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Orestis, John oral history interview

Mike Richard

Interview with John Orestis by Mike Richard

Summary Sheet and Transcript

Interviewee
Orestis, John

Interviewer
Richard, Mike

Date
August 20, 1999

Place
Lewiston, Maine

ID Number
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Biographical Note

John C. Orestis was born March 8, 1943 in Lewiston, Maine. He attended Lewiston schools, Georgetown University and American University Law School. John served in the 105th Maine legislature, 1971-1972. He was involved with Model Cities and was Committee Chair of the task force on Housing, National League of Cities (Board of Directors); budget and audit committee; president of the Maine Municipal Association in 1975; corporation counsel for mayors Beliveau and Clifford, and mayor of Lewiston from 1973-1976. He practiced law 1968-1986, and then began a nursing home business.

Scope and Content Note

Interview includes discussions of: 1954 Maine gubernatorial campaign; 1969-1972 presidential campaign; environmental protection; Model Cities, Lewiston; Greek community in Lewiston and Maine; big box voting; social clubs and voting in Lewiston; anecdote about 1954 campaign about picklemaker; U. S. Conference of Mayors; National League of Cities; Maine Legislature; Louis Jalbert; Democratic National Convention in Miami 1972; Maine Municipal Association; Tax Reform Act of 1986; Severin Beliveau; Bill Hathaway; John Baldacci; Margaret Chase Smith; David Emery; and Olympia Snowe.

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Transcript

Mike Richard: The date is August 20th, 1999, we're here in Lewiston, Maine at the office of John C. Orestis; interviewing is Mike Richard. And Mr. Orestis, can you please state your full name and spell it?

[*Intercom interruption*]

John Orestis: It's John C. Orestis, O-R-E-S-T-I-S.

MR: Okay, and your date of birth please?

JO: March the 8th, 1943.

MR: And where were you born?

JO: In Lewiston.

MR: And so have you lived in Lewiston all your life, or most of your life?

JO: Not yet. I don't live here now. I lived in Lewiston, except for the years I was away at school, until six years ago, and six years ago I moved to Yarmouth.

MR: Okay, and let's talk a little bit about your family background. First of all, who were parents, what were your parents' names?

JO: What <u>are</u> my parents' names, they're both still living actually. In fact my father celebrated his eighty-eighth birthday yesterday. My father's name was Christos Orestis. He, as I said, is eighty-eight, and was born in Nashua, New Hampshire, moved to Lewiston when he was, oh, I think around ten, and has been here ever since, lived here all of his life. And my mother's name is Cecile Langelier. She was born in Lewiston and has been here all her life. She's eighty-two, she'll be eighty-three in September. And, so that their union was one of a Greek immigrant and a Franco-American. They were married in 1940 so they're celebrating their fifty-ninth wedding anniversary September 5th.

My father was one of six children I think, five or six; five children. He had three brothers and a sister. Two of his brothers are deceased but he still has a living brother who's eighty-five, and a living sister who's eighty-three, so I do have some longevity genes, thank God. And they came here as children of my grandfather who was a Greek immigrant, and his name was Vasileios Orestis. And he came here, oh, in the late teens I think, 1918, 1920, somewhere in there, and ran a pool hall here for a little while. And then [he] started and for a long time successfully ran a commercial laundry and linen rental service, you know napkins and table cloths and butcher aprons and, you know, coats and that kind of stuff, and actually ran that until about 1960 or '61 when they sold it to a Boston firm.

On the other side of my family, my Franco-American grandfather was named, was Albert Langelier and he immigrated from Canada again very early in the nineteen hundreds with my

grandmother. And [he] was a civil servant here, he was the Lewiston city treasurer and tax collector for years, and served in the legislature himself back in 1921. So, then that is where, who I come from, and I have one brother, no sisters, I have a brother who, I'm fifty-six, I have a brother who's fifty-one and lives in New Hampshire, in Rye Beach, New Hampshire now.

MR: And what's your brother's name?

JO: William, Bill, yeah.

MR: Has he been interested or involved in politics?

JO: No, no, not at all.

MR: What were your parents' occupations?

JO: My father was a public, not a certified public accountant, a public accountant, a registered public accountant as it were. He had a small-time public accounting firm where he serviced small restaurants and stores and just small businesses here in Lewiston-Auburn. And [he] also had sort of a sub-practice in the Damariscotta-Newcastle area, and some in Camden-Rockport, a sort of word of mouth development of his practice. He picked up one or two clients up there and then picked up three or four more and so ended up sort of splitting his time between Lewiston and that mid-coast area. My mother was a homemaker. She worked very early on in their marriage and then became a homemaker and then never went back to work.

MR: And what were your parents' political beliefs?

JO: Political?

MR: Beliefs, or registration?

JO: Well, I think my mother was, I'm not sure she developed any great political philosophy, except that she was and is a die hard Democrat. She, it was drummed into her head by her father who of course was a Lewiston labor Democrat and a civil servant, that the Democratic Party was, you know, the way, and that it had in fact, you know, provided an opportunity for them as immigrants here and a job. And so she has never voted for a Republican in her eighty-one, eighty-two years. And I think would, she, she'll say, if there's a Republican running that anybody talks about, that her father would roll over in his grave if she ever voted for someone. So while she doesn't have a strong political philosophy, neither, she's probably, you know, a little right of center in some of her views. She's a very strict Roman Catholic and somewhat conservative. But she really believes that the Democratic Party will be the ones who do the job right so she votes for them without looking at the issues. My father, he's a moderate, a moderate Democrat. I don't think he's voted for many Republicans either. Had a, if any, had a lot of interest in the party. Was, was and is friendly with a number of the older now party stalwarts. He, in fact, was the director of the census in 1950, which was a political appointment, for one of the congressional districts in Maine. He ran the 1950 census and numeration, had three hundred people working for him and did that kind of thing. He was on the school board here in Lewiston.

And never ran for public office but was always involved in the party machinery as a volunteer. And had, was very supportive and very friendly with Ed Muskie, Frank Coffin, Tom Delahanty, some of the, some of his contemporary political friends. So, I'd say he, but in direct answer to your question, he was probably a moderate.

MR: And did he subscribe to a religious belief or church?

JO: He was Greek Ortho-, he is Greek Orthodox which created some controversy in our family. My, the Greek Orthodox view of a mixed marriage, that is Greek Orthodox and Roman Catholic was pretty negative. And my father came from a, obviously a direct immigrant family, his father and mother both had come over from Greece, or as they say, "came on the boat from the old country." And in fact when he chose to marry my mother in 1940, instead of staying sort of in the house and in the family business, they kicked him out. Put his clothes on the front porch and sent him on his way. And he never has been in, he was never in the family business after that so it created somewhat of a schism in the family. And we were sort of the half-breed cousins and then we had, you know, some of his siblings married Greek and they're full blooded cousins. But, so that did, you know, early on in the forties and fifties created quite a bit of, quite a bit of controversy in the family.

But my Franco-American grandparents were very, they were Roman Catholic. They were very receiving and welcoming to my father and brought him into the family and always treated everybody equally, which was a pleasant and fresh breath of air after my Greek family's sort of rejection of the union between my parents. And in fact my mother never saw my Greek grandparents until they died, never saw them, ever. Saw them the first time in their caskets. Kind of strange . . . But anyway, so I was brought up Roman Catholic, as were the rules back then. If a Catholic married outside the church, in order to have the union blessed at all by the church, you had to agree to raise your children as Roman Catholics. And your partner had to, your spouse had to agree to that too. And so they did and my brother and I were brought up as Roman Catholics here.

MR: And did your father still have a close tie to the Greek community in Lewiston?

JO: Well, you know, he's an elder of the community. He doesn't participate particularly actively any longer. You know, if he goes to church at Easter that's probably what his participation is at the religious level. Certainly a number of his friends both in the family and outside the family are Greek-Americans. But the Greek community here is not particularly strong any longer or large, you know. There are probably a hundred families in the church, and the church covers Augusta down to Portland, you know, that area. And the next church north is Bangor, and the next church south is Portland. There are only, there's only Bangor, Lewiston, Portland and Biddeford that have Greek, actual Greek churches, actual congregations, parishes.

MR: Was it stronger, was the Greek community stronger in Lewiston when you were growing up?

JO: It was larger, and I think probably more cohesive and active than it is now. You know, it's, I think as you get away from the im- I . . . As each generation gets away from the immigrant

movement, you know, and more into the melting pot, I think the, not just the Greek community but here the Irish and French communities have, you know, fragmented. And, not in any particularly contentious way, they just fragmented and sort of drifted off. And those kind of ethnic values may be there, but practiced as a community not as much, or, as openly I think. I think it's the same of all of those ethnic backgrounds. But there's a good community, I mean the church is still fairly active. That small number of families, that hundred or so families, of those probably twenty or thirty families are very active. There's a church council and, you know, fraternal organizations. There's a fraternal organization for men and a social organization for women in the church. And they have a full time priest here, which is sort of a mark of a parish that's still alive, you know. So it's, it's here, but it's not particularly strong I don't think.

MR: Was the Greek community particularly politically active locally at the time you were growing up?

JO: Not really, no, no. I mean, they vote. And they, you know, like most Mediterranean ethnics, you know, they believe in the vote, they believe in the process. They, I think, I think it's probably fair to say that most of them are Democrats, although there were some Republicans obviously. Senator [Olympia] Snowe and some of her family and others were Republicans. Although, she may have, I'm not sure that she might not have grown up as a Democrat and became a Republican when she married Peter Snowe. I'd have to ask her, I'm not sure. But I think mostly the Greeks were Democrats here, you know, blue collar labor Democrats, you know, but not particularly active. Not many of them ran for office, not many of them were in the sort of party machinery so to speak.

MR: And so, it might be a little bit of a broad question, but what were some of your experiences growing up evidently in the French community around (*unintelligible phrase*)?

JO: No, not in the French community really, although, well, I say that but certainly I hung around my French grandmother quite a bit, more than I probably did my Greek grandmother. My father went off to the war. And when he went off to the war, as was the case with a lot of people, my mother, who was a homemaker at the time, didn't want to live alone and we moved in with her mother. So for three years I lived with my French grandmother, the three youngest years of my life I lived with my French grandmother. And my mother was of six or seven kids and, six I think, and quite friendly with all of my aunts and uncles. And, but I think we, it's hard not to say you grew up in the French community here because obviously ninety percent of the population, I don't know if that's the right number, but a large percent of the population was Franco-American. And when I was young, you know, in the forties and fifties, you know, French was spoken quite freely and openly. And, you know, you couldn't get a job in a store, you could but you, it was easier to get a job in a store if you spoke both French and English, etcetera, etcetera. So I guess I did grow up in a French community, but that doesn't mean the rest of the world here didn't, we all did.

What was it like growing up? I mean, we lived in a sort of a mid-town tenement neighborhood. We never owned our own home, we always lived in an apartment. When I say mid-town, I mean, you know, above the city par, but still no single family homes in the neighborhood. A tenement neighborhood just a block or so above (*name*) Field and the Central Maine Youth

Center area. And I had, you know, a pretty normal growing up. I went to the local neighborhood elementary school, actually the oldest existing school in Lewiston at the time. And then on to I guess what you'd call a junior high now, which was also, I think that might have been a city-wide school, seventh and eighth grade. And then on to Lewiston High School. And, you know, pretty uneventful, unremarkable "Ozzie and Harriet" growing up, you know. Remember, it was the fifties.

MR: Were there any ethnic tensions or anything between the French and other communities?

JO: Well there were but not, not what, not in the fifties and sixties I think, I think that was earlier, I think it started to fade pretty well in the fifties. I mean we never, my brother and I and the kids I hung around with never experienced any great tensions. And the bunch of people I hung out with were pretty much of mixed nationality point of view, you know. There were kids, Irish-American kids, and Greek-American, French-American, Jewish kids and pretty much everything, you know? And we didn't feel any great tension. But I know my father says that earlier on, you know, there were big fights and people thrown off the bridge between Lewiston and Auburn and all that. There was certainly great rivalry between Lewiston and Auburn on the kid level, you know, the two high schools and all of that kind of thing, but not, I don't think from, I didn't experience a lot of tension from an ethnic point of view.

MR: Okay, and I guess while we're talking about Lewiston, how do you think in general, maybe politically or economically or socially, Lewiston has changed in the time that you've been living here?

JO: Well, certainly politically. Well it's changed in all three areas, politically, economically and socially, you know. Certainly politically it's changed in that early in my life and into probably, well, even when I ran for office in the early seventies, the Democratic Party ruled, period. And it wasn't, I don't think that there was this huge, you know, Tammany Hall or James Michael Curley type boss or organization, but certainly the party ruled by its, by just its sheer numbers, you know. Back then there was, there was, what did they call that voting, I can't even, my memory is gone, but you know the voting . . .

MR: The big box?

JO: . . . the big box voting, you know, that was still around. I can't remember when we abolished that, I think it around through the sixties. And even when it wasn't, people looked for the 'D' designation and voted that way. Ain't so any more, you know? I mean we have, I think people vote for a personality (*unintelligible word*) locally here, they don't vote that much on issues. I mean it's amazing to me that Maine elects such liberal people when there are so many conservative people here. But you know, they vote for personalities and here in Lewiston I think that's the biggest change that's taken place. First of all, the party itself hasn't held on to much loyalty as a organization. People still register to vote and enroll as Democrats but they don't necessarily get involved or feel like they're part of a, you know, of a club, organization, machine or anything else. So that's, that's I think pretty much gone.

People pay attention to, I don't even know what the registration numbers are, I'm sure

Democrats are still well in control, but when you think about that people are paying attention to personalities, not to their enrollment, because you see Olympia Snowe elected. You see, you know, Bill Cohen doing very well here year, you know, election after election after election. There are still many more Democrats than Republicans in the delegation to the State House, but you do see Republicans able to get elected here now. Stavros Mendros, who's a freshman legislator got elected and beat an incumbent Democrat, John Telow earlier on was a Republican when I was serving. So there have been Republicans who have been able to be elected just by hard work and not even hiding the fact that they were Republicans in any way.

So it's changed a lot in that you can't count on Lewiston to deliver a Democratic majority to any candidate, especially state wide or congressional district candidates, you just can't any more, doesn't happen. And in fact, because it doesn't happen, this becomes a very key place. If they can keep, if they can win, if a Republican can win Lewiston-Auburn, especially Lewiston, or keep the Democrat from having much of a margin, it makes a big difference in the congressional race and in the state wide races. Joe Brennan lost his opportunity to go back to the Blaine House against Jock McKernan in Jock's second term primarily, I think, because he didn't do as well in Lewiston as he should have. He won by five or six or seven thousand votes, but he should have had a huge victory here. And when he ran against, when he ran the next time against, was it against King I guess, he lost Lewiston, he lost the election by two thousand votes statewide. So, the old days when Lewiston could deliver a huge Democratic majority and deliver a huge margin to statewide or congressional candidates is gone. And the Democratic candidates recognize that and it's become a point of real attention to be paid in an election.

Economically, of course this was a mill town, a textile mill town; Auburn was a shoe town. This was a cotton mill town and it isn't any more, as Auburn isn't a shoe town any more. And that has changed the economics dramatically. I mean, downtown Lewiston and downtown Auburn, you know, economically pretty, pretty tough shape, but that's not necessarily because of the mills and the shoe shops going away. I mean most downtowns have suffered that, and not that many have enjoyed a successful renaissance, so that's not particularly indicative. Although it does obviously create a problem, in that businesses, you know, this kind of town, Lewiston or Auburn, you know, started from the river and came up, you know.

You had the river then, the canals and the mills and then the mill housing. And then as you went uptown people who didn't, other people who worked in the mills and then people who didn't work in the mills but served the people who worked in the mills, and then the mill superintendents. And you can just, if you look at a map of Lewiston and you take the river and go up Pine Street and look at the different blocks and how they developed residentially, you can just see what happened in Lewiston-Auburn. Well that's all changed.

Neighborhoods such as the one I grew up in, which were good middle class, hardworking families, are now, you know, populated by your transient people. And crime rates are higher and a lot of things are happening in those neighborhoods which would not attract the same make up as there was there, when I lived there. The mills are gone. There's been some diversification and plenty of new jobs, but, but you know, I don't think Lewiston has developed the kind of energy I hoped it would back in the late sixties and early seventies when I was involved. And while it has a much more diverse economy, I think it has a struggling one.

Socially, I don't know. You know, I don't pay a lot of attention to the organized social life of Lewiston-Auburn. So I don't have a lot to tell you about that, except that certainly in the fifties, and even into the sixties, I think the fraternal organiza-, for men, the fraternal organizations and the private social clubs were important and much more active than they are now. And probably the churches too. And I think now there's less of that sort of organized socialism.

MR: Okay. And actually you mentioned the social clubs so now might be a good time to talk about what the social clubs were like. Especially in the fifties and sixties, how they were significant politically and what some of the clubs actually were and what they did, and who was involved.

JO: Well, understand that there were two, I mean, there were two reasons, well, two reasons, two kinds of social clubs. That might be the way to put it. First of all, understand that social club meant that it was by membership, and literally by membership. You had to have a membership card to go through the door. Some of them were strictly social clubs to get by the liquor laws. The liquor laws in Maine were such that you could not serve hard liquor unless you were a hotel, a Class A restaurant, defined by the nature of the volume of sales of food versus liquor, or a private organization. So those who wanted to drink in a bar and have hard liquor had those choices. They could go to a hotel, a Class A restaurant or a private club. Other than that you had to have a tavern license or whatever, and you know, you sold beer or beer and wine.

So some of the social clubs sprung up strictly to get by the liquor license. LA Working Mens Club, the United Social Club, some of these clubs. But they became, because people went there to drink and socialize with each other, they became somewhat cohesive.

Some of the other clubs sprung up around the snowshoe movement, which was, you know, social-slash-athletic movement of sorts based in the Franco-American culture and tradition. And, you know, hooked into a network of snowshoe clubs throughout the state and into New Hampshire and up into Quebec province, you know, where they actually had snowshoe parades and snowshoe races. And then the rest of the year it was a drinking club and a card playing club, and whatever other kind of sort of illegal gambling that they could get away with in the club when people weren't looking.

One of the things about the clubs, they were very Democratic, with a big D. They were very homogenous, they were very popular, and they voted. And you could depend on the clubs to deliver you a lot of votes. And if you got the club's so-called endorsement, which was a pretty informal thing, you know, you show up and drink a few times and sort of court the favor of the club officers and they pretty much put the word out that that was the guy to vote for in that particular election. And it was a way to get a bunch of votes fast, you know, like the labor union or teachers union endorsement. Having the clubs was important in Lewiston and meant that you could count on a ton of votes. And those of us who ran for public office from time to time knew it and made sure that we paid attention to it.

MR: So at the time that you were running in the early seventies, they were still a huge factor in (*unintelligible word*)?

JO: Oh yeah, oh yeah. One of the things I did in election season, I was going to all the clubs. They all had published schedule, published schedule, you'd talk to the officers and say, "When are there going to be a lot of people there?" Usually, you know, there were parties scheduled as the, see they would have their Christmas parties and those kinds of holiday parties fairly early. A couple reasons. One I think to accommodate the elections and have the politicians come in and, you know, curry favor with them, but secondly because I think, you know, get those parties out of the way. They were somewhat raucous parties. And they had strippers and drinking and all, before the family stuff started, the more, you know, the more religious and family aspects of the holiday took, took hold. So they'd have those things early. So when you were running for election, you know, you'd go to all those parties because you'd have a chance to talk to three hundred guys who voted, "yay". And, you know, if you could get the officers to be friendly to your candidacy, you were the one they were going to invite to the party. Your opponent didn't.

Now remember, in 19-, in the nineteen sixties and into the seventies, and I don't know when it changed, we ran city wide. There were six house seats in Lewiston. Everybody ran for the six house seats, and the top six voters, vote getters got the seats. So you might have ten, twelve, fifteen people running for six seats. The top six people got the seats, went to the legislature, the others didn't. So when you ran for the legislature you, as opposed to now where legislators run, I don't know how many people are in a district in Maine. It's supposed to be, you know, redistricted so that they're fairly even. But, however, whatever the number is, back then if you, it was all different. If you were running in Lewiston, you were running for, you know, thirteen, fourteen thousand voters voted, that's who you were running for, you know, for the votes of those people. In Portland it might be even more because it was a bigger city. If you were running out in Buckfield it might be two hundred votes or whatever, you know. So it was different than it is now where everybody's sort of running after the same amount of votes. But you ran city wide, so the clubs became very important because they could deliver a large block of people to you as votes.

MR: Okay, so, actually just to get a little bit of the chronology here, you were in the state legislature starting, I have until '72 but I don't know when you started.

JO: I was in the state legislature, I only went one term because I didn't particularly care for it. But I was in the 105th, which was 1971-72, which was exactly fifty years after my grandfather who was in 1921. And we had the same seat, seat 74, so that was kind of fun. I mean I requested that seat because my grandfather had it, it wasn't by chance. So I was in only that one term. I returned to Lewiston in 1968, late summer of 1968, started practicing law. I practiced law for twenty years here before I went in the nursing home business, and I returned in 1968 and I ran for my first public office, elected office, in 1971, or 1970, I took office in January of '71.

MR: And actually I should, one thing I forgot to ask, what were some of the names of the clubs that were the most important in Lewiston?

JO: Oh, Le Montagnard was probably the largest and most politically active of sort of block vote club that there was. And then there was the Acme Club, the Pastime Club, the Richelieu, the United Social, Lewiston Social, L&A Working Mans Club, those were the ones that I visited.

I was a lifetime, am a lifetime member of the Montagnard Club. I haven't been in years. That was run, usually they were run by the, sort of the treasurer or president of the club sort of ran the club and also sort of really owned the club. Usually the treasurer of the club ran the business aspects of the club, the bar, the food, the gambling and supported the social activities of the club with part of the profits. And [they] took the rest of the profits home, put themselves on the salary, on the payroll for salary to take out the rest of the money, which is how you got by the sort of non-profit aspects of the club.

And the Montagnard Club, which was the largest, was run by a fellow named Roland Tanguay, who was a state rep, and had in its membership a number of the delegation. And not just, I mean my membership was given to me because I was in the legislature and then mayor, you know. And they were very supportive of me. In fact I had my inaugural party at the club, one of my two terms as mayor. And so they were pretty friendly. But Roland Tanguay was in the legislature, Albert Cote who was a state legislator, George Ricker who was a state legislator was a bartender there. So there were quite a few who were not only members but truly were active members of the club, of that club. So that was probably the most important of the clubs and the largest.

MR: And do you have any just stories or anecdotes about time in the clubs or (*unintelligible word*)?

JO: We, you know, I, just two quick sideline comments. I mean it was, if you got into the spirit of it when you were campaigning, they were fun places to go. Because everybody had some bitch with government and wanted you to hear about it and talk about it. And they were, you know, good hard working blue collar people who, you know, needed and wanted a place to go. And so the clubs I thought were okay, you know. I mean they were certainly not, you know, they weren't, they weren't the International Press Club and they didn't put on interesting intellectual exercises or programs, but they were good places to go, with good hard working people, and I enjoyed them. I remember the Montagnard Club when I went campaigning, either for the legislature or mayor, I don't remember any more which one, going there at their Christmas party and not having ever been to one, the club's Christmas parties before. First of all amazed that there were that many people there. I mean it was jammed with people. Second of all, amazed at how sort of raucous. And, for me who was, you know, I came out of a fairly quiet family background and I was already married and had two, by then two or three kids, at least two and maybe three kids. Two, yeah, probably two kids by then, my daughter was born just before I was elected mayor. I mean, there were strippers and gambling and drinking and having a wild old time. And I was expected to, at some point in the evening they were going to call this crew to order and have me say something. And I thought, "How the hell can I get up and say anything," you know, regarding issues or anything else like that, you know, I mean it would be a joke. I'd be, you know, they'd start throwing beer bottles at me. So I didn't, you know. I was introduced and said some innocuous friendly words about how, that it was wonderful to be there and they were wonderful people. And in the middle of it all, out of the corner of my eye, I realized that they were sending one of the strippers over while I was talking, with, you know, just a pair of panties on and nothing else and waving her chest in my face trying to distract me. Well, she did distract me very well. I'm trying to talk, and kept watching this woman walking in front of me and shaking her chest, and I thought, "Nobody could ever believe this is how I got

elected."

The only other thing, the only other little anecdote I have is that my ex-wife, my first wife had a very good idea when I was running for mayor. And that is, that why didn't she and the baby come with me to the clubs and, with posters for my election, and we would be sure that way that they'd never turn away. And she was pregnant at the time and was sort of pushing a carriage with the second child, and so we did. We went on down to lower Lisbon Street from club to club and bar to bar with my election posters being held by my pregnant wife while I pushed the carriage with the other baby. And I got a poster at every window that way. I don't even know what the clubs are like now, though, I really don't.

MR: Okay, well, actually when did you meet your wife, and . . .?

JO: When did I meet my first wife? In school, college, you know. We were married right after we both graduated, immediately, within a week of graduation.

MR: And where did you go to school?

JO: I went to Georgetown University undergraduate school, and American University law school.

MR: And how did you, actually when did your interest in politics start, was that during undergrad school or before or after?

JO: No, before. My interest in politics started in 1954. And since this is a Muskie project it's coincidental but probably significant that it started with my father and Alton Lessard, Tom Delahanty and Frank Coffin, and they were all supporting Ed Muskie when he was running for governor in 1954. And I was eleven years old and we were riding from, we had gone down to Rumford to talk with the senator and we were riding back from that meeting with Muskie. And that was the first time I met him. And I was, I got car sick, almost ruined some of his nomination petitions. Because I, my job, they gave me a job. I was in the back seat and I was eleven and I was put to work as a politician already. My job was to go over the nomination petitions and make sure that the names were legible and the towns that they had, that they lived in were, you know, corresponded to the town the petition had certified in, and on and on. And I was getting car sick reading them, I remember, and saying to my father, "I'm going to throw up right on these things if I can't take a break here." So my first exposure as insignificant as it was was to a Muskie election in 1954.

And I probably, I knew it was in my blood. I mean my father was very active and, while never running for office, very active in the party and all of the elections and, you know, was very friendly with all of the folk, the Democrats of that era, you know. And my grandfather on my French side, you know, was as I said both a civil servant and an elected official in his life. So politics was in our household always, you know, and issues and the party were talked about always.

But my active start and interest came, uh, in Washington because my sophomore year at

Georgetown I went to work for Muskie. And I worked for him until the day I left Washington. And in fact George Mitchell hired me. George was the executive assistant in the office in 196-, in the fall of 1962 and he hired me to work in the office while I was at Georgetown. And then he left somewhat soon thereafter, I can't remember exactly when, and came back up to Maine. But I stayed in the office and worked there until I graduated from Georgetown. And then Muskie politically appointed me, a patronage appointment, for my law school years, I worked in the U.S. Senate post office on a patronage appointment. They had, for students they had three kinds of patronage appointments: U.S. Senate post office, the United States capitol police force, and the elevators, operating the elevators. And a number of people here in Maine, a number of whom you'll interview, had those jobs when we went to school in Washington, and mine was in the post office. I worked in the post office for three years until I left, but because I was in the post office I would also volunteer and do stuff in the office. I'd been there in the office for three years before. So that was probably where I gained my most significant and serious interest in continuing in politics when I returned home was by working Capitol Hill all those years.

And then, I mean, think about when I was there, from 1962 to 1968. I mean I was there through some of the, you know, contemporarily some of the biggest things that happened in politics in three decades, you know. The Kennedy assassination, the King assassination, the Kennedy assassination again, the riots of '68, because I didn't leave Washington until August of '68. So I was there right through the riots. Had to have a safe passage placard for my car to drive through Washington to go to work at the post office, because I'd work four o'clock in the morning. So it was a very interesting time to be there. So if you were in Washington, going to one of the Washington universities, working on Capitol Hill during that time period in your life, it would be pretty hard to not come away from it being someone interested in politics. Not necessarily in running for office but certainly in politics.

MR: And what was George Mitchell and the rest of the staff like to work with in Muskie's office?

JO: Oh, good. I mean, we had a great bunch of people down there, a number of whom are around. George of course, Bob Shepherd was the, was the press secretary. Bob's now, he's probably on the interview list, he's down in Brunswick. He's a successful businessman in Brunswick now. Gayle Fitzgerald, who is deceased now, she was Gayle Cory after she was married, Buzzy Fitzgerald's sister, was there and she was the senator's private secretary and sort of the mother hen of the office. She was a lot of fun to work with. It was a great, great crew of people. And I learned a lot watching and listening, you know. I was a young part-time college student employee. I wasn't exactly, you know, a speech writer or big policy maker, but I really learned a lot and enjoyed working in the office.

MR: How would you, just from observing other people in your own work there, how was Muskie's relation with his staff, and what was he like when he was in the office?

JO: He was distant. He was, as you know, highly intellectual, one of the brightest and most articulate men that probably have come out of modern politics. But he did not suffer fools easily and he was, I think, somewhat careful about who he picked to be close, you know, he . . .

MR: Actually, I'm sorry to interrupt but I want to just turn the tape.

JO: Go ahead.

End of Side A, Tape One
Side B, Tape One

MR: This is the second side of the interview with John Orestis on August 20th, 1999.

JO: He was close to George, and I'm sure others in the office as he cho-, I mean he picked who he wanted to be close to. And other than that he was relatively distant and had a short temper, very short fuse. You know, if you were at the sort of low end of the totem pole as I was, you know, you didn't have a lot of contact with him on a day to day basis, you know. Saw him, said "Hello," that kind of thing. His wife would come to the office and be a hell of a lot more friendly than he was. She was and is a lovely lady. But, you know, you felt the greatness. I mean the man was just very, very bright and very articulate and well read, well educated, well spoken, and thoughtful. And it was pretty exciting to work around somebody who was that way, for somebody, you know, who was as young as I was, and sort of just getting used to being an adult, it was pretty good. But he was tough to work for. I didn't work for him directly, I mean I didn't have to answer to him directly unless, you know, I dropped something and broke it and he got pissed off as hell, which didn't happen.

It's funny, though, later on when I was on patronage in the post office, I had a key, as a postal employee, I delivered the mail. I worked at four o'clock in the morning, we sorted all of the mail, bundled it up, and then around seven o'clock in the morning we delivered it to all the offices. And then you, and Muskie's office was on my route of delivery. I wasn't working in the office then, just volunteering from time to time, but his office was on my delivery route. And I used to set up the route so that he was almost the last place I would stop. And if I could get the route done early enough you didn't have to, you didn't, you finished delivering fairly early but you couldn't punch out until eight o'clock, punch your card and go off to school. I would nap on his couch. And one time I overslept and he came in early. He was never in at seven o'clock in the morning, or at least I never saw him. But he, that morning came in relatively early like seven thirty, quarter of eight and woke me, gave me a little shake and said, "You're not working in the office." I said, "No, Senator, I'm your post man." He said, "What are you doing?" I said, "I'm taking a nap." He said, "Well I'm in a little early and I need the office." I said, "No problem, I'm outta here." But he was, he was friendly about it and it was kind of cute.

MR: What were some of the times that you witnessed his temper, you mentioned his temper a little while ago?

JO: See, I volunteered to the campaign in '72 and I think that the, he was pretty tired out. I had Brown County in Wisconsin, I was on the advance team for Brown county, Wisconsin. A guy named Clark Tyler ran the advance team, he was a speech writer and freelance writer in Washington, and he ran the advance team in Clark [*sic*] [Brown] County which was where Green Bay, which is where Green Bay is. And I went out there, I was there in February and March, lovely time to be in Green Bay. I actually was supposed to be in the Florida primary, but I

missed the plane flight and got assigned to Green Bay instead of Florida in February. I never missed another plane. Anyway, I think probably he was pretty frazzled and pretty worn out and pretty much on the end of, you know, his thoughts that he might win this thing by then. And I think probably that'swhere I witnessed his shortness of temper the most, during the travels through Clark [*sic*] [Brown] County and through Green Bay. He was just very distracted from anything but this campaign and very short with anything that interfered with his focus on it, very short tempered with that. And I've watched him explode with secret service people and with the campaign staff two or three times.

And the time that I saw, it wasn't his temper as much as, I was upset by his personality that particular day. It was his birthday in March of '72, I don't even remember when his birthday is, you might not know either, maybe March, February or March because that's when I was there and it was his birthday, the day of his birthday. And we were staying in I think a place called the Northland Hotel, or something like that, in Green Bay, Wisconsin. It's interesting, when you're an advance person you always stayed at or used the vendors who would let you bill the campaign in Washington because nobody had any money, and the campaign didn't really have any money. So if you get the bill sent to Washington you didn't have to worry about it again. You left town before it ever became a problem. And they did become problems especially in a campaign that was losing at the end, you know, there was no money. So, but this hotel must have been one of which we could bill Washington, and that was a key phrase, bill Washington.

So we were staying there and he had been on the road that day doing other things. I had sort of actually been with him most of the day doing radio interviews and we had had a little birthday celebration, or we were going to have birthday celebration. We'd had the day of doing radio interviews and that kind of thing. And we were going up in the elevator, and there was Muskie and two Secret Service agents and myself and Jane, and we were going up to his suite. And she hadn't seen him all day, and it was his birthday. She was trying to get him to pay attention to her, and he was reading these self-serving, phony, congratulatory telegrams from, you know, Democratic governors and Congress people from around the state, around the country. And really it got under my skin. I thought to myself, 'I will never treat my spouse like that', you know? He was just short tempered and aloof and distant. And she was trying to get him to just look at her and pay attention to the fact that she was, that they were together for the first time that day on his birthday. He just sort of looked through her. Pissed me off. I thought, 'wow, I'm donating my time to this guy?' I got over it because in fact, you know, the, I really did believe in, in, that he would have been a good leader and a good president. But his personality was tough.

That was an interesting trip in Wisconsin because that was where some of the sort of dirty trick stuff took place. That's where they had a delivery of like, you know, a hundred pizzas to the (*unintelligible phrase*), you heard about that?

MR: Oh yeah, I heard about that.

JO: So I got to sort of be a small part of history that I didn't realize would ever be a part of history. For us it was just, what the hell was all these pizzas, what do we do with, what do we do now. And I also had a great time on that trip because I caught, I . . . *Rolling Stone* was covering

the campaign of course, and they were covering Green Bay in particular because it was Muskie's birthday and George Wallace was coming into town with a big show. He used to travel with entertainment and they would put on sort of this country entertainment, so to guarantee a good crowd that way. And we were amazed at how enthusiastic the response was to all of that entertainment. Muskie's campaign was dying by then, and how we had such a hard time to just get enough people in the room for his birthday to make it feel like it was anything. It was very difficult work, very difficult work. (*Unintelligible word*) was difficult work anyway, but it's particularly difficult if a campaign is dying. But anyway, it was interesting for me because I got a chance to hang out with the *Rolling Stone* people. And the guy who was covering, God, his name escapes me now [Timothy Cruise], but wrote a book called *Boys on the Bus* or something like that. And it was the story of the media on the campaign and I spent a couple evenings drinking with him, he was an interesting guy. And, the woman photographer accompanying him didn't mean a damn thing to me at the time. It was Annie Leibowitz who became, you know, and is one of the country's foremost political and fashion photographers. At the time she was just like I, just a kid making her way and shooting pictures for *Rolling Stone*. Anyway, so that, that's a long answer to your question, when have I witnessed his temper, but it gives you some flavor of some of the things that went on back then.

We, in being an advance person, it was a job that didn't really have much definition. Except that you made sure that the candidate was well taken care of, that he knew who was whom in the party machinery in a particular area he was visiting. You always stood just behind him, just behind his ear, and whispered names to him as they were approaching him. People you had spent the last four days getting to know and had to remind the senator he had met that person before, you know. Like, here comes Henry Jacobs, he's a local lawyer, you know, and he donated five hundred dollars to your campaign. And his hand would go out and it would be, "Hi Henry," you know. It was, it was fun and you felt like you were contributing something by making him look good in those circumstances. And, you know, you had to get him around on a very tight schedule in a timely manner and work with the Secret Service to make sure that happened, so it was, it was fun.

I remember we were doing a banquet for him, I think it was in Green Bay, it was certainly in that county. And there was a guy there, was a Polish pickle maker, and because the senator was of Polish descent, this guy thought he had some special connection with the senator. And he just wanted to be with him all the time, with him all the time. And the senator said to Clark Tyler, who was running the advance team, "Clark get rid of this guy, he's driving me crazy and I'm going to haul off and let him have it." And he meant it. So Clark said to me, "We got to get rid of him." I can't remember the guy's name, the poor little pickle maker. But he said, "We've got to get rid of this guy." And I said, "What do you mean get rid of him?" He said, "I don't know, I haven't figured it out yet but you've got to get rid of him because the senator's going to be coming down and into the banquet shortly." So, he said, "I know. Go up to him and tell him the senator wants to speak with him privately and bring him into that little holding room over there. And once you've got him in there, we'll lock him in." And we did. And then we just claimed to the guy that, "Gee, we didn't know the door had locked and we didn't hear you pounding." And we left him in there for forty minutes. He was so angry, but he believed us in the end. We just didn't know, we went to get the senator and we just closed the door so you'd have some privacy and he got tied up doing other things and we didn't realize the door was locked. We actually

locked the guy up for forty minutes to keep Muskie happy. And then the other thing that happened on that trip, I just, these things are all coming back to me, I haven't thought about them in thirty years.

MR: It's great.

JO: The other thing that happened on that trip that was kind of fun was, you would have, like, here we would arrange . . . If we were doing an advance trip and we were bringing in the campaign and the campaign had no money, we would go to people like, well like Shep Lee. And say Shep, look, you know, you're a good Democrat and you own a car dealership and we're bringing this campaign in and we need six cars, you know, for two days. For nothing, he'd just give them to us. So we did that in Green Bay. We went to a local Democratic car dealer and we said "Listen, the campaign's coming in and we need three station wagons for the media and we need three cars for the campaign and we need them for two days," and you know, blah-blah-blah. And they gave them to us.

Getting ready to leave on the last day and we had provided station wagons to each of the networks so that they wouldn't have to hassle and they could, I mean you're insuring coverage for yourself so it's the right thing to do. Well one of the networks, I can't remember which one, didn't want to give up the station wagon. They didn't want to get back on the bus with everybody and have to load all their Goddamn equipment in the belly of the bus and ride on the bus to wherever it was going next, Milwaukee or whatever. So they were going to hold onto the station wagon and they wouldn't give me back the keys. And the busses were getting ready to leave and the station wagon was full of their gear, and they were having a cup of coffee in the Northland. And they had locked up the station wagon, held onto the keys and they were just going to take it. And they said to me, "You'll just have to catch up with it in Milwaukee." And I said, "I can't do that." And they said, "You don't have a choice, we've got the keys, we've got the station wagon, you're screwed." So I went over to Clark Tyler, the guy who was running the advance team, I said, "Clark, they're taking one of our cars." He said, "Dammit." He said, he was so fast, he said, "Did you ever see a car that could run on four flat tires?" I said, "No." He just smiled and nodded. So I went over and undid the stems on all four tires and watched the car go right down on its rims. Those guys came out, they saw that, and they went bullshit. And I said, "Gee, how do you think that could have happened? Shall I help you move your equipment to the bus?" So, other than a call to the dealer and AAA to get the car back to him, we saved the car from going to Milwaukee. Anyway.

MR: Well yeah, that's some pretty interesting stories you've got there, yeah.

JO: Yeah, had a good time.

MR: Sounds like you did. Did you work on any other campaigns for Muskie later on, like in '76 or?

JO: No. Seventy-two is really my last, oh, other than, you know, my last official sort of campaign staff involvement. I mean I've been involved in campaigns from, like I said, I was eleven until now, you know.

MR: Kind of fundraising kind of thing?

JO: Yeah, fund raising, and event productions, you know, are my, sort of my fortes, yeah. I don't lick envelopes any more.

MR: Leave it for the college students (*unintelligible phrase*). And so did you have much contact, well, when you were mayor was '73 to '76?

JO: Seventy-three, yeah, correct.

MR: Okay. And actually you worked a lot on the model cities programs and with the National League of Cities. So did you have much contact with Muskie through that work?

JO: Staff contact and, you know, remember that, you know, when you're a mayor and your ego's as big as a house, you know, you think you're an equal by then. And yeah, I had contact with him, you know, as an elected official, you know. We were, you know, grand marshals of parades together and at social/political events together and that kind of thing. And certainly his office, because I had worked there all those years and now I was mayor, was the place I went to for, you know, as a go-to place for things I needed done for Lewiston or for constituents, whatever. But, you know, you always dealt with the people running the office, certainly not with the senator himself, except when he showed up for events and you were the mayor.

MR: And actually there was an issue I was reading about concerning Nixon's budget cuts that resulted in, the paper reported a 7.7 million dollar loss of federal funding to Lewiston. And, do you remember some of the model cities project I guess was pretty hard hit by that and you were, you took a stand against that. Do you remember what that . . .?

JO: I don't remember honestly. Model cities was in fact my first involvement in politics when I came back to Lewiston. I was appointed by the then mayor, I think it was, it must have been John Beliveau, to the model cities committee and specifically to chair the task force on housing. It was sort of interesting because then I became a real estate developer as well as a lawyer and I think mostly because I learned how as a model cities guy. And so then I was involved in model cities, you know, from its very inception right on through. I went from the model cities committee to being appointed to the job of city attorney, civil work, not city attorney meaning I'm prosecuting crime. They called it the corporation counsel. I was, Beliveau appointed me as corporation counsel, then Bob Clifford who followed him as mayor appointed me as corporation counsel for two terms. And so I worked with model cities all through that time, and then of course when I became mayor. And Henry Bourgeois who was the library director of all things, but very bright and a lot of ambition and a lot of hutzpah. I thought he was being wasted at the library so I pushed to have him come over and be model cities director, which he did. And he's now the president of the Maine Development Foundation in Augusta and has had some very good leadership jobs ever since those model cities days. But I don't remember specifically the Nixon cuts, I really don't.

MR: Were there some other aspects in the model cities work, does anything at all during your

time as mayor or before that you remember that stood out, or some issues that you . . .?

JO: Only that I thought it was, you know, obviously a good program for us. The late sixties and early seventies for Lewiston were very banner years from a domestic spending point of view, federal domestic spending point of view. We used to shop the domestic programs catalogue, literally like we were going to WalMart and shopping for something. We'd look for programs that fit Lewiston and go after them. And I spent a lot of time back and forth to Washington both as city attorney and then as mayor sort of chasing these applications. And using Muskie's office as the pressure point to get some of these things done the best we could in a Republican administration, you know. But, you know, we had, we built a high school, a fire station, multi purpose center which is also an elementary school, a sewage treatment plant, hundreds of units of low income family and low income elderly housing. Any other public buildings? Trying to think. I think not, not during my years. But all of those things were built during those years, sort of the heyday of the domestic program years. Interesting that, when you think about it, that you had a Nixon administration trying to sort of stop the train but the train was really rolling down the track from the Johnson years. And, you know, but domestic spending was huge for a while there. It was wonderful for Lewiston.

MR: Do you remember any people who were trying to throw up obstacles to Muskie's program, or critics of the program, either within the Republican Party or within the Democratic Party?

JO: Remember there was no real Republican Party here in Lewiston. Democratic Party, I don't remember, I honestly don't. Some if I make it up, I really don't.

MR: And what were some of your, what exactly was your role on the City Policy Leadership Issues Task Force, was that . . .?

JO: I don't even know what that is.

MR: Okay.

JO: What is, what was that?

MR: I'm not sure. I remember reading an ar-, well it might have been just a headline from the *Sun-Journal*, but it says in late '73 you were named to it. It was, it must have been part of the National League of Cities (*unintelligible word*).

JO: Oh, well I can tell you my National League of Cities career because it's somewhat interesting.

MR: Okay.

JO: The National League of Cities, there were two national organizations that dealt with cities. There was the U.S. Conference of Mayors and the National League of Cities. U.S. Conference of Mayors was pretty much a big city organization which sort of highlighted full-time big city mayors. And it was both a complimenting and competitive organization to the National League

of Cities. National League of Cities was much bigger, represented the smaller . . . the big cities were part of the National League of Cities also, but they sort of had their own little deal where they could showcase their mayors over at the U.S. Conference. National League of Cities had something like fifteen thousand town and city members, and it was the industry trade association for towns and cities and mayors. And, not city managers who had their own organization called the National Association, National Conference or Association of City Managers. And so it was for elected officials and sort of official, you know, corporate representation of the towns and cities. One of the big influential, still is, big influential organization.

It was being run by a fellow, executive director who at that time, a guy named Pritchard, Allen [E.] Pritchard who at that time was one of the big public interest group leaders in Washington. They called them the PIGS, the public interest groups, and National League of Cities was one of the PIGS, one of the recognized large PIGS. And he ran the deal, and he had run into some serious financial trouble.

Well, one of the guys who was well connected within the National League of Cities was a guy named John Salisbury who headed up the Maine Municipal Association. And when I got elected mayor John and I were friendly and we got along quite well. John said to me, "You know, we haven't in a long time had a member of the board of directors, National Board of Directors of the League of Cities, from Maine, do you want to take a run at it? I can, you know, help you get elected." I said, "Sure, be fun." So we had our convention in Puerto Rico, San Juan, and I went to the convention as a newly elected small time, small city, mayor who knew nobody. And I got put, it would be like having the convention in Portland and staying in a small hotel in Gray, that's how far away they put me from the convention center. I was in this hotel, the room was abysmal. The damn thing leaked, the roof leaked, the pipes that were running through that ran the air conditioning I guess, leaked. And they, and we had to move the bed so we wouldn't get wet. My ex-wife and I went to this convention together.

Well, the second day of the convention, the nominating committee met and I was named to the slate to be elected to the board of directors. Nominating committee met and reported out at ten o'clock in the morning on the second day of a four day convention. By noon of that day, I had a driver and a police car assigned to me, and I was moved from that hotel to a suite in the convention headquarters hotel, because I was going to be on the board. And, you know, I was twenty-nine years old and I had, you know, I was a small town guy and my head grew about eight sizes that day, you know. Anyway, I got elected to the board and, am I taking too much time?

MR: Oh, no, actu-, no, this is good.

JO: Okay. I got elected to the board and during that convention, you know, because I was elected to the board, met all the big city mayors who were very welcoming, nice guys. Came back to Lewiston, thanked John Salisbury for helping me, sort of settled back into my normal everyday life of doing divorces and wills and defending drunken drivers, and being mayor and having fun. I got a call one day in city hall. We had a part time secretary, took care of the mayor, and she said, "John, there's a guy named Tom Bradley who says he's the mayor of Los Angeles on the phone for you." And I said, "Well, Tom Bradley is the mayor of Los Angeles," I

said, let's, I said, "I met him once, let's see if it's really him and, I'm sure it is but what this is about I have no idea." So I picked it up. Bradley says, "John." I said, "Well, Tom." Anyway, he and I became friends. And he was a, he was a very bright politically astute leader and he knew what he was doing and he did it quite well. He said to me, I, "As a new member of the board I'd like to appoint you to a committee, you haven't been appointed to a committee yet, I'd like to appoint you to the budget and audit committee."

And the budget and audit committee was sort of the, it wasn't a policy committee, but it was an operational committee, it was the key to the whole goddamn operations because it controlled the finances in the association. And it wasn't a committee that you put, you know, a freshman mayor from Lewiston, Maine on. And I'm saying to myself, "Wow, you know, this is pretty cool." So I said, "Sure, sure Tom, I'll serve." So he said, "Well we're having a special meeting in Chicago next Tuesday and you need to be there because we've got some financial difficulties we need to look at." I said, "Okay." He said, "Call National League of Cities and they'll arrange for a ticket and all that stuff for you," and blah-blah-blah. So I fly out to Chicago and Bradley's waiting for me and with him are mayors of two or three of the other large cities that are running things. Carlos Romero was the mayor of San Juan and Tom. And I'm sitting there and, you know, I'm the only guy there that's from a city under hundreds of thousands of people. And I'm wondering what the hell is going on, but I'm pretty flattered by it, and I, boy, I must be pretty smart, you know?

Tom says to me, "Well, you know, as the junior member of this committee we have an assignment for you." And I said, "Oh, what would that be?" "We want you to go fire the executive director." I said, "What?" I'm twenty-nine years old, this guy is, you know, the big shot executive director with the limousine and all this crap. And we're in Chicago where I've never been in my life, and they're telling me go to this guy's suite, you know. And I've got a room the size of a corner of this conference room, and go to this guy's suite and fire him. And I said, "What do you mean fire him?" "Well, he's managed this thing into a sinkhole financially and he's got to go, and somebody's got to tell him, and you're elected." So I said, "Okay, I'll do it." And they said, "Don't take any crap from him now."

So I got up to this guy's suite and I knock on the door, and he answers. And I said, "Mr. Pritchard," "Oh no, it's Alan," I said, "Alan," I says, "I don't know if you remember me, John Orestis, I just got elected." "Oh, of course, John, come on in." So I go in and sit down and I said, well, um, um, and I'm stuttering and stammering and I don't know how to get to it. And he says, "Let me make it easy for you, you're here to fire me." I said, "Well, I wouldn't put it that way." You know, I'm backing away already, you know. He said, "I told you I was going to make it easy for you." And he pulls a letter out of his pocket. He says, "This is my letter of resignation, you can have it provided," and he pulls another sheet of paper out of his pocket and he said, "you get the committee to approve my package."

And he had, he knew it was coming, he had outlined a whole package for himself, you know. I can't remember what it was but it was things like two years' salary, continued use of the limousine for six months, you know, two years of medical benefits. All stuff to ensure that he have an orderly transition into another job or into retirement or whatever he finally ended up doing, and I don't remember what he ended up doing. And he said, "You can be a hero." He

said, “You can go back down to that committee and you can tell them you talked me into leaving.” He said, “and you’ll have a good time for the next couple years on the board because you’ll be the hero that got rid of me.” I said, “What are you doing this to me for?” He said, “I’m going to get fired anyway.” He said, he said, “I said to myself, whoever they send up as a sacrificial lamb to deliver the news to me, I’m going to make him a hero, so,” he said, “you’re it.”

Well, I go back down and I say, “I can get a letter out of him, of resignation,” I said, “I can get it provided we can negotiate some terms with him.” And so I pull out this little sheet of paper and we go down the things, yes, yes, yes, yes, yes, and there he goes. So I said to Bradley, “That was okay,” I said, you know, “I got through that okay,” I said, “I hope the rest of this job isn’t quite as difficult,” or something like that. And he said, “Oh no, he said, the second part of the job, he said, you’re going to love. I’m going to appoint you to the search committee to find a new guy.” I said, “That could be fun.” He said, “Oh it will be. You’ll get a chance to, you know, go around the country and do interviews with two or three other mayors and,” he said, “you’ll enjoy it.” And he did.

And so, there’s a point to this whole story. So we do the interviews with a whole bunch of people. I get friendly with the acting director of the association who was the deputy director, a guy named Alan Beals, and Alan says to me, “John, will you champion my cause on the search committee?” I want to, you know, I’ve got my application in, I want to be the director. You know, I’ve been working here for ten years as the assistant director and,” he said, “I want to be the director.” He said, “I know they’re going to bring in, you know, there are going to be some real hot shots from outside organizations that apply for this job, this is a very attractive job.” And, he said, “I’d like you to be my champion.” And he said, you know, “You’re young and you’re new and,” he said, “you have no ties with anybody, you have no axes to grind so,” he said, you know, “you’ll be listened to.” While you won’t be as influential as some of the other people, you’ll be listened to just because you have no axe to grind.” I said, “Sure, I’ll be your champion.” I liked him and I’d spent a bunch of time with him over the last couple weeks organizing the search committee. And so what we decided to do was take this whole pile of resumes, go through them. We hired a consultant from a search firm to help us, and winnowed the applications down to a manageable bunch to interview. Interview those people, and then get it down to three people that we would recommend to the full board of directors to pick from those three, the one who would be the executive director. So we did the job. We went around the country, did interviews, we, I think we picked fifteen or twenty people and we interviewed in the east, the middle and the west. And I discovered that mayors like to travel. We could have made all these candidates come to us, but the mayors like to be other places. And they always like to be someplace that’s nice, and they always have first class accommodations. So we did the interview thing and when it got down to it, my guy, Alan, was number four. So he wasn’t going to be recommended. And I called him, I said, “Alan, you didn’t make it,” you know, “you were number four.” And he was disappointed and said, “Thanks for the help,” and all of this. Anyway, one of the three that we recommended withdrew. So now the committee was hassling over whether they ought to go back to the pile to get another name, or take Alan and his number four and just move him up to number three. And obviously, I being his stalking horse, really pushing for him to be number three and I finally got it through the committee. I can’t remember how many the committee were any more, but it was by one vote that he got to be number three

on the recommendation list. So I called him back and I said, you know, so-and-so withdrew when we called to offer him the spot, he withdrew his application and found another job so you're now number three. I told him how he had become number three, and that I had fought for him and all this horse shit. And so he said, "Thank you very much," he said, "Your job is over, I can take care of myself on this board of directors," he said, "Talk me up, but don't worry." So I did.

And we flew out to Chet Huntley's ranch in Montana for a full board meeting to pick one of those three to be the new executive director. And Alan did his homework and got his votes. We were at Chet Huntley's ranch for a couple of days. Now, Chet Huntley's ranch, he had died, and his wife by then had turned his ranch into a conference center, so it wasn't like we were in his personal home, it had been turned into a conference center. So Alan got picked. And he came up to me afterwards and he said, "I owe you." And I said, "Nah, you don't owe me anything," you know. I'm a director, you're now the executive director, we'll get along just fine, don't worry about it. He said, "No, I owe you and don't worry, you'll be taken care of in ways you'll be happy about." I said, "Whatever." Long story short, what he did was he started putting me on the list for every invitation of any interesting or important conference or event that took place that needed mayors there. And for the next two years, for my second term as mayor I was everywhere, everywhere. There would be all these big city mayors and me, because I had gotten Beals that job. It was amazing.

When Nixon resigned, Ford did this sort of reaching out. One of the things he did was ask to have twelve mayors come to the White House in the Cabinet room and advise him on domestic affairs. And guess what? New York, Los Angeles, Chicago, Miami, and Lewiston, I was there, one of the twelve. Every time I turned around. In fact, at the end of my term, in October of the last year of my term, I got to go to Europe first class for two weeks on a trip sponsored by the State Department and the National Endowment on the Arts to look at renaissance cities. I was on that list, too. And I was a lame duck. I couldn't even, you know, bring it back and do anything with it, but I was on the list and went. So anyway, I had a good time.

MR: That's pretty amazing, amazing chances you had.

JO: Yeah, yeah.

MR: So what was that, what was the conference with Ford like, the meeting with Ford on . . .?

JO: It was window dressing. I mean, he was, it was, oh, and I ended up going to the White House a half a dozen times after that because I was now on the White House list as well as National League of Cities list. So whenever there was a domestic piece of legislation to be signed and they wanted, you know, a bunch of mayors in the background and hand out the pens and all that horseshit, I'd get called to go down. A conference on inflation, I got called to go down as a mayor. So I ended up going to the White House quite a bit.

Ford also had a special affection for Lewiston because before he married Betty, his girlfriend, college age girlfriend was a woman, a Lewiston native named Betty, not Betty, her last name was Gardiner, I can't remember her first name. She lived out in Las Vegas by then. And the

Gardiner family was a banking family here, in fact I had gone to school with one of the sons. And she went to Bates. And she was his girlfriend, and so he had a special affection for Lewiston and for Bates because of that.

And in fact in that first conference, the one right after Nixon resigned, and Nixon resigned on what, August 4th I think, 4th or 8th or something like that. Within a week we were in the White House, in the goddamn Cabinet sitting there with the president of the United States. I couldn't believe it. I mean, I was getting calls from *Newsweek* and *Time* and the *Wall Street Journal* and all these people calling up because they'd work the list, you know. And they'd see Lewiston, Maine, and so they all, it was more interesting to call me and get my comments than it was to call, you know, I can't remember who the hell the mayor of New York was, I think Abe Beam or somebody, so it was kind of fun.

But anyway, the conference was window dressing. He went around the table and asked everybody, what do you think the largest domestic issue is and, you know, and from a small city perspective mayor, he says, how would you, you know, and that kind of stuff. But he opened the conference, it was interesting, because they had a Cabinet table like this, you know, conference room table and they're all sitting around, the president sits in the middle and I was sitting across from him in the Secretary of Treasury's spot. And he started the conference by welcoming us and then looking across at me, and I had expected to never say a word in the whole goddamn thing. And he says to me, "Mayor Orestis, I once had a girlfriend," And he went into this story about this Gardiner woman who, again, I think it was Phyllis or something. And Bates College and Lewiston hold a very warm spot in my heart and I, do you know what happened to . . . ? And I said, well I know the Gardiner family very well, you know, I went to school with the son, and blah-blah-blah, and I believe she's in Las Vegas, Mr. President. "Yes, that's what I understood, too," he said. "I haven't talked to her in a long time and," he said, you know, "Betty isn't even jealous about this because she was my college girlfriend." And he's chatting away with me, all this, and then . . . As I say the conference was more sort of on his agenda of being inclusive as much as it was to really develop any particular true advice. But it was fun, fun to do.

MR: I'll bet, yeah.

JO: Oh yeah.

MR: And what were, other than some of these highlights, what were some of the regular specific issues and things that the National League of Cities would do, I mean what exactly was your roles to . . .?

JO: Well, there were two, I was involved on two levels. First, as I say on the Board of Directors which ran the organization. And then we as a board, and actually the president of the League, appointed members to policy committees. You know, there was a committee on housing, a committee on education, blah-blah-blah. And we developed positions, those policy committees developed positions supportive of legislation or developed initiatives for legislation which would help cities. You know, we had our own running battles with Congress, our own running battles with governors because, you know, we were for city rights and we wanted the

state money but not the state handcuffs. So all of those typical, you know, city driven issues were issues that the League dealt with and took policy positions on and worked on. It had a large staff, it was a large organization; large staff, each policy committee had staff attached to it.

In fact Tim [*sic*] [Stephan T.] Honey, who ended up being the city manager of Portland for a number of years, and then was the city manager of Boulder, Colorado when that little girl got killed out there, Jon Benet Ramsey kid, was . . . He and his wife both worked at the League of Cities and he was policy advisor to the committee I was on which was on housing. But that's what the League did. It did sort of a typical, sort of industry association stance on things, you know, working with or against Congress on a particular piece of legislation, developing our own initiatives and working with or against the Governors Conference on certain things, The National Conference of City Managers, Nation-, the U.S. Conference of Mayors, you know. You're either with them or against them in different arenas and, but it was a very substantial organization. It worked, it still is, I mean I don't follow it much any more, but I would imagine it still is.

MR: Okay, and back at home when you were back here in Lewiston when you were mayor in 1975, there was an issue concerning party appointments and Nunzio Aliberti and Robert Dubuc and some of the, there was an alleged violation of the city charter's restrictions on the number of Republicans?

JO: Was there, really? Oh, and what did I do?

MR: Well, I don't know.

JO: You have a better history than I do, I don't remember it. You know, the city then was run by boards and commissions. We didn't have a city manager, at all. City council, we had a finance board that ran the budget and finances, we had on education board which every city and town still do. We had a public works board, a fire commission, a police commission, a board of library trustees. Every department of the city had its own board of directors so to speak. The mayor got to appoint the members of all those boards. The division on those boards was, was partisan. They had staggered terms so that each year you got to appoint somebody. But you didn't get to clean house, but if you were mayor long enough you certainly gained control of the board in your last years as mayor. I was the last one year mayor. They actually had one year terms for mayor, you could only serve two consecutive one year terms. Then you had to rest a year and then you could go back again. I was the last one year mayor, they had a city charter change, and I was the first two year mayor. So I had three years. I was the first man to have three consecutive years ever, so I got control of every board in my third year because they were five member boards. So if I had had a political agenda that was anything other than sort of ordinary in running the city, I could have really had a lot to do with that last year.

But I don't remember that Bob Dubuc, he actually, he flew into a mountain with a private plane and died a few years after that, but I don't remember that I had, he was a nominal Republican and I appointed him to something and should have appointed a Democratic, or? I don't remember really.

MR: There was, yeah, I'm still, I'm kind of fuzzy on the details myself but that's, that's okay. Yeah, I was just wondering maybe . . .

JO: I remember one of the controversies was I appointed all my relatives to the boards my last year.

MR: Oh really, a little nepotism there.

JO: Yeah, I appointed my father to the board of education, my uncle to the fire commission. Wasn't running again.

MR: Actually, I'm going to stop this one before we (*unintelligible phrase*).

End of Side B, Tape One
Side A, Tape Two

MR: This is the first side of the second tape of the interview with John Orestis on August 20th, 1999. Interviewing is Mike Richard, time is about two o'clock.

(*Tape paused.*)

MR: . . . Mr. Orestis, about your time in the state legislature, and first of all, well actually first of all you were in there one term, '71 to '72?

JO: Yeah, right.

MR: Okay. And how did you, was there any particular special way that you got interested in this, or did this just seem like a logical . . . step?

JO: It was a step, yeah, it seemed like a logical step. I was interested in elective office. I wasn't much interested in the city council. I was kind of looking around for something that might make some sense to try. And you know, I hadn't run for office before so I wanted to do something that I thought I might have a chance at, so I did it. At that time, I think I might have said earlier in the interview, you ran city wide. Did I mention that earlier?

MR: I think so, yes.

JO: Yeah, well anyway, you do, you run city wide and the top six people win the seats, although many people might run. And so I only won by a hundred votes, so it was an interesting experience getting elected certainly. We ran a pretty, pretty well organized campaign. We did some of the things that are now sort of, sort of old hat, but at the time I thought were pretty exciting, like polling voters, identifying, identifying supporting voters and then pulling them out for ourselves. "We" meaning me and my family and my friends that sort of, you know, pulled together and did this. It was fun. And I won by, as I say, I was the last of the six, the sixth of six, by I think a hundred and ten votes over the seventh person who asked for a recount. And if you know anything about recounts you know that you don't change a hundred and ten votes very

easily.

So, my election was confirmed by the recount and I was seated and frankly didn't enjoy the legislative experience very much at all. At least on the House side. I might have enjoyed the Senate where it's a little more intimate and you can have a little more effect on what goes on. But the House is, you know, a hundred and fifty people, and I was a liberal labor Democrat in a Republican controlled legislature. I was a freshman, I was trying to support a family, running a law practice down here in Lewiston. So it was difficult, challenging from that point of view, in just trying to support my family. But also I thought, what a waste of time. I mean, what an awful lot of hot wind about issues, and it just did not excite me at all. So I ended up saying to myself fairly early in the session, "I'm not doing this again." And I didn't.

MR: Would there, was there anyone, any of the legislators, that you got to know particularly well during that time?

JO: Who were my friends in the legislature?

MR: Yeah, basically.

JO: Peter Kelley, he was a good friend. He was a House member from Caribou and ran on a public power platform for governor I think, you know, two, four, six years later, I forget how many years later. He became a very good friend. Leighton Cooney was my seat mate and a legislator from Sabattus. In fact I just had lunch with him a few minutes ago when we took our break. And he became state treasurer later on, and then ran the Bureau of Public Improvements, which is in Maine essentially the bureau of public buildings, they run the state properties. And so he was head of that bureau for a couple of years. Jay McCloskey, who's now the U.S. attorney for the district of Maine. Doug Smith, who's now a lawyer at one of the larger firms in Portland, and a lobbyist. Floyd Harding, who was a senator from Aroostook County. Oh, those are the ones that quickly come to mind. Elmer Violette, who was the senate minority leader, senator from Aroostook county and later became a Supreme Court judge. I think, those are the ones that come to mind fairly quickly at least, I'd have to think through the roster.

MR: What about Louis Jalbert, was he still in the House?

JO: Yeah, he was, he was in the House. He was in the House for some sessions beyond that 105th actually. I can't remember what year he finally got defeated, but certainly he was there after the 105th. But I wouldn't count him among my friends by any means.

MR: Do you have any impressions of him, and . . .?

JO: Other than being a thief, a liar and a bully and ill-mannered? Not much, no.

MR: Well, I guess that's enough then, covers all the bases. Okay, so that was your time in the state legislature. And then also you, we were talking about your work on the Muskie campaign in '72 a lot, and also I noticed that you were on the Demo-, or you were at the Democratic convention in '72?

JO: I was, I was a delegate to, then to the convention in Miami when Muskie was still a *de jure* candidate if not a *de facto* candidate. I mean, he really wasn't running any more but he was technically still a candidate. I got elected to the state convention by one vote to become a delegate on I think the third or fourth ballot in the Androscoggin county caucus. And I did it by making a deal with the McGovern delegates, I was a Muskie delegate, that if Muskie withdrew, I would throw my support, my vote to McGovern. Or if Muskie lost on the first ballot and it was, and we had established a threshold and didn't get X votes, that I would switch to McGovern. And based on that the McGovern people voted for me on the second or third ballot and I was elected as a delegate and went to Miami. And I did vote for McGovern on the first ballot because Muskie withdrew. But the Maine delegation had decided that they were going to vote for Muskie as a favorite son in a sort of a show of support for him. But I felt I had made a bargain with the McGovern delegates, that I needed to live up to, so I was sort of castigated a bit by some of the remaining members of the Maine delegation of, for the convention, for having switched my vote. But, oh well, I did.

MR: So how many, how many of the delegates at the convention at that time were actually Muskie delegates going into this?

JO: I don't remember, frankly, I don't remember how many votes, how many delegates we had.

MR: Just kind of ballpark, was it just a hand full of people or was it several?

JO: Oh no, quite a few, quite a few. I mean it was, you know, our native son so pretty clear that we would go there being, I was a Muskie delegate. I just was secondarily pledged to McGovern with certain conditions that I felt I had to live up to.

MR: But it was pretty much exclusively the Maine delegation that was Muskie supporters, or . . .?

JO: Oh, how many others were Muskie delegates, other than Maine? I don't remember at all, I really don't. It was so foregone that it was over, you know? I mean, when you got to the convention you realized it even more.

MR: And, well let's see, oh you were also, in March 1975 you attended a foreign policy session in Washington? This might not have been anything special, it's just something I noticed in a headline.

JO: I don't think it was.

MR: Okay.

JO: That might have been another one of the things that Ford invited me to, probably was.

MR: Okay, and also we've been talking a little bit about the Maine Municipal Association, and you were president in 1975 (*unintelligible word*).

JO: I was, uh-hunh.

MR: What was, what exactly was that, or is that?

JO: What is that. The Maine Municipal Association again is a trade association for Maine's towns and cities. It's very active. It provides lobbying services on behalf of cities, legal advice, especially the towns that don't have their own council, insures products and other products sold to towns and administered by the municipal association, they have a very large insurance program that they sell to towns. And it's sort of, sort of the trade association for the town and city officials of Maine. Some of them have a subset of it for themselves; the Town Clerks Association. I think for a while, even though there are not a lot of mayors in Maine, there was sort of a Mayor, Maine Mayors Conference within the Maine Municipal Association, that kind of thing. But it's a good trade association. Fellow named Chris Lockwood runs it, been there forever and is very effective, good fellow, and has some very successful municipal associations, very successful. And I was president in '75, correct, that's in my last year as mayor, yeah.

MR: And then after your years as mayor, did you have any other political offices, or . . .?

JO: Nope, I dropped out. When I finished being mayor I had to make a choice either to run for mayor again, which I could because of the change in the charter, I could have run one more term, to run for Congress, or to run for nothing, run for cover as I say. And I chose to run for cover. I was essentially broke. I mean, being mayor and being in the legislature pays nothing. And I remember being, at the National League of cities conferences, where mayors were talking about their pays and talking about getting raises or not getting raises. And they were talking, oh, I make seventy-five, I make forty-five, blah-blah-blah-blah, they were talking thousands. Well the mayor of in Lewiston made thirty-five hundred dollars. And I used to literally be almost a full-time mayor for thirty-five hundred dollars and practice law when I could. So, I mean, I had three children, you know. And they were all young and growing and expensive and, you know, down the road would continue to be, so I had to go back to work. So I said, that's it. I've made my contribution at least for the moment and I literally dropped out of civic service, so to speak, for quite a while. Good ten or twelve or thirteen years.

MR: And then you started work with the nursing home (*unintelligible word*)?

JO: Yeah, I'm in the nursing home business now, yeah. I started in, actually I started that on a part time basis in 1978 and finally it grew big enough for me to stop practicing law in 19-, the end of 1986, and I've been full time in this business since then.

MR: Actually, what field of law did you practice?

JO: Tax-, real estate law, partnership law and tax law.

MR: And who are some of the lawyers or other people in the community that you got to know or work with through that?

JO: In this community, not a lot. John Bonneau, from Bonneau & Geismar is a good tax planner, estate planner, I did some work with him. But most of my work was pretty esoteric. It was real estate tax shelters, tax planning, and I worked with accountants, I worked with some lawyers in the Portland marketplace, some in Boston and New York. I had a relatively sophisticated and sort of boutiquey law practice, very, very narrow field and so it was relatively easy to get out. You know, I just, actually the Tax Reform Act of 1986 was passed just as I was getting out, almost wiped out all the tax advantages of what I was doing. So my timing, though coincidental, was perfect in terms of leaving the law firm.

MR: All right, well I guess I'll ask you about a couple of Lewiston figures and maybe your impression on them, their significance to Lewiston politics.

JO: Sure. Sure.

MR: You mentioned John Beliveau, Mayor John Beliveau, what was he like to work with (*unintelligible word*)?

JO: Oh, he was fine to work with. John's a good fellow, he's a judge now and, you know, had good heart, had Lewiston's welfare pretty much, you know, at the front of his agenda for quite a while. No real political future for John ever, he just wasn't, whether he wanted to or not I don't know, but he wasn't ever really pushing to, you know, run for a larger office that I, a bigger or a higher office that I knew about. He certainly was pretty popular and might well have been able to do that had he wanted to, and done things somewhat differently. But, you know, he had his little run, I think he was mayor for two terms. And whether he did anything else or not I don't know. And then he was appointed, he was very friendly with Joe Brennan who was governor for a couple of terms as you know, and Joe is the one who I think posted him for a judgeship. John's been on the court ever since. Good fellow.

MR: And also Bill Clifford, you mentioned also?

JO: Bob Clifford.

MR: Oh, Bob, sorry, Mayor Clifford.

JO: Bob was mayor after, it was John Beliveau, then Bob, then myself. Bob went to the state Senate for a couple of terms, then was appointed to I think the Superior Court and now is on the Supreme Court. Hell of a nice guy. Very, very solid citizen in every way, politically moderate, maybe a little right of center, very, very evenly paced guy. Moderate in every way, just a moderate personality, calm, very judicial, did a good job as mayor, good job in the state Senate. Don't know whether he ever considered a run for anything else or not. I may have known at one time, but I really don't remember whether he did. He certainly was very popular and I think could have run for Congress or something, but didn't. But has contributed, you know, handily, mightily to the state in terms of, you know, his service on, both of Beliveau and Clifford, their service on the bench. They're both good judges. John is a, John Beliveau's sort of a kitchen table judge, does district court work, and Bob is a very well respected and thoughtful jurist on the Supreme Court. So they've both, both gone places in terms of public service that they may

not have originally planned to go but I think they served the people well in what they've done.

MR: And how about Mayor Bill Jacques? I think he was right after you (*unintelligible phrase*).

JO: No, he wasn't after me. He was some, quite some time before me actually.

MR: Oh, okay. So you probably didn't have much contact with him?

JO: No, no, Bill, I don't have much to say about Bill. I don't know him very well. Politically I think he was pretty far right of me. And, you know, he's an old line Lewiston politician and been elected to the county commission two or three times. I think he was in the state, might have been in the state Senate and the state House both. I suspect he was, I don't have quite the recollection. But, you know, I consider him sort of another generation, you know.

MR: How would you describe, while we're at it, how would you describe your own political attitude to, you know, political (*unintelligible phrase*)?

JO: Well, as far left of center as you can be without falling out of the boat. Pretty active in womens rights, pro-choice issues. I'm a great supporter of gay rights movement, I was treasurer of the gay rights referendum committee here, pretty far left. Always have been, always will be. I'm much further left than my children are.

MR: And actually, what, talking about your children, what are your childrens' names?

JO: Well, my oldest is, like my dad, is Christos, he's Christos, the third. My father was the second, and his grandfather was the first. And then I now have a grandson who's Christos, the fourth. But my oldest son Christos is a lobbyist in Washington, works for the Health Insurance Association of America, which is the trade organization for the large health insurance companies like Unum and Aetna and the Blue Cross/Blue Shields of the world. He's a vice president in the trade association, for that. My middle child, Stephanos, is a lawyer in Augusta. He's a lobbyist also, a lobbyist in Augusta and lives in Portland, single. And my daughter, Kelsey Ann, Chris is thirty-four, thirty-three, almost thirty-four, Steve is thirty, almost thirty-one, and my daughter Kelsey Ann is twenty-six, almost twenty-seven. She works in Portland, is still struggling with finishing school at USM, lives and works in Portland. And then I have a step, twenty-year-old stepdaughter who is my stepdaughter by my second marriage, who is a sophomore at Vassar. Her name is Shaw, S-H-A-W, her first name. Her last name is Wilhelm. She, we're going back, I was taking her back to school next Friday as I told you when I talked to you earlier, yeah. That's my foursome.

MR: And, actually, I don't know if I got this on the first tape, what was your first wife's name?

JO: Her name was Kelsey also. Actually, her real name was Mary Ann, and her maiden name, her maiden surname was Kelsey, so she was born Mary Ann Kelsey. But when she married me, she picked up her last name as her first name, it had been a nickname of hers for years. So she became and is, still, Kelsey Orestis.

My second wife's name is Sandra Shaw, S-H-A-W, her last name is her daughter's first name. And she was a model cities product. She was, she actually ran the model cities publications program, she did the newsletter and newspaper. She actually then left the model cities program to start a small politically based newspaper here called the *Twin Cities Observer* which was written in French and English, it was a dual language newspaper and it was a liberal, pretty liberal rag. She came out of, she graduated from Colby and was a *Newsweek* reporter and then came up here to marry her first husband, left *Newsweek* and was a reporter for a number of the local papers here. And then started her, worked at model cities and started her own magazine in the Oxford Hills area, Norway, South Paris, and had her own little regional literary magazine there for, I don't know, four or five years and finally sold it. And then was, then moved on to the State House where she was a special assistant in the House Democratic majority office for five years. And then she was a speech writer for the Speaker of the House, she wrote speeches and legislative testimony for the speaker of the house for two years. And then went on to be director of communications for the Maine Development Foundation and for the Maine Business Alliance which is now merged with the Chamber of Commerce. And then her last job was, she was a writer and, a grant writer and freelance writer, but a grant writer and program writer for Planned Parenthood of New England. You see, all the liberal causes are ours.

And she just passed away. She contracted cancer last Christmas and died after six months at age fifty-four. So, she was a good liberal Democrat and a hell of a writer. And part of the political scene here in her own way, behind the scenes, with her writing for, she wrote for a lot of the Democratic campaigns, speeches for Joe Brennan and Tom Allen, and then wrote for Planned Parenthood, and for the, and for Dan Gwadosky when he was Speaker of the House and so she's, her words live on. But yeah, so those are my wives and my children and I'm now a single man trying to come to grips with that loss of life, you know.

MR: I'm sorry. Okay, are there any, through your work as a mayor and the different positions that you've held there, are there any governors that you've gotten to know particularly well?

JO: Yeah, yeah, well I knew them all. I know them all. Ken, I started with Ken Curtis, who was a good friend. Actually I started with John Reed, who was a Republican governor back in the sixties, who was a casual friend of mine because he was a good friend of the owner of the Poland Spring Hotels, Poland water, Poland Spring Water. And [I] used to hang around at the hotel a lot and I got to know him there.

But from a Democratic political point of view, when I was in politics, Ken Curtis was my first governor that I worked with, and I'm still a good friend of Ken's. Joe Brennan and I go back to his very early days, long before he was governor and we're still very good friends. In fact, we both spend time in the summer on the same island out in Casco Bay. And he and his second wife, his present wife Connie, and I are all good friends. King is a, Angus is a social acquaintance and political acquaintance of mine. I wouldn't call him a close friend by any means, but we've known each other for thirty years and we've done a lot of things together. I didn't support him, I supported Joe Brennan against him, so Angus has sort of not reached out to me very much because he has his own supporters, etcetera. And Jock McKernan, you know, was on the other side of the fence, but certainly, I mean Jock and I have known each other for, you know, twenty five years, and his wife is a good friend of mine. Olympia is a good friend of

mine. She grew up in the Greek community here and I've known her since she was a kid, so. I mean, it's a small t- . . . .

Severin Beliveau likes to say that Maine is one big small town, and it is, you know. I mean, when you're in the, in a profession as small as politics, or in a profession as small as the nursing home business, you know everybody, you know, you know everybody in that business. And frankly, you know, if you've been around and are a native of this state and been around for a while, you know people all over the state in all walks of life. But, most of those governors are all people I could call if I needed to for whatever, you know, political consultation, help, whatever.

MR: How do you say in general that the state, politics at the state level, has changed over the past years?

JO: How would I say they've changed?

MR: Maybe how has the Democratic or Republican Party in particular developed, or the independent movement, any of those?

JO: Well, certainly I think the state, like a lot of states, this was probably a leader in it, is a lot less party oriented. The party machinery, you know, party organization both Democrat and Republican is a lot less powerful and a lot less organized and a lot less listened to than it used to be. When I came back and started practicing law here, I mean, it was a big deal to be elected to the state Democratic committee. The Democratic committee was full of what we thought were prominent, you know, thoughtful, influe-, soon to be or presently influential people. We had prominent influential chair people, Severin Beliveau was the chair when I came back I think from Washington, followed by Harold Pachios. And I was actually general counsel to the Democratic state committee under Pachios' chairmanship. And I was on the state committee for a while. And the Republican committee mirrors that.

It was just, I think, much more influential then. And people now, you know, don't, they don't, for the most part . . . The party machinery's here and it's good to have, and it's good to have the support in elections, and certainly between the party organization and the organization that's sort of run by the incumbents. There's a huge battle and a very effective use of party affiliation in the control of the legislature in electing Democrats or Republicans. But generally I think the parties have faded.

And of course if you look at the enrollment numbers, registration and enrollment numbers, you'll see that there's an awful lot of unenrolled, registered but unenrolled voters, a large independent block. Much larger than it used to be. When I got here, back from school in '68, I wouldn't presume to guess at the numbers but, you know, was, having Republican majority, but it wasn't like it had been. It had been so dominant that you couldn't elect, they used to say you could hold a Democratic caucus in a phone booth, and I think that was close to true. Those numbers had come down quite a bit by '68 when I came back, continued to come down, and the Democratic numbers continued to go up. The Democratic Party became the majority party in terms of enrollment, but independent numbers started to move. And now, I don't know what it is but I'll

bet, my guess is that the independent numbers or percentages are much, much larger. And the Democratic and Republican numbers are much closer together than they have been in thirty years, I'd bet.

MR: Okay. And you've been talking about especially Severin Beliveau and Harold Pachios, is, what is your assessment of the significance of these two figures?

JO: Well, you know, I mean they're law partners and good friends, and they are extremely influential in terms of getting things done at the legislature, especially Severin. Harold's a very close friend of George Mitchell's and served as deputy press secretary in the White House under, in the Johnson administration under Bill Moyers, and knows a lot of people, as does Severin. They came out of Washington. Severin went to Georgetown, was, you know, chair of the Democratic chairmen and women of the country during the Watergate mess. And as a matter of fact was involved in Watergate because his office as Democratic chairman had been broken into also. He, I don't know if you or someone else will interview him, I know he told me he's been contacted. He tells an awful interesting story about that, the details of which I'll leave to him. But I think they were and continue to be very influential, but not particularly interested in or involved in the day to day machinery of the Democratic Party at the state committee level any longer. They were, but they, that's gone by for them. Certainly if I wanted to get something accomplished politically in this state, that's where I would go.

(*Tape paused - interruption.*)

MR: So we were talking about some of the movers in state Democratic politics, like Severin Beliveau and Harold Pachios. Actually is there anything else you want to add about them before . . .?

JO: Well, I started to say that if there was something I wanted to get done politically here, I would use their firm and know that I would probably have the best inroads there are available, with those guys. I mean, I have to say, I mean, confession, you know, Severin is my closest and dearest friend. So I come to it with some prejudice but nonetheless, he does get things done.

MR: And who are some of the other major figures at that level that you worked with, got really involved in a kind of day to day workings of the state Democratic Party?

JO: Way back or through the years?

MR: Through the years, just anyone that you've worked with a lot.

JO: Sure, so you had those fellows, you know the Mitchells, Jim and Libby. You had Rick Barton who's now, you know, moved out to the State Department and out to the United Nations. Oh, let me think, hmm. Those are the folks who were sort of at the Democratic state committee level, you know, who took on the chair job, who did those kinds of things. And of course, you know, Tom Allen, John Baldacci and. You know, all of the people who have served in Congress or in the Senate have, you know, been in and out of my life these thirty years. Including Muskie. Peter Kyros years ago, although Peter and I were not particular close. Bill Hathaway, Bill

Hathaway was a good friend. In fact my uncle was his treasurer all the years that he was in office, ran all of his campaigns for him, both in the House and then when he ran against Margaret Chase Smith. So, you know, all of those figures were good friends and people that I worked with over the years.

MR: Actually, yeah, I'll ask you a couple of the senators and the Congress people you've worked with, and maybe just a brief kind of synopsis of your assessment of what their, what their (*unintelligible phrase*). So Bill Hathaway I guess we can start with?

JO: Sure. Well Bill, I thought Bill, I thought and do think that Bill was an extremely bright guy. He's classically educated, he was a lawyer, he, I thought he did a pretty good job in the House. Bill does not have a high energy level sometimes, you know, some people might even say he's lazy, I wouldn't say that. But he is not, he's a very, very sort of lope along guy, you know, he runs at a certain pace. I think that he did a good job beating Margaret for the Senate seat, but then I think he did a lousy job following up and keeping the job. He, but, but a very bright guy and I think did a good job for his constituents when he was in the house. Represented this district and did quite well at it. Yup.

MR: And how about Congressman Baldacci?

JO: I think John is a, John's a good guy. John is, cares about people, cares about what he's doing, isn't, his ego is not out of hand. He knows that Washington is a place that can just sort of chew you up and spit you out. He understands that he's, you know, just a second term congressman, is it second term now, or third? He's only going to run for four terms, so I think this might be his third and he'll be running for his fourth coming up. He, you know, he does a good job with constituent service, he pays attention to people when they have problems. He recognizes his limitations both as, you know, being fairly young in Congress and in the limitations of congressmen generally. But I think on balance he's a good congressman and a good fellow. And I think he's going to run for governor.

MR: And how about Margaret Chase Smith, on the Republican side?

JO: Well Margaret, dear Margaret, you know, an institution, you know, in our country. Certainly not my cup of tea from a philosophical point of view, although her independence and her ability to stand up for what she believed in, you know, her "Declaration of Conscience" and all of the things that she did, very admirable. And certainly while we were not of the same party, I knew her well. Actually, she came and christened one of the units for Alzheimers at one of our nursing homes close to her home, our home's in, our nursing home's in Madison and she was of course in Skowhegan. And she was just as charming as could be. And by then she must have been, you know, almost ninety years old. I think, while I didn't work with her a lot, I knew her well socially. She was a charming, charming lady and knew people everywhere, knew people everywhere, and cared, cared about people. I'd say she deserves her reputation, she earned it and deserves it. And I thought she was quite a lady.

MR: How about David Emery?

JO: Dave? Dave's a good friend. Dave was my other seat mate in the legislature. Leighton Cooney sat on one side of me, and he was just about as liberal as I was. We were both, as I said, so far left we were falling out of the boat. David sat on the other side of me and he was so far right he held the boat from going over. David, as you might know, is a conservative Republican from Rockland and an engineer. So he had that sort of steel trap engineer's methodical mind. He and I never, never agreed on a vote, on any issue. And because we were so politically different, both in party and in philosophy, I could never support him. I could never support him when he ran for Congress, I never thought he was doing the right job, I thought his votes were wrong. I would tell him that, and I have told him that to his face, and not with any animosity and he and I get along just fine, having shared the same little tiny one foot space there for two years. But, I think David's out of step with the times with his conservative views, and obviously so did the electorate when they bounced him.

MR: And how about Olympia Snowe, we've talked a little about (*unintelligible word*)?

JO: Olympia's a good friend and she's a neighbor, she lives a couple miles down the road from me and I've known her since, as I say, we were both kids. She's younger than I am but I served in the legislature with her husband, her late husband. She is a good senator. I haven't voted for Olympia, she knows it. I always support her opponent, she knows it. But that's a party thing for me, it's not because Olympia's politics aren't good. I think her politics are pretty good. I mean, she's as close as you can get to, you know, to being a moderate Republican, even a liberal Republican you could almost stretch to say, for a Republican. And certainly doesn't follow the party line, is willing to break and vote what her conscience tells her to vote with from time to time, has bucked the leadership and done it well. And she and Bill Cohen alike could have been Democrats, you know. I mean, Bill Cohen chose the Republican Party pretty much almost accidentally, he could have been a Democrat as well. They just told him he could win better as a Republican in that district in Bangor when he first ran, you know, but he could have been a Democrat just as well. And his record, voting record, would tell you that. And so would hers. She could be a moderate to right Democrat, she's a moderate to left Republican.

MR: Okay, well is there anyone else either in local or state or national politics . . .?

JO: Oh, I think we've covered an awful lot of people, haven't we?

MR: Yeah.

JO: And, you know, I've enjoyed this. I mean, I don't know if you have other questions, but I've enjoyed this. And I think, you know, I've given you a sort of a fair overview of my very short political career and what it's meant to me and I've enjoyed it. No, I think we've hit everybody I want to talk about.

MR: Okay, and just one follow up question I guess.

JO: Sure.

MR: What would you say Muskie's, Senator Muskie's effects and legacy for Maine and Maine

politics and national politics has been?

JO: Oh I think, you know, other than as I had described him earlier being thoughtful and articulate and just well grounded public policy leader. I think, you know, what he leaves behind him in the environmental reforms are probably the biggest, you know, his clean air, clean water work, especially his clean water work, just will never, won't have to be duplicated hopefully. I mean think what, I mean, you're, how old are you?

MR: Twenty-one.

JO: Twenty-one, just a child. The Androscoggin River was one of the ten dirtiest rivers in the country. Today you can canoe and fish and swim in the Androscoggin River. We would have never had that kind of thing without the senator. The senator led that fight, Mitchell followed up with it in the clean air work. That is a legacy that will live long after people even remember his name. I think that's the biggest piece for me.

MR: Okay, great, well I guess I'm fresh out of questions now.

JO: Good, well thank you very much.

MR: Thank you very much.

JO: I've enjoyed the opportunity, thanks for asking me.

End of Interview