were showing. But presumably Ed Muskie, I can't remember, but the question is, "How do you run a campaign that was terribly important to Ed Muskie personally?" as I've come to learn any campaign and every campaign is to a candidate personally. But it was a real exposure to that side of Ed Muskie, you know, the campaign protagonist and participant.

**DN:** Was he comfortable in that situation?

**CM:** You know that's one word I would never think of using. As a campaigner, let me describe a couple of things. Ed Muskie as a campaigner was, went through a phase, a cycle, very predict- I came over the years to sort of see it and know exactly when it was going to happen. There was a change in him when he, and he would step off a plane in Maine as a campaigner, coming up from Washington, and by and large he'd be sort of awful as a campaigner. If, and the way he built his Maine campaigns is there would be these very brief visits during the session, same way it is now. But then you get serious about it at some point; you increasingly add time to the schedule. And, but then at some point it would be full-time, and that was usually about three weeks. I mean, you'd say, "Yes, we're going to start Labor Day," but it never worked out that way. Then Muskie would be awful until he immersed himself. And you could sort of see this change come over him as a campaigner now, by the events, I mean, there was this interactive process that (*timer goes off*). . . . Oop, oop, the world's coming to an end.

**DN:** Let's. . . .

(*Tape turned off.*)

**CM:** All right, when we return to this subject I want to continue, complete the description of Ed Muskie the campaigner. It's also important to talk about Ed Muskie the candidate, for any of us that have worked with candidates, because he was a terrible candidate. He was a wonderful campaigner. We ought to sort of pursue that. And then within the context of the '70 campaign that's a, there was a lot of additional dimensions when you try to run two campaigns at once, in the state and outside the state, and that would be worth pursuing.

**DN:** Good, thank you very much, Charlie. This concludes the second tape in the interview with Charlie Micoleau. [*sic* This is the second interview of two interviews. This interview consists of only one tape.]

*End of Side Two*