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Shettleworth, Earle G., Jr. oral history interview

Don Nicoll

Interview with Earle G. Shettleworth, Jr. by Don Nicoll

Summary Sheet and Transcript

Interviewee
Shettleworth, Earle G., Jr.

Interviewer
Nicoll, Don

Date
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Place
Augusta, Maine

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Biographical Note

Earle G. Shettleworth, Jr. was born in Portland, Maine on August 17, 1948. Earle's father, Earle Sr., was born in Connecticut and came to Maine to manage Woolworth's on Congress Street in Portland from 1933-1946, then opened a small chain of 5 & 10 cent stores, E. G. Shettleworth Company. Earle wrote a history column, "Portland's Heritage" for *Portland Press Herald* during his high school and college years. He attended Colby College, class of 1970, with a degree in architectural/art history and later Boston University, receiving a Master's in architectural history. He did a pictorial history of Maine for a bicentennial project in 1968-1969. Governor Curtis appointed him to the Archives Board in 1969. He joined the Historical Preservation Commission in 1971 and became Director of the Commission in 1976.

Scope and Content Note

Interview includes discussions of: 1954 Maine gubernatorial campaign; 1964 Senate Campaign; 1968 Vice Presidential Campaign; environmental protection; 1966 Historic Preservation Act; Republican Party in Maine; meeting several times with Percival Baxter; Ralph Owen Brewster and the Klu Klux Klan (KKK); Peter Kyros, Jr. and mock Kennedy/Nixon debate; 1964 Democratic National Convention celebration; President Johnson's visit to Portland; Franklin Delano Roosevelt's New Deal and Johnson's Great Society; and the Maine Historic Preservation

Commission.

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Transcript

Don Nicoll: It is Monday, the 28th of February, the year 2000. This is Don Nicoll interviewing Earle Shettleworth, Jr. at the offices of the Historic Preservation Commission, 55 Capitol Street in Augusta. And Earle, we'll start with asking you to state and spell your name, and give your date and place of birth.

Earle Shettleworth: Sure, well Don, my name is Earle, E-A-R-L-E, G., Shettleworth, S-H-E-T-T-L-E-W-O-R-T-H, Jr., and I was born in Portland on August 17th, 1948.

DN: And what were the names of your parents?

ES: My father was, of course, Earle G. Shettleworth, Sr., and my mother was Hester Knudsen Shettleworth. And my father came from, originally from Connecticut, having come to Maine in 1933 to run the Woolworth store on Congress Street in Portland. And he had that position as manager of Woolworth until after the war in 1946. And then he went out on his own and created his own small chain of 5 & 10 cent stores in the Portland area.

DN: What were they called?

ES: They were called E.G. Shettleworth & Company, yes.

DN: And you grew up in the city?

ES: I grew up actually on Baxter Boulevard in Portland. My mother had always been from Portland, and when my father decided to leave Woolworth, they wanted to stay right in Maine. They'd built their house six years previously in 1940 on Baxter Boulevard.

DN: And did you have any brothers or sisters?

ES: I have an older sister, five years older.

DN: Now, where did you go to school?

ES: I went to Portland schools. I started out in kindergarten with the old Hazeltine School on Ocean Avenue, and that then merged into, when I was in the second or third grade, into the Baxter School. And if I may digress for just a moment that, going to the Baxter School up and through the sixth grade allowed me to meet Governor Percival P. Baxter, because he would

frequently visit the school that had been named for him. And that allowed me to get to know him and actually then visit him in his office on several occasions, and talk with him, and really have a personal relationship with him, which was very exciting.

DN: Now is this while you were a grammar school student, or (*unintelligible phrase*)?

ES: Well, when I was in, I first visited him in his office when I was in the sixth grade. I was interested in saving the previous school I had gone to, the old Hazeltine School, and I'd written a little history of it. And I thought, wonderfully naively, that if he was the man who could preserve a mountain and two hundred thousand acres around it, that he must know how to preserve this old school, you know. And, of course he reported back to Katherine Jordan, who was the principal, about the visit. And he said that, you know, this was a very earnest young man and he had very good intentions, but of course this really wasn't a practical thing to do. And, of course, preservation in Portland was not even thought about at that time, you know, I mean it was just in its nascence if anything.

DN: What stimulated this passion for preservation at such an early age?

ES: Well, I was interested in history since the time I was about four years old. And I think what triggered it was the fact that my father brought home from one of his stores, an illustrated history of Britain. These had been actually a series of booklets that had actually been published in Britain during the war to try to create, you know, national identity and a sense of national history and spirit. And they'd been remaindered and they'd been sent over to this country in the late forties and early fifties to just be sold en masse. And I ended up with a set of them and I just poured through them. And that was my sort of visual entry into history, you know.

DN: And this when you were four?

ES: Probably I was about four, yeah, yeah. That would have been about 1952 or so.

DN: Did your parents or your sister share this interest?

ES: Not actually. I think that, well my sister really is a mathematician and a scientist, and my mother was an English teacher; of course my father was a businessman. But the wonderful thing about my family was that they really cared a great deal about whatever you cared about, and they encouraged it. And from a very early age when they saw I was interested in this, why then they took measures to see that that interest was developed, you know. And that included family trips throughout New England and other parts of the country to historic sites at an early age, getting involved in collecting antiques, and things like that. I mean, whatever it was, they, you know, they encouraged and indulged it and I'm very grateful to them for it.

DN: Now you talked about visiting with Governor Baxter. What kind of a person was he and how did he respond to the sixth grader.

ES: Well he was quite remarkable really. I had made an appointment to see him in his office on the top floor of the Trelawney Building, which still stands today at Longfellow Square in

Portland. It was a building that his father [James Phinney Baxter] had built around 1909. And he had his father's office, which was good part of the top floor, beautifully paneled office, sort of an entry area and then the big office with a wonderful bay window looking out on Longfellow Square. It was wall-to-wall memorabilia and pictures including a huge photograph of Mt. Katahdin. And he sat at a large desk with his back to the window, although he could swivel around and look out at the view. And I came in and I think I brought with me something for him to sign, to inscribe. I think it was the, his address in 1925, the dedication of the Baxter, his father's memorial on the Baxter Boulevard.

And I can remember very vividly some of the things from that conversation. I mean he, you know, he was quite an elderly gentleman, but, and he was of course, you know, in some ways quite grand, you know, I mean a sort of a grand figure. Very erect and very serious and very, of course, very well spoken. But he told some wonderful stories that someone my age would appreciate.

He pointed to a paperweight on his desk and it had a picture of the old Baxter Library, which is now, of course, the art library for the Portland, for the Maine College of Art, and it also had an inset of a picture of his father. And he said, "You see that building?" He said, "When I was maybe about your age," he said, "my father built that building." And he said, "They were having the cornerstone lain and they'd already built some of the superstructure before they put the cornerstone in and I went to the dedication and I got bored by it, and I started climbing on the superstructure of the building." And he said, "Nobody noticed me and within a matter of, you know, a little while," he said, "I was up on top of a section that I couldn't get off, and my father had to call the fire department to get me off." [*laughter*]

And of course he told the story that's often been repeated about. . . . you know the, the fishing experience he'd had in Rangeley with his father. And the fact that, you know, his father had given him a certain amount of money for the fish he caught and he'd invested that and it had grown, you know, to a tremendous amount. I mean these were, these were sort of, you know, fables for children, you know, that he could relate to.

And he was very, I can remember when he would visit Baxter School and go to the classrooms, he was also very attuned to, you know, to what children might be interested in, you know, and so on. And I can remember one instance, it was around Christmas time and we had both Christmas and Hanukkah symbols. And there were some Jewish members of the class. And he specifically made great pains to sort of elicit from them, well, what were their holiday practices, you know, and so on. I mean, you know, he, it was very, a sensitivity, you know, that was very interesting.

Anyway, I would keep, you know, in occasional touch with him all through the sixties until his death, and, in '69. And probably the most memorable experience that I have relating to him, I mean I would go to talk with him occasionally to ask him historical questions, because of course he went back into the 1870s and '80s. I mean, it was just incredible really. But, and of course when I asked him about that very sensitive subject of Ralph Owen Brewster and the Klan, he wouldn't say anything. He just, his comment was, well that's all past, that's all history, you know, he just wouldn't even comment on that.

But I think it was in 1967, I had been writing both as a high school student and a as a college student for the Portland papers, a history column called "Portland's Heritage." And the last set of those articles that I did in the summer of '67, I did an article about his father's work in creating the Portland park system at the turn of the century. And he saw that article and he was so gratified by it that he actually, I mean he was probably about ninety at the time and quite frail, quite fragile. And he actually had his chauffeur bring him down to the *Portland Press Herald* building, took the elevator to the second floor, walked into the press room where I was, I mean I was a, you know, college reporter. Here was the whole room full of, you know, reporters and editors and so on, and he came in to thank me personally for having written that article about his father. It was awesome, you know, it was just amazing, you know.

The other thing that I remember in one of those early visits was he took me over to the great picture of Mt. Katahdin, he had the big photograph, and he said, "Have you seen my mountain?" [*laughter*] That was the phrase. I still remember it to this day, "Have you seen my mountain?" So anyway, I think that he helped me develop a sense of history, a connection to history. And, of course, I was looking for those connections to history as a young person, and I developed a number of others as well.

When I was working for the newspapers I would seek out people in their eighties and nineties in the 1960s and do interviews with them as well. Quite a range of people in fact, including Harry Jones, who was a great pioneer aviator of Maine, who laid out all the airports in the twenties and thirties, and he was an elderly man in the sixties, very interesting person to interview. Anyway, Baxter I think inspired that connection, but I think also in many ways he's kind of a model and a hero in the sense of public service. And, you know, I've felt often that, and that's why I have three photographs of him behind my desk, that you know, that there's a model there to be learned from and I think that kind of inspires me.

DN: Did he talk much about his father?

ES: Yes, yes. Of course he was very admiring of his father. And when I visited his home once on West Street, he had a magnificent portrait of his father just as you entered the house, in the hallway. In fact it's the portrait that he willed to the Portland Public Library and it's down on the first floor, which shows the library in the background. And he had it arranged, it's a little eerie, he had it arranged with a mirror across from it so that, what he said was, "If you look in the mirror at the image mirrored," he said, "It's almost life like, you know." And, I mean, it was almost sort of like a shrine to his father in the hallway, you know, it was very interesting. And he also had a group portrait of he and his mother and some of his brothers and sisters over his fireplace. And he had tiles that his mother had painted, that he had moved from the Deering Street house, 61 Deering Street where he grew up, to his house on West Street. And those surrounded one of his fireplaces. Had beautiful antiques, many of which, of course, he willed to different institutions you know. But it was very interesting to visit there.

DN: So you had a major stimulation for interest in history from him. Did your folks show much interest in the active political life in the state at that time, when you were growing up?
ES: Well, I would say not, actually. I think my real, I think the political came from two standpoints. One was the fact that, you know you, history and politics are so intertwined that

when you study American history, you know, you study American politics, so there's that part of it. But also, I had a very defining event, so to speak, in 1960. Of course that was a great election, a great watershed election, and my parents had been Republicans.

Interestingly when I did the family history I found out, of course, that my mother's father had been a Democrat, I mean he was a Danish immigrant. And how else, the only time he was on the police force in Portland was when the Democrats were in, you see. I mean, which all of those jobs were political in those days at the turn of the century. But in the upward mobility, you know, going from immigrant generation to second generation in America, the respectable thing in Maine was to, you know, become Republican in that generation.

And in fact my mother's family, there were thirteen children, and my, one of my uncles was Judge Albert Knudsen and, one of my mother's brothers. And he had been very active in Republican politics in the twenties and the thirties, to the point where he had become county attorney during the thirties, elected county attorney as Republican. Many people wanted him to run for congress, but he did not want to leave Maine. But he and my Aunt Laura Reiche, Howard Reiche's wife, another of my mother's sisters, and her, another of the sisters, Alma Hite; Albert Knudsen, Laura Reiche and Alma Hite were all very involved in Republican politics, very actively involved in Republican politics. And in fact Laura and Alma were among the staunch supporters of you-know-who, Margaret Chase Smith. I mean, you know, that vast cadre of Republican women who, you know, were just so totally devoted to Margaret Chase Smith, you know. And they were among, you know, they fit right in with that, you know, that was, they just believed that the sun rose and set on Margaret, you know. So anyway, that was the background that I grew up in.

Well, here comes the election of 1960. So in my homeroom it's only natural that I become the Republican chairman. And guess who's the Democratic chairman? Peter Kyros, Jr., yes. And so we fought it out during the fall of 1960 in our homeroom at Lincoln Junior High School, having been, seventh graders just entering high school. We had a debate, Peter and I debated each other, you know, he was Kennedy and I was Nixon. And, you know, there was sort of a mutual respect, but at the same time a mutual tension between the two of us, you know. Well after the election was over, it was, I think it was Christmas vacation. And I got a call from Peter and he said, "You know, I'd love to get together with you and let's do something," you know. Well this astounded me, you know. And so very quickly we became fast friends and have remained so to this day.

And it was Peter who very, along with his father of course who was just beginning to get involved in Democratic politics. I mean Peter, Sr. had a blueprint, you know. He had some ideas, because I can remember those earliest discussions in '61 and '62 about when we run, you know, and what we're going to run for, you know, is it congress, is it governor, you know, what is it going to be, you know. I mean, there were, he was, and of course the first step was to become chairman of the party, which of course he did and then went on to four terms in congress. But I would be in that household frequently and just be immersed in the Democratic politics of the early 1960s and the comings and goings in which, you know, there would be many of the party leaders.

So I was quickly thrown into this whole opposite environment of what my family, you know, with the three staunch Republicans, activists, were. But I quickly decided that Kennedy and the Democratic Party were for me, and I got converted, you know. And of course I, to this day I'm, you know, a totally unrelenting New Dealer, you know, I mean I believe in the New Deal; not the New Frontier but the New Deal.

DN: You came to the '60 election supporting -

ES: Nixon.

DN: Nixon . . . .

ES: Right, yes.

DN: - and your family was -

ES: Strong Republican.

DN: - strong Republican supporting Margaret Chase Smith. What was their attitude toward Sen--, Governor Muskie?

ES: Well, I think it was the attitude that many strong Republican families had about Ed Muskie, and that is that he was the exception they were willing to make. Because they just saw, I mean he, I think when he ran in '54 he so, he was so clearly a quality person, you know. I mean it just, it just was clear that he was head and shoulders above his, his opposing candidate, who of course was Burton Cross, incumbent. And in addition to that, Don, there was not only the fact that I think my parents always, they always voted for him, both as governor, twice as governor and then the times he ran as senator. Because they really felt that he was such a bright and attractive and, you know, committed person for Maine and he really was clearly the best person running, regardless of his party.

I hate to say it, but you also have to remember, too, that there was the other issue for people to overcome too, and that was Catholicism. And, I mean, I was brought up in a household that was, I think, very conscious of tolerance and, you know, the teaching of tolerance. But I can remember very vividly in the '50s and into the '60s that I was living in a very intolerant period still, and that there were members of my family, I'll be frank about it, my mother's family, who had very strong prejudices and who voiced them, you know. And I don't mean to link that necessarily to the Republican Party, but it was all just, you know, it was sort of them and us, you know. It was the, you know, the Catholics and the Jews were Democrats and the Wasps were Republicans, you know, and that kind of thing. And I know we don't talk about this today, this politically correct age, but it was the facts of life then.

So that really I think that Muskie, in a household such as mine, you know, there was the double challenge of meeting the test of quality, but also, you know, there was the underlying issue too that, you know, this individual came from, you know, an immigrant background, he was Catholic, those sort of things, you know. So I think that that in a nut-, maybe in a microcosm, is

the kind of political magnetism that he had in Maine as he started his career in the fifties. And it always sustained him throughout his career, that he, you know, he just, he was such a strong person that that was just easily over-, that was overcome, you know.

DN: Did they have any personal encounters with him or any impressions given to them that made them feel positively toward -?

ES: Yes. That of course was the other, I think, very deciding factor, particularly in 1954 when he was an unknown. And that is that my father had, of course his first half of his career had been spent as a Woolworth manager and he knew many of the Woolworth managers in New England. And one of them, John Swanson, had been a Woolworth manager in Rumford at the time when Muskie was growing up. And John and his wife Elsa had known the Muskie family very well, liked them very much. And after John Swanson left Woolworth's, he set up a store in Bridgton and he and his wife were very close friends with my family. So that when this, you know, relatively unknown young lawyer appears in 1954 running for governor on the Democratic ticket, John and Elsa Swanson say to my parents, "You've got to vote for him," you know, "we know him personally, we knew him, you know, as a teenager. And this is a terrific person and you really need to give your vote to him." So I think that that was another deciding factor.

And I suspect that that kind of grapevine that exists in a state like Maine, I mean Maine in many ways is a very small state, I like to say it's one big interlocking directorate. And as a result, you know, I think that that's a very important factor in politics, you know, that word gets around as to whether you're a good person or not, regardless of party or regardless of background.

DN: Did you meet Governor Muskie or, while he was governor?

ES: I did not, no, not that I can remember, no, no. I would have met him in my entry into Democratic politics in the early 1960s through Peter Kyros, Sr. and Jr. I think very quickly I started going to party functions with Peter, Jr. and that's, you know, that's when I began to meet Muskie, yeah.

DN: Now, what was your first real party involvement?

ES: I would say that it would have been in the election of 1962 in which I can remember, let's see, Maynard Dolloff was running for governor and Sen. Muskie would not have been up for reelection at that time, that was '64. Anyway, as I recall, the party was headquartered in Lewiston at that time, and they were in, upstairs of a building on Lisbon Street, maybe? And was Ed Schlick the director maybe?

DN: Ed was the executive secretary at that time.

ES: Yes, right, right.

DN: And it was on Main Street, I believe.

ES: Main Street, right, Main Street, okay. Well, I can remember that Peter, Sr. of course went

up there a number of times and took Peter, Jr. and myself along. And I think we worked afternoons sorting things or, oh I know what it was, it was stuffing envelopes for bulk mailings, that's what we were doing. I think that was my first involvement in Democratic politics, yeah.

DN: And did you graduate from that?

ES: Well, to the extent that I went with the Maine delegation to the 1964 Democratic convention in Atlantic City, and I was a page. And another of the pages was David Flanagan, actually, and I think Peter, Jr. was too. And that was a tremendous experience in that, I think Peter stayed with his family, but David and I stayed at the YMCA and we would join the delegation each day, they were at a motel right on the boardwalk. And I did have a chance. That was my first chance to really observe Senator Muskie close-up for any length of time because he was, of course, chairman of the delegation. And he would hold daily meetings with the delegates and I would just sort of sit there and observe from a little distance, you know. That was kind of exciting. That was a remarkable convention to go to in that, literally within the span of two or three days, you know, one saw, Martin Luther King was there, Jackie Kennedy was there, Robert Kennedy was there, you know, a number of the major political figures of the day were all assembled. And then of course the ascendency of Lyndon Johnson, you know, the apotheosis of Lyndon Johnson.

And I can remember that last night after Johnson had been nominated, I think the previous night, and this was just sort of a coronation, you know, at the end. Peter, Jr. and I were standing on the boardwalk and they had these very elaborate fireworks, and one of them was this, actually Johnson's face in the sky, you know, in fireworks. And Peter turned to me sort of prophetically and he said, you know, "This is either going to be the greatest thing that ever happened to this country, or it may be the worst." And, of course, it was some of both unfortunately. I mean, on the one hand, you know, the wonderful civil rights and social programs that came out of the Johnson era, and including, and this we'll get to in a moment, historic preservation in the mid-sixties. But on the other hand, of course, the tragedy of Vietnam and the fact that it really left a major impact and a major scar on the very generation that Peter and I were part of, you know, that we were soon to be propelled into, really.

But I always think of that, how prophetic that was, you know, his sense that it wasn't all perfect, you know, it was almost too good to be true, you know. Because certainly that feeling of 1964, I mean it was a foregone conclusion that Lyndon Johnson would win that election. And when Johnson came to Portland of course, again thanks to the Kyroses, I was right up there on the stand, I shook his hand and so on at the city hall. And that probably is the largest downtown crowd in Portland that will, in the history of the city, I mean there were over a hundred thousand people that poured into the center of the city to see Johnson. The feeling of euphoria and of unity and of support for that man and for his programs was extraordinary. I think probably it was only equaled by maybe the early days of Roosevelt, you know, I mean it was just really remarkable, you know. And sadly, you know, within two or three years it would all be so different.

DN: You were by 1964, you graduated from high school that year?

ES: No, I graduated in ‘66 actually.

DN: Sixty-six.

ES: Yes, right, yup.

DN: And ‘66 was also the year that Peter, Jr.’s father ran for Congress.

ES: That’s right, that’s right, yes.

DN: Were you involved in that campaign?

ES: Oh yes, definitely. Well, I was entering- in the fall of 1966 I was entering Colby. And, of course, Peter was entering Yale, but I think that he made a special arrangement where I think he actually was able to take some time off and be up here and working with his father. So I saw him off and on. And then I spent that election night with them, of course. And I also spent, I had forgotten this, Don, but I had also spent election night 1968 with them and with the whole Muskie entourage as well. And I remember that it all started in Portland, I think, everybody was down in Portland to see the early results of the election in 1968. And then Muskie and his family drove to Waterville, and I guess they were located, what, did he have a home in Waterville still?

DN: Not then, no, they stayed at the motel.

ES: That’s it, the motel, yes, because we all went to the motel. And I didn’t get back to Colby, of course I was going to Colby, I didn’t get back to Colby until like maybe three o’clock in the morning. We just all stayed there of course, you know, glued to the television sets seeing what would happen, you know, and of course we know what happened.

DN: Did you go to the armory early in the evening when there was a gathering there and Dick Dubord and his jazz band played?

ES: No, no, you see, we were all down in Portland at that point.

DN: You were in Portland at the time.

ES: Yes. I want to add one other note to the 1964 convention that was particularly memorable. I drove down with two very nice ladies from Portland who were delegates, and I’ll see if I can remember their names but at the moment I don’t. But it was particularly memorable driving back because I drove all the way back with Al Lessard, Alton Lessard, and, in his great big white Cadillac. And if I’d only had the kind of tape recorder you have here, because he told me the most wonderful stories about Democratic politics going back to the thirties. I just, I remember so little of it except that I remember that apparently, and I don’t even know what the issue was but I was so impressed by it, his telling about it.

Apparently there was an issue here in Maine that was basically unresolvable at the state level, so the parties made an appointment to see FDR and he was involved in this, whatever this issue

was. I don't know whether it was a party issue, whether it was a, you know, patronage issue or what, but anyway. And so they all filed in and met with FDR and of course FDR settled it for them, you know, very quickly, very quickly, you know. But I was so, you know, I was so impressed to, you know, hear, talk to somebody who had talked to Franklin Roosevelt, you know, it was just wonderful, really. Since then I've talked to a number of other people who talked to Franklin Roosevelt, but anyway.

DN: Now you were at Colby from '66 on.

ES: To '70, yes.

DN: And your major there?

ES: Was art history, actually, because I had become very interested in architectural history and architectural history was included under art history. And then I went on to Boston University graduate school and have a master's in architectural history from there.

DN: And did you focus on art history and architectural history with an eye to becoming involved in historic preservation?

ES: Well, it's very interesting, Don. I think that when I first, well to go back a bit. When I was in junior high and high school, I had no idea that there would be any kind of career opportunity in historic preservation. There was virtually nothing at the time. And basically what I had set my sights on at that point, I think inspired by my interest in politics and inspired particularly by my uncle Judge Knudsen, was to go into the law. And that's what I thought I would do, that somehow history and preservation was something that you did on the side, you know, in your spare time. And, but my real passion was for it.

Well then I, when I got into college, well just as a freshman, and took art history courses, that whole world opened up. And I said, "Well, maybe I can teach," you know. I mean, maybe I can teach at the college level and that will be what I'll do. But of course in the meantime what was happening, and Sen. Muskie was a major player in this, was the passage of the 1966 Historic Preservation Act. And that act resulted in the formation of state historic preservation commissions in all fifty states and the territories. And it created a national network at the state level of preservation entities that continues to this day, now over thirty years later, and has had an untold impact on the identification, understanding and protection of a wide variety of cultural resources in this country.

I mean, we look back nostalgically at some of FDR's New Deal programs that were related to cultural accomplishments: the WPA arts, the WPA writers' guides projects, and so on. But of course all that had a very short life, I mean it started in '33 or '34 and it ended when war came, if not before.

But the remarkable thing is the Preservation Act, and some of the comparable acts that Muskie and others worked for in the mid-sixties under the Johnson Great Society, if you put it in context, it's all part of that; Lady Bird's concern about beautification for the highways and scenic

landscapes, the concern that Muskie was so critical in, about cleaning up the air and the water. And the same thing go, and the creation of the Land and Water Fund, and the funds coming out of the sale of oil leases to be transferred into these funds to renew, to renew the resources of this country. And historic preservation was all part of that in the context of that. And of course Senator Muskie was critical in all, in the leadership in all of those programs.

As I know I've told you before, Don, again the very prophetic thing when I look back at it, my father was very friendly with the father of Chip Stockford, who was one of Muskie's aides in his office in the 1960s. And of course we'd take spring trips to Washington, and two or three times my father arranged for us to go to Muskie's office and talk to Chip. Well, I can vividly remember, I would have been a, probably a junior in high school, and this was 1965. And Chip said, "Oh I know you're very interested in history," he said, "I have a draft here of a bill that the senator is going to be introducing in the next year or so. He's involved in a study committee that has traveled to Europe to look at historic buildings and cultural resources and how they are managed in Europe." And he said, "You know, in another year or so we're going to try and put a program in place to address this nationally, and here's a copy of a draft of that bill." Well, I've spent my whole professional life involved in that program.

When I graduated from, well, even in fact before that, I was at Colby in the late sixties and it's so interesting how connections occur. And Maine is a wonderful state for connections, because I had worked in late '69 I think it was on, yes, on a bicentennial project. Maine was going to have a bicentennial in 1970. Actually, it was, I'm sorry, it was earlier, that was '68, '69. And I did a lot of preparation for a pictorial history of Maine, and it didn't come through because the legislature decided not to fund the budget at nearly as ambitious a level as had been proposed by Governor Curtis. Well, I, as a student, here I was left out of, I'd done all this out of pocket, I'd spent a lot of time, I'd traveled, I'd had pictures reproduced, and so on.

So one of my father's business partners was a fellow named Phil Cook from, originally from Calais, who in turn was a very, a boyhood friend of Linwood Ross, who as we know of course was the alter ego of Ken Curtis. So Linwood, so Phil said, "Oh, well I know Linwood up in Augusta," he said, "He'll take care of it for you," you know. So I got a call at school from Linwood Ross and he said, and of course he was the state purchasing agent, and he said, "I understand that you've done a lot of work for the state and that you're not being reimbursed for it." And he said, "I'm concerned about that. What can I do for you?" And so I explained, you know, it amounted to maybe three or four hundred dollars, you know, but it was a lot for someone going to college, you know. And so he said, "Well look, you just write out an itemized invoice for the time you spent, the expenses you've incurred and so on. Send it to me, and I will see that you get the money," which he did. I got a check in a couple weeks.

So then, lo and behold, I get a call from Linwood a few weeks later. And he said, he said "Now," he said, you know, "we know you're very interested in history and politics and so on, and we really need some young people on these state boards," he said. He said, "Now how old are you?" And I think I wasn't quite twenty-one. Well, I guess you had to be twenty-one to serve at that time. So anyway the first thing they thought of, and I vetoed this myself, I thought it was really, would have been very awkward even if it was very thoughtful, they needed a student representative on the university board, you know, university system board. I said oh, no,

no, no, the, Colby, that would not do, you know. Well then the next thing that came, and by that time I was twenty-one, this was '69, I had just turned twenty-one I guess, yeah, I had just turned twenty-one, fall of '69, the Archives Board. So Governor Curtis, Linwood had me appointed by Governor Curtis to the Archives Board. So what this is leading up to, Don, is that when the National Preservation Act went in in '66, it created a chain reaction of creating the state commissions. And in 1971 the Maine Historic Preservation Commission was created. Well that commission required citizen members to create a board. And a very interesting thing was happening politically: the state museum at the time was run by Robert Damm, who was a real empire builder. He did not want the commission to come into being, he wanted to subsume it. And so I was very concerned about, you know, the commission coming into being on its own. So I called Peter, Jr. and I said, you know, "Who do we know," you know, "other than Linwood? Who do we know in Curtis' office who's directly involved?" "Oh, Neil Rolde," you know.

So I got in touch with Neil and Neil said, "Oh, by all means we want, the governor wants this to come into being and will appoint it, despite what. . . . " Oh and you know, the other person who was working against it was Carrol McGary, who was commissioner of education. He was in league with Damm. So anyway, Neil arranged a meeting with McGary and myself and basically said to the commissioner, I can remember this, "The governor is committed to having this commission come into being," and basically, I want you to back off, you know. So then Neil turned to me afterwards and said, "Now who do we put on this commission?" you know? And he said, "Of course you'll serve," you know.

So that's how. . . . And Neil of course also sowed the seeds for some wonderful leadership. He had a very close friend in York who was a, again, Neil was a Democrat but, John Bardwell was a Republican but John saw how wonderful Neil was and supported him very strongly. So John Bardwell went on the commission, John ended up being my chairman when I became director, was a wonderful leader.

So in any case, one thing led to another and I think that early involvement in Democratic politics with the Kyroses really laid a ground work for me to be able to develop the beginnings of an entry into state government. And then, of course, I was appointed to the commission in '71. We hired James Mundy as the first director, and then Jim in turn, when I got out of graduate school, hired me as architectural historian. When Jim left in '75 I was appointed acting director, and then I became director in 1976. Who was also on that first board? Jane Muskie. So I got to know Jane very well through her term on the board. And, you know, she was of course a wonderful person, wonderful to talk to.

DN: We're going to turn the tape over and I'm going to have some other questions for you.

End of Side A
Side B

DN: This is the second side of the tape of the interview with Earle G. Shettleworth, Jr. on February 28th, the year 2000. Earle, you've been talking about your involvement in and career in the Historic Preservation Commission. Early in your comments you observed that similar programs, cultural programs in the New Deal did not last beyond the New Deal essentially, but

that many of the Great Society programs including especially the Historic Preservation program has lasted. Do you have a sense of why the difference?

ES: Well, I think that for one thing, I think that the New Deal programs were in a sense created with the concept that they weren't permanent, that they were stopgap. That they were really the helping hand to many different aspects of society; to the artists, to the writers, to the playwrights, you know, and on down the line. But the idea was that once things got better, then it might not be necessary to have them any more. And of course as we know, the reality of economics was such that while things gradually got better during the thirties, they never really returned to full prosperity until the war broke out in '41 and then got under way in '42. And then very quickly, if they hadn't already been terminated in the late thirties or the early forties, the New Deal programs for cultural activities in this country ended with the war effort.

I think the intention of the great society programs was different. I think it was more long term and more far reaching, and more visionary. In that, I think that when the National Preservation Act was created in '66, when the National Endowments for the Arts and the Humanities, which we haven't mentioned yet but were also part of this whole effort of the mid sixties, were created, it was with the idea that these would be lasting contributions, that they would be ongoing contributions, that the Great Society, the very definition of it, included not only trying to solve the human problems but also to reach out to human creativity and human vision. And it was a kind of multi-level, multi-planed approach to American society that had I think a more, you know, long term commitment to it.

Now that's not to say that it's been easy sledding politically for many of these programs in the last thirty to thirty-five years. They have had their detractors. They have gone through very difficult political and budgetary times sometimes. I mean we have seen, of course, the very direct attacks from time to time on the National Endowments, both arts and humanities. In the 1981 through '88 budgets Historic Preservation funding was totally zeroed out for the states, and it was only through the Congress that it was put back each year. And then, of course, when President Bush got back in, there was a sort of kinder, gentler approach to things. And he began to put monies back in and it's been steadily growing back since then.

So that the very fact that these were created in the mid-sixties has not, you know, automatically meant that they were going to prosper. They have had to fend for themselves, but they have proven themselves I think as durable programs for, you know, literally, you know, no money at all so to speak in the scheme of things and a great return for the cultural value of the country really.

DN: To what extent have the programs been helped by being imbedded in state government?

ES: I think that there are several benefits. One thing is that several of these programs, from the outset, were conceived to be state-federal partnerships. And this, of course, was I think different from the New Deal programs in that the states were impoverished during the thirties and everything was coming directly from the federal government. And while there were state offices of the New Deal programs, they were federal offices right in the towns and cities, as well as at the state level. The difference here was a partnership, and that partnership was in funding

and in staffing. And so I think the fact that states were asked to 'buy in' has really broadened the base of these programs, and also given them a broader built-in constituency, so that they were not just at the whim of a small political situation or a small group of politicians in Washington if they wanted to change them, or if they wanted to destroy them, or phase them out or whatever. The crafting of the state-federal partnership has helped to insure the broad political base of support that has been critical in times when these programs were threatened.

DN: Had you any opportunities over the years to talk with Senator Muskie about the Historic Preservation program?

ES: Well, unfortunately not. No, no I didn't. I talked a little bit, of course, with Jane when she was on the commission, and I mean she was very much aware of his role back in the mid-sixties and she was a very conscientious attender of meetings. In fact she wanted to be reappointed to the commission after her first five-year term was up, and Gov. Longley wouldn't reappoint her. I won't say any more. It speaks for itself.

DN: Have you, you've retained close connections with Peter Kyros, Jr. over the years?

ES: Yes, yes I have.

DN: And you're in an apolitical position even though you (*unintelligible phrase*).

ES: Oh yes, oh yes. No, and I've always of course been very careful about that from the first day I entered state government. I mean, you know, I'm, you know, one can look it up in the Gardiner clerk's office. I'm a registered Democrat to this day. And as I told you I believe not so much in the great society as in the New Deal, but, and I say that very sincerely, but, and all it represents. But no, I've obviously been very careful and actually we've had wonderful support over the years, in a bipartisan and nonpartisan way. And people from both parties as well as independents have made, you know, wonderful commission members and supporters of the program. So I think it's, it's a testimony to it that.

Well I think you know what we're really dealing with, Don, here is we're dealing with the physical fabric of our heritage, what has survived. And one of the things that I don't think is fully appreciated about the Historic Preservation program, I mean the conventional wisdom is that we're dealing with old buildings, but actually there are far greater dynamics to it. For one thing, written into the Act in the sixties was the fact that this program must address archeology. And in the case of Maine that has opened up inroads into understanding, into research, into salvage through highway and bridge projects and on and on, into creating a vast body of knowledge that we never would have had about prehistory in Maine. From ten or eleven thousand years ago up to the contact period when the Europeans came in the, you know, 16th, 17th centuries. That's, you know, a rich dividend that I don't think, you know, anyone conceived of in the formation of the program in the mid-sixties. But that's all part of it.

DN: As you look back on the period from 1954 on, what do you think Senator Muskie's most important contributions have been to the state?

ES: Well, I would say several. Clearly and probably most lastingly is the reinstitution of the two-party system. The fact that he really developed a climate, which gave people confidence that there was a Democratic Party alternative to the Republican Party in politics in the state, that he encouraged many talented younger people like Peter Kyros, Sr., for example, to go into public life, and really scores of people. And that that has had I think a very positive long lasting dynamic on the last fifty years of the history of the state, taking us up into the new century.

Clearly I will always admire him for the fact that he once again proved that Maine can produce leaders of national and international stature. I think that we're very proud of this, I don't think we're too chauvinistic about it, I think it is true. When you look back into the 19th century, you know, you look at figures such as Hannibal Hamlin who was Lincoln's vice president. You look at Thomas B. Reed, who was really the most powerful Speaker of the House in probably in the history of the House. And then you look into the 20th century with Muskie and with Margaret Chase Smith. And with George Mitchell who, of course, Senator Muskie really, I mean, there would not have been a Mitchell had there not been a Muskie. And so I think that that is a very important contribution. And for him to, you know, find his base in the fifties in Maine, and then move on to the national scene in the sixties and the seventies and make such major legislative contri--, lasting legislative contributions, and then end his career as Secretary of State. You know, clearly that is- that's a very major contribution.

And again, it is, it is the American success story. I mean, it is the, it is what we so fervently believe about this country, that there is this innate upward mobility about this country. And indeed with my parents hearing about, you know, this young lawyer from Waterville whose parents had come over from Poland. And, you know, living in Rumford, the most unlikely of western Maine mill town settings to come out of, and he ends up as Secretary of State. I mean, that's the American story, you know.

DN: Thank you very much, Earle.

ES: Right, very good.

End of Interview