
L: Now you want to know about the origin and the beginnings of the Industrial Commission in Lowell.

A: Right. Right.

L: Well Flannery, who was Manager of the city, he was forced to do something, because the city, the downtown was becoming empty, desolate. People were out of work by 25% I guess at that time 20%. Nobody has any work. You walked down, you saw people, proud people, hunchback, no money, no work. (A: Yeah) Depressed. And uh, something had to be done. They were saying, “hey look, we got to find jobs. What is the city doing for us?” So Flannery appointed the group here representing every segment of uh, of the social structure in the city. (A: Umhm) Anybody that’s business people bankers, lawyers and from the professions. So we were given $40,000 if I remember correctly. It was $40,000 that was allotted (A: umhm) for the committee to operate and see what we can do. Well we had the one meeting, the second meeting, the third meeting, conversations. I told them, I said, “look, I can’t be coming over here for the tea party. (A: chuckles) You know I got work to do and the people are asking me, well what are you doing? And as far as I can see we’re not doing anything. I can’t do it, because I can’t devote my time solely on that business, because [words unclear]. None of you can do it. [Few words unclear] Mr. Bourgeois, Homer. You’re a lawyer, you work in the bank. Mr. Palefsky, you got your son in the construction business.” So we have to find somebody, through some means, to advertise whatever way to, he selects the man and reduces it to a bundle, then he brings them before us. And we decide based on personality, and what we consider to be the proper man.
They contacted [Shurtleff?] or [Shirtliff?], whatever his name was. He was from Harvard, and he was teaching City Planning I think. [Shurtleff, Shirtliff?]. Anyways he uh, he began, he knew how to operate. (A: Yeah) He uh, advertised the Wall Street Journal, New York Times and The Business for somebody for the job in the city of uh, to Head the Industrial Commission. …Commission in the country you know? (A: Really?) Oh sure! (A: Yeah?) At that time, yeah, except for the [unclear] into the state, you know. They wouldn’t give you free (--) Come over here, we got cheap labor, you come and we’ll take care of you. There aren’t any Industrial Commissions around anyplace, you see.

A: Especially not for just a city.

L: No, not that I know of. So um, he had the guys and he brought probably ten, fifteen people that were interested. (A: Umhm) They interviewed them, and based on his knowledge, and expertise, and judgment, he selected who he thought were the three best qualified that may appeal to us. And they were brought on our committee, and each one introduced, he was asked questions, you know. Background, you know, he gave us the background before they came in. And then we were to figure who we wanted, you know, our own perception now, who we consider to be the best qualified from all aspects of the personality, how he spoke, whether it was a [unclear] he was tongue tied, or whoever. So we came down to this man here. Cook, wasn’t it?

A: Earl Cook.

L: Well I, he was from Marblehead. (A: Uh huh) So I figured he was, he was a good man, and I, and I’ve got a couple of others to go along with me, like the Colonel. And uh, I said I consider that man to be the best qualified.

A: Who’s the Colonel?

L: Colonel was McGowan here. (A: Yeah) And I called and I talked to uh, to what’s his name, Delmore. And I made my voice heard that uh, he [unclear] my preference. (A: Yeah) I wasn’t real bashful about, because I started the thing by telling him “look, if we’re not going to do anything I’m wasting your time. My reputation is at stake now.” Let people think that once you were elected into the Commission he wants to produce manna from heaven for everybody. I said, “I can’t, I can’t have that reputation, you know, because I’m a guy that produces. I don’t sit around fooling around.” You know? [Both chuckle] So we get this man here. (A: Yeah) That was, politics started to enter, you see. They decided to pick some local boy there.

A: Who was that?

L: Let me see now. Um, he was in the high school plays there with uh, against Douglas there. What the (--) Sharkey! His father I think worked for either the Electric Light Company, or the Gas Company. Good boy. High class. I respected him, but not for this. We couldn’t make it a political football. (A: Umhm) See, and then they would go and
they tried to influence him, because he would be a local boy and they would have the [unclear] to hire him and fire him. (A: Umhm) So it would not have been said to him in the long run, if he didn’t produce early, that they would chuck him out you see, because his reputation would be hurt. (A: Yeah) And I analyzed all those things. I said, no, maybe these guys will think what I’m thinking.

A: And when you say they would have an affect on him because he was local, who, who were you talking about?

L: Well I meant the politicians and maybe these people who had irons to heat, you know, to bend him, you know, which way they want to. (A: Umhm) I had nothing. I’m coming here for a job. (A: Right) So these people are looking for jobs, or could help somebody from whom they can gain later. I can’t say that that was the fact at that time. It’s a possibility though that a situation like that can then be under the best, the best of intentions that a fellow might have. But uh, the thing now is you’ve got to act. Palefsky, Mr. Paley, Palefsky, his son had the construction company and he called it Paley, but the real name was Palefsky. (A: Uh huh) He was willing to gamble, and he started constructing the first building in the complex without a tenant. (A: Yeah) You know what a gamble that was at that time, when the city was down, disaster area, you know. No opportunity site and he started building with no tenant. In the meantime Bourgeois and uh, I was trying to find his name. 1, 2, 3, 4, we went to school together the same year. We graduated together. Let’s see now. And [McGowan?] Principal.

A: Who? The guy standing right next to you?

L: Yeah, McGowan. No, no. Hall! I knew it was Hall. Howard Hall. (A: Yup) You see that family of lawyers and everything. (A: Yup) Hall and I were, graduated the same year. (A: Yeah) He was good respectable people, you know, so like (--) Anyways the issue came now as to what are we going to do? The building is going up, you can’t let the man hang. Other people began to show interest now. Once the momentum started the business people, the lawyers and the doctors, and the other that have money under the pillow and under the mattress, they came from the darkness (A: yeah) and were willing to invest the money for the bond, because they were promised to get I don’t know, seven, eight percent, or ten percent. I forget what the percentage was, but it’s a good percentage for those who would buy the bonds. (Yeah) Over prescribed in no time and they were angry because they couldn’t buy bonds to pay for the project. So that was fully funded before it was completed, see. (A: Umhm) Then of course they started to (--) In the meantime I was transferred because we had to reorganize our union, because you know, the shrinkage, you know, the mills, you know. (A: Right) So I had the opportunity to either take the uh, the Lawrence/Lowell Bus and Office on servicing, or go on to statewide organization. I prefer the organization. It was more for me at that time, political action and all that. (A: Yeah) So I had to leave the city, not leave, I lived in the city, but I had to leave to go you know, to Manchester, New Hampshire, Vermont, Rhode Island. I had to be in different cities in Massachusetts too, because Bill Belanger was our New England Director, not only from Massachusetts. So we worked under his office.
Then things started moving. And I think AVCO was the first plant. AVCO if I remember correctly, AVCO was the first plant that came in.

A: Could be. I’ve been doing some research on the newspapers, but I haven’t found everything of course, because it’s over the course of many years. But I know Reese Associates was in there, (L: yeah) and AVCO.

L: AVCO was up first.

A: Yeah. And um, there was another steel company in there, or something.

L: It was after me. See, because I wasn’t around, because I had to uh, I had to move.

A: Yeah.

L: So now the city at that time was in such a bad shape, if you walked down the city you thought that uh, this thing is going down. This thing can’t survive. People, what can I say. It was sad to see them, you know, proud people look down, no money, no job, deprived, you know. Some of the, especially the Greeks, me go to the Eagle, never. I’d starve and die before I go to the City Hall. (A: Yup) Welfare. (A: Yup) And uh, because they weren’t, they weren’t aware that that was there for them in difficult times, you see. But uh, they wouldn’t go. They didn’t during the depression. Lot of them starved to death.

A: Yeah

L: But they wouldn’t go. Malnutrition, you know.

A: Yeah, that was the same during like the early strikes, I know a lot of the Greeks refused to take help from the unions, (L: yeah) and they provided for themselves within their own community.

L: Well I’m going to come back to that in the 30’s and the 40’s, you see. We’re going to that later. (A: Yeah) So is there anything you want more on the Industrial Commission?

A: Yeah, uh, just some basic stuff. (L: Sure) Now do you know when the Commission was formed, and when you were asked?

L: I think 1954. I have, I have the uh, but I haven’t got it here, I have it over there. I could call you and tell you. (A: Okay) See I’ll send it to you now.

A: Because I haven’t found that yet.

L: No, no. And I can, and I can send you the copy of what they said, and how they thanked everyone, because we were free, we didn’t get any money you know.
A: Yeah, right.

L: And I’ll just try, because I can send you that too if you want.

A: Yeah, a copy of that would be great.

L: Sure, sure. First the appointment of the Commission, second the letter of thanks for having served, see. All right?

A: So uh, Flannery (--)

L: Oh, and they had a, by the way, if you look at the part in the paper, they had this on the front page, all of us.

A: This picture, or a different one?

L: Oh no, a different one, one by one.

A: Yeah!

L: Front page, yeah.

A: When the Commission was first started? (L: oh yeah) I see. So yeah, if I can get that date I can find that in the newspaper then.

L: I’ll give you the date.

A: Okay, great!

L: And uh, what else?

A: Now when the Commission (--) Well let me ask you another question. How long did you end up serving on the Commission?

L: At least over a year I guess. (A: Yeah) Yeah.

A: And you were initially asked. This was the first group?

L: The first group, we were appointed, the first ones. (A: Yeah) We started, there was nothing, flat.

A: Yeah, okay. Um, now how often did you meet?

L: Well we met quite a few times, and every so often, you know.

A: Yeah, perhaps once a month or something?
L: Oh now, earlier, because you’re getting a hot item, you know. They give you a hot item. (A: Yeah) I cannot recall exactly you see, but I knew we met often because the pressure was on us, you see? (A: Yeah) And uh, I didn’t like pressure, especially when they say well we’re going to do this. Okay, we’ll do it. Now here’s $40,000. $40,000 wasn’t much money, but it was good money at that time. (A: Yeah) It could prepare for something. Nobody was getting paid. (A: Right) No secretaries, nothing, see. (A: Right) We used the hall in City Hall.

A: Did yeah.

L: Oh yeah, we used one of the offices there, we used to meet. They treat us well. And uh, we reacted in good conscience, you know, to do something for the city. (A: Yeah) It was innovative. People didn’t understand it. If we, if we failed they would have crucified us. Those good bastards, they went and they did this and they did that. They were supposed to help the city. They destroyed the city. (A: Yeah) So I knew the gamble that I was taking too you know.

A: And there was a lot of people that were looking for you to fail, uh? Perhaps politicians and stuff that could uh, use that as momento for their campaign?

L: I don’t think so, (A: no?) because we were too strong for them. (A: Yeah) Then any, any two of us were too strong for them. Oh yeah, especially, what are they going to say, I had the votes. I had the membership. (A: Yeah) What the hell were they going to say? [Go chew tobacco (?)] I’d go and, I’d go and I’d stand there and I’d crucify them. I’ll turn them from white to black with logic. (A: chuckles, yeah)

A: That initial $40,000 feed money, um (--) 

L: Yeah, where did we get the Professor from Harvard? (A: Yeah, and beyond that?) We could use the advertising, (A: umhm) You know we didn’t pay for lights at City Hall.

A: Right, right.

L: That was for that purpose.

A: Did part of that go to pay for Earl Cook’s um, salary?

L: I believe that that was taken later, you see. (A: Later?) Later when uh, but he was, he was paid for top wages for that time. (A: Yeah) There was no question about he was going to get paid. (A: Umhm, umhm) That was no point. The minute we found him. That was just for us to provide us for, for um, you know, change money, a little change to have around.

A: Like seed money.
L: Seed money as they call it today. So when you, when you get into the business of, now having found the man and you start the business, well he’s got to have money too. Expensive you know, to move around. To call people, somebody in Arkansas, California, you know he finds out the reading from the paper, you know how they do it.

A: Yeah.

L: They get the clipping service. (A: Right) They call up and they get the clippings, they get the information that he wants from the particular business that he’s in. (A: Yeah) So he was always (--) Information to him regarding somebody who wants to move, or unhappy in an area, it was available to him. So on that base he couldn’t fail to have information. (A: Yeah) He had to apply it to his work. See I knew all about those things, but I’d get caught as if I didn’t know, see.

A: Why is that?

L: It is my business not to make it known how much I know. (A: Yeah?) Sure! (A: Yeah) You never let people uh, you only allow so much. You never go all out. Just like you have a grievance. Who’s been having a grievance? (A: Umhm) Let’s say you’re to boss, you’re complaining about the worker there, I have to come in to protect the worker. (A: Umhm) Now even though I have a 100% case, I can ruin you, make you a fool. Ridicule you in front of the Superintendent, the Hearing Officer. I’m not going to do that. I want to win the case. I’m going to put enough to win the case, but I’m not going to destroy you, because I may need you the next time one of my men would be 60% wrong and he would be 60% right. And he would have to understand now, I could say, look you know, give him a disciplinary notice, you know, this time he’ll do it within uh (-)

A: Instead of the guy getting fired, or something?

L: Five days, five days lay off without pay and all that. (A: Yeah, yeah) So you don’t go for the kill when, especially when you know that your men are going to be more [unclear] than the boss. All right? (A: Yeah) So you got, you got to know how to be diplomatic and uh, be strong you know, but have the argument. See you have to anticipate, see in my field at the time there are very few that were wholly informed you know, how to handle grievances. The tactics [unclear] the employed. The strategy. How to put yourself, deduction, deduction, how to put yourself in the other fellow’s position. Well what would be his strong points, you know, against me in the case? Then I would go strong points. Now I would never reveal my weak points. I would only talk about my strong points. Let them come and find out what my weak points on the case is, see? If he can’t find them he’s gone, see? (A: Right) But if I find his weak points, he’s gone you see, but then you don’t kill him. You know you don’t go for the throat, jugular.

A: Just win the case.
L: Win the case and give a layer of self-respect. You know, don’t destroy self-respect, because you’re going to need that guy. (A: Yeah) Of course a lot of people don’t know that, because they never [few words unclear].

A: Out of this came something called the New Industrial Plant. Were you around for that?

L: They uh (--) 

A: NIP? What it was, was um, the sale of the bonds. In other words, the Industrial Commission could not own land, could not sell land, could not sell bonds, etc. So they set up this Corporation called the NIP, New Industrial Plant.

L: And who headed it? The Commission?

A: Homer Bourgeois did. Separate people, some of the same people. Like Palefsky was on it, and I think Howie Hall, and maybe Pearson and Lydon.

L: I wasn’t at that time you see, because I told you, (A: yeah) afterwards we had to divide the duties between the leadership, (A: Umhm) because you know, the membership has dribbled down. (A: Right) See, we had the City of Lawrence there, the mills there, especially the American Woolen Company. Thousands that worked in there.

A: And did that go out during the 50’s?

L: No, it didn’t go out, but it was dropping in production. (A: Really?) Bad news all over the country, American Woolen Company. Besides that, the Beaver Brook Mill. (A: Really?) Yeah, up in Dracut. You know Dracut? (A: Yeah.) Sure. I was there when I was Director of the Union. We serviced that there. They were the first to take Dacron and wool, blend them together. (A: Yeah?) Yeah, Dacron. [Unclear] you know the wool. They made the blankets there, the first one. And the fellow that was there, he was the resident manager, his brother was a President of a bank. What the hell was his name? He was, he was also I believe, a professor at one time at the Lowell Textile School, the weaving. (A: Oh yeah?) Weaving. His brother was a banker. And uh, jeese, his name.

A: Not uh, Olsen?

L: No. No. There were all sorts of people. They blended that together, (A yeah) the first time they did it. (A: Wow) Dacron and wool at the same properties, you see?

A: And that kept them going for awhile after that?

L: They did! But then the, when the American Woolen membership was dwindling in uh, in Lawrence, the Director from Lawrence was you know, when I was a Director in Lowell, had more power because of bigger membership. And he was close to the, very close friendship with the Director for the Woolen Industry in our union. (A: Uh huh) So
I see from the grapevine that they wanted to take over, have that switched to Lawrence. (A: Really?) I got whiff of it you see. So. That was at the time when that cost plus time, you know, during the war, (A: uh huh) out of the way. (A: Right) So of course it didn’t cost them anything, because the government was paying the extra. So they had fifteen extra people, twenty extra people. (A: Right) But after that was over you either swing, or you sink based on (-->) Either you get rid of those fifteen, twenty men that are spokeless, that don’t, don’t do anything, see, or you got to lose the plant. So the manager called me up, he says, “we’re going to close the place, this is what happened.” I said, “why should we lose it to them?” Okay, I called a meeting of all my stewards and the officers, indoctrination lessons now. Like the Communist in the cell operations, we had to battle them bastards at one time. I knew all the operations. So I sat down with them and I said, “here’s the story. You don’t do what I’m going to tell you, you guys don’t got any job. So listen carefully. You know there’s fifteen jobs there these guys went [unclear], you never worked there before though, huh? Those fifteen jobs can cost all of you guys your jobs.” And they had good paying jobs, see. I said, “what we’re going to do is we’re going to get, I said, they have synchronization too. There’s some jobs that sit here that you put the, you seam the blanket here first on that side. There’s another machine there, and you have another man to put, to seal it in the other machine, when all you have to do is put it in tandem I says, and they can roll it into the other one.” (A: Uh huh) “What we’ll do is, and I said I need you because you’re my professors, you’re my experts, consultants in town, don’t you forget that. I said, we will get the highest price, in other words we’re going to get 1/3 more price, pay, if you’ll take out the” (-->) $2.50 an hour at that time, $3.50 an hour, he’s going to get 1/3 more (A: Yeah) over the, it’s going to go over $5.00, over $6.00 or $5.00. Okay, he understood now. Do you agree? Yeah. The next steward, this is the situation. This is what the management thinks we can do.

Do you think it can be done? Sure. Okay. You? No it can’t be. Out. If you tell them out, that’s it, there’s no argument at all. Once a steward said no, because I told them you’ve got to pledge because you’re dealing with the jobs of everybody else. So don’t you try to be a hero you know that I kept my job and all that, because that doesn’t work with me? I said, because I’m going to find out for sure. Well I called the manager, I said, bring your Superintendent and we sat down. I said, “you can go on because you got what you want now, because I cut it back.” He was a hotheaded bastard. He was hotheaded. He used to [unclear] the person all the time. That’s going to stop. If you have a problem, don’t say anything. Whatever goes wrong you call me, and I will tell you what to answer in my presence. All right? Don’t just shoot off your mouth. See, because I will lead you because you want to keep the plant. And he did. (A: Yeah) Do you know when they used to go to New York, to the National Headquarters of American Woolen, from all over the country they used to go to settle their grievances. And it’s a fact, they used to go from all over. From Oregon, from every place. Once every two months, or three. Grievances, the first time I went there, grievances. Man. Then I saw the percentages. A small plant like Beaver Brook had more than the others. So comes now to our meeting, we had no grievances. I told my cousin, as a delegate you go there. [Unclear] didn’t have no grievances. What the hell, what happened over here? Well Lou, we settled our grievances. Should we call the resident managers? What’s going on over there? We had hundreds and hundreds of votes, we got a new man over here. Mr. Vergados, he understands the problem. They told us his problems, and I told him my
problems and we sat and we solved them. Resolution, resolved them intelligently, amicably. No grievance at all. (A: Yeah?) Because he seems to make mistakes. He’s a good man, he knew how to run the plant management, but when he dealt with the workers he could not take away from his being that he was a superior. Who the hell is he to question me?

A: What was his name?

L: I forget his name now.

A: Oh this is the guy who’s brother was the bank guy.

L: I’ll remember his name. I’ll remember his name. Short guy. Dynamo though. Woho! But I told him, you want to keep the plant, you know? This is what you have to do. Over here, courage and all that doesn’t work. (A: Yeah) Smarts, it takes smarts. Courage, I’ve got plenty of that to spare, but there’s a time to keep, lean back and just start thinking, you know, what’s the right move. (A: Uh huh) And he did it boy. I got to give him credit. But the, let the people, mill workers start it. Now we go to uh (--)  

A: Uh, well I wanted to ask you another question.

L: Good ahead! Ask what you want!

A: Uh, about Lowell. Now you say during, now this is during the late 40’s, 50’s (--)  

L: No, you’re talking about, you’re talking about the 50’s now.

A: 50’s now.

L: Because we were in uh, on the uh, (--)  

**Tape I, side I ends**  
**Tape I, side II begins**  

L: … on the uh, on this?

A: Yup, yup. So you’re saying, unlike most of the rest of the country, which had economic prosperity, Lowell (L: down the shute) down the shute. Yeah.

L: Well there wasn’t too much prosperity at that time, you see.

A: Aren’t the 50’s suppose to be America’s acme like?
L: No. (A: No?) Not in my book. In fact, when I was in Florida in '60, '61, it was a depression area over there too. (A: Yeah?) Very depressed in Florida. But uh, in Lowell, very bad situation at that time. Unbelievable. You walk down the street, and you saw those people, the way they walked. [Comment unclear] there was no drive, nothing. [Unclear] you were looking for something you can’t find in town. You got a family to support. Bring soup to the kids. You’re a proud man; you’re a good worker. Why should this fall on me? What the hell, what did I do to deserve this, you know? (A: yeah)

A: Do you think Lowell was ahead of the game as far as being a, well you know, this industrial system that we had has kind of changed now towards, geared towards the services [unclear]?

L: Yeah, well that’s what this did here? The purpose of the Industrial Commission was to bring a different type of industry, different type of industries here. Electronics and all that. (A: Yeah) I thought them machines shops would turn wheels. Machine shops was an industry on wheels. (A: Yeah) They could pick up and leave anytime; they didn’t own the machinery. They were owned by United Machinery, they only rented that. (A: Yeah) See, but the textile mills were going down. (A: Yeah) And nobody wanted to work in the mills because the labor, the pay was so cheap. (A: Yeah) See, very very cheap pay there. In fact when I organized the Merrimack Mill in 1941, the minimum was .32 cents, and after the strike I wouldn’t let them go until .40 cents, .40 cent minimum. The .40 cents on the medium jobs was even more than the medium jobs, the .40 cents an hour. (A: Yeah) So if you look, if you look at the labor statistics it shows the increase in the minimum pay, you will find that from then until after the war it wasn’t even .40 cents. It was .32. (A: Yeah) And I got them before the war, in 1941, the uh, .40 cent minimum. I fought hard for that, and a weeks vacation. [Unclear] repulsive. And I told them, you’re going to have a weeks vacation with pay, that you have to make so many hours. You know the first contracts you have to work so many hours. (A: Umhm) If you work less you get less. (A: Umhm) And it, beginning the week of the Fourth of July. They said, “well what are you talking about? They said, Louie, you did good. The union there we’re going to get some more money, but the boss is going to pay us for not working?” “He’s going to pay you, he’s going to like it, he’s going to close the plant, and he’s going to have vacation.” Would you believe that they didn’t believe it?

A: [Laughs]

L: You know when they believed it, most of them? (A: When?) When their boss said, “this plant will be closed for the week of July for the people vacation.” When they told them, “go home, no work this week.” That’s when they believed that they had that week’s vacation. You have no idea what I went through for those people.

A: You want to uh, you want to talk a little bit about the Merrimack?

L: Well the Merrimack, gee, the Merrimack. Man oh man!
A: Who owned the Merrimack back then?

L: Well I knew that Fox was the Superintendent. (A: Umhm) And uh, it was the Yankee group.

A: Yeah, but not, not the Ziskands guys.

L: No, no, no, Ziskand came afterwards. No, the Ziskands came afterwards. (A: Yeah) Ziskand was a fellow that used to buy machinery you know, from (A: junk, junk) yeah, junk machinery to sell to South America and all over, you see. And he had his yacht out in, in uh, Rhode Island there. And he wanted the people to wear those, he had sneakers for them to wear. I found out from the manufacturers over there.

A: What do you mean they wanted to wear sneakers?

L: He had the sneakers there for them when they went in his boat. (A: Oh yeah) Anyway, a good guy from Lowell. (A: Yeah) But uh, never organized from a hundred years. (A: Umhm) [Unclear], Yankee, English background, the good jobs you know. (A: Uh huh) The Greeks and the Poles and the rest, down the dye house, sweat, sweat jobs you know. Dirty jobs. The Greek girls, well that’s spinning room, and some in the weaving for the men. The loom fixers, primarily Belgium to French, sneaked a few Greeks in there. (A: Yeah) But in the opening bale rooms, and the card room and all that, that’s where they had to go. All the goddamn cotton was coming all over. They had the windows closed, you couldn’t even breath. That’s where they put some of the French women, Greeks, Poles and uh, different nationalities, Portuguese, you see? (A: Yeah) I changed that boy after the union went in [unclear].

A: How did you change it?

L: Discrimination. I charged discrimination. (A: yeah) I want you to put girls in the cloth room. And I, I said, we got the Irish girls, and the English girls and I says, and they get the [unclear], and they have that thing and they have to take the light, bababababa. I says, it’s a darn nice clean job. I said, very nice. But the Greek girls graduate from high school, they have more education than all of them over there. You tell them to go in the spinning room and the sweat places. (A: Yeah) I straightened that out boy afterwards. You don’t know what I did for them. (A: Yeah) In fact, when I made the inspection for the mill at that time, they said, “you can’t come in to inspect the plant.” I said, “oh, I’m going to come and inspect the working conditions. (A: Uh huh) I says you, evidently you don’t know how to read the contract. I said, the contract says, [few words unclear] conditions of employment. And that’s me, condition. I’m going to check and see if you have the conditions.” (A: Yeah) So when I went around the plant, in the velvet cutting room, the corduroy, the uh, all the departments, then I went in the card room, I mean into the cloth, cloth inspection room. I’m talking about 100 girls. I look, here they’re suppose to work with them, there’s nothing in back. They’re broken. The chairs were broken and there was nothing there for the girls to lean. (A: Yeah) I said, “since when do we, do we have the this?” “We tell them and they don’t fix anything.” I
said, “yeah, I’ll take care of that.” So after the inspection I went into the, Mr. Russell. A Yale, Yale boy, good guy, he was a good guy. Knowledgeable. He tried to do, but he had you know, old standards of Yale. You know, that uh, “why are you interested in them? They don’t mean anything” he said. You know, the workers. (A: Yeah) The peasants and the pee-ons. But he didn’t think that way, but he couldn’t express himself to liberally [unclear]. So when the inspection was over I said, “very nice. I said, some rooms, every morning it changes. But there’s one thing you can attend to immediately, and correct it. I said, chairs for the girls in the cloth room. When are you going to get them?” “Well you can get them right now he says, if you call up the chairs.” “Well uh, no, no, no, no. I said, date and time, when?” Well, they said, “we’re kind of off(--)” I says, “when are you going to get the chairs, because you’ll come some morning and there won’t be anybody working there, inspecting.” “You know, we’ll get it Friday.” Let’s say today was Tuesday. (A: Umhm) Okay, I’ll hold you to your word. Wait for Friday. We’ll have a hundred chairs then. I checked. They had the chairs I think in Lawrence some place.

A: Did they? Yeah.

L: I checked. I called up. What do you think? I’m going to be ahead of him. You’re going to tell me, well we tried and we couldn’t find it. And I don’t know. Well I know that they have them there. So I found out they had them in Lawrence, those kind of chairs.

A: Now who did you call? Like another worker, or the shop steward?

L: No, no, I called up you know, you’re on the telephone you see, and I called over there. I called somebody that told me here’s the number, call these people, I think they have it. You know, when you call for something that you need, they refer you to somebody else. So I knew they had those chairs available. I says, “a hundred or more.” He says, “two hundred if you want.” Because you still run those um, when they have affairs, you know they need chairs that they rent them. (A: Yup) I told them when Friday comes, I think I said the time, Friday, let’s say 12:00, they got to be there by 12:00. I said, “if they’re not there, to the steward, I said I want you to assert your leadership, they’re going to respect you afterwards. You got to tell them nobody works now. We stop until they bring the chairs.” Gee! The cloth room, they all stopped!

A: Because there was no chairs?

L: Yeah, because the new chairs didn’t come in. (A: Yup) They had the chairs, but the chairs didn’t have any backs. Oh, you can’t do it; we’re going to fire you. The steward said, “you can’t fire us. There’s a condition of employment. You’re supposed to bring more chairs. We gave you five days, that’s why my business agent told me. You better talk to him. My order is at 12:00 we stop. You go and see him.” He tried to reach me. I was unavailable. I was unavailable. I called them, I said, “what did they say?” We don’t know, he’s someplace. We can’t find him. We called twenty places. [Comment
unclear], because that’s where they pick them up, clean them, and they’d send the cloth out to collect the money.

A: Yup, like the final process.

L: That’s it, final process! So I wasn’t available. So they’re looking for me, they’re looking for me. So I called up and they said, “look, they’re going to give him a chance he says, and make me [unclear] to go there to finish off the work.” I said, “they’re not going to do a God damn thing. You’re not going to do a thing. Don’t even lift one [unclear] I said, until sure they put the chairs.” (A: chuckles) They heard them during a Saturday, or Friday night till Saturday morning, all brand new chairs, okay. Following that I had always a special monthly meeting, or weekly meeting with the cloth room. They used to walk from there right to the hall, 100 strong. Right after work they used to come.

A: Where was the hall at?

L: On Moody Street (A: yeah). The French, there’s a French Club and we used to have upstairs. We used to meet.

A: It’s gone now huh? The building?

L: I don’t think so.

A: Which, which is it?

L: It is on uh?

A: The Past Temps Club?

L: On Moody Street.

A: The Past Temps?

L: Yeah, they had downstairs (--) Is it gone?

A: I don’t know. Is it on the corner of Cabot and Moody? About half way up Moody?

L: Half way, yeah, yeah. (A: All right) And uh, that’s where we had our first office there, (A: yeah) up there, upstairs in the hall. So they got there, they all stopped in because they realizes what the union was, you know? (A: Uh huh) And uh, then we made more headway, you see, because we didn’t have maintenance and membership to [check?] off at that time.

A: What’s that?
L: Well maintenance and membership, they take the dues from the check that they pay you. None of that, you see, first time. I said, [unclear] I want to build a strong membership, you see?

A: Yeah.

L: I wasn’t worried about that, because I know what I could do there, see? I built a leadership before, see. You see, a mistake people make in organizing, we could send a business agent, or organizer, and he signs cards you know, and if eighty people worked in a plant, they signed seventy. But they don’t have twenty leaders. Like mother, like mother hen could be [unclear], but he says, he directs them you see? He says, “look, we’re going to do this together no matter what anybody says, we’re going to stick together. We’re going to go and vote for the union.” Well the minute the propaganda, you know, the company started saying this, this and that, about the union. Anybody, anybody, if the union wasn’t going to leave, we’re going to close shop and everything. Well I’ll be here. There’s no time to organize. So I went down to sign everybody a card. I come because of a friend, Ali, who is a close friend of yours, close that you can rely own, that you can depend, that you can, that he will do what you’re telling him. [Unclear] He says, “well I know two that I can talk with.” “Just bring those two in.” So we sit down, indoctrination now. Cell operation, see.

A: Communist ideas [unclear].

L: Well that’s organization, see? (A: Yeah, yeah) It’s like Stalin in his organization program. And this is Trotsky, see. (A: Yeah) Says if we cannot allow those who are ahead, smarter, to advance too fast, you see, if the others are slacking behind. We’ve got to move together. Let them be ahead, but the others are going to, never going to lag behind any further. He said, they’re going to move, see. Well the same thing here. You cannot allow some people, because they’re enthusiastic, go and destroy the whole organization here. So I said I would sit down with them, and with you, and the other two and talk. This is the reason. Quiet, don’t talk to anybody about the union, except [comment unclear]. Who do you know? Is it the two that you brought in? They said, “Bill, who do you know that you can trust your friend that works over there?” You don’t know, see? This is another friend of his, right? He says, “well I know Joe, I can depend on him and trust him. He’ll do, you know if I tell him look, we’re going to go together, he’s on.” And the other guy, Bill over there, “you, you know somebody that you can trust?” “I know two, they’ll be with me together.” Now what do we have? Well, two, three, so six now. Okay. From one, three to six. But these are not just members to sign cards, these are leaders now. We’re indoctrinating them to become leaders. How he must be always in control of that group, be close, they got to exchange ideas. If anybody goes to them and says look, we’re going to sign you for another year. Say no, no, we have a union. You’re only trying to obstruct that chance to get a union, you understand, trying to get (--) So before you know it we have our leadership corps, with one, with three, I place charge three people, three people according to his ability, you know. Five, and somebody ten. Nobody knows him. The company doesn’t know anything. He petitioned for election. We have now have instructed him before, what propaganda
they’re going to come with, see. (A: Yeah) This is what they’re going to say. They’re going to take, they’re going to close the shop. And if anybody, they catch anybody they’re going to fire them. And all the bad things about the union, you know, they’re crooks, they’re this and that. They want to take your money and they don’t do anything for you, and all that. (A: Yeah, yeah) Then you explain what the union does. (A: Yeah) That if you don’t have a union, you don’t have a job. (A: Right) If the boss says, you don’t have a union, the boss comes to you and says, “it’s a Friday, it’s your last day, you know, thank you for working for us.” “But I’ve been working here for five years, and I got married two years ago, and I bought a house and I have a child. Did I do anything wrong? Is my work no good? “No.” “No?” “While we worked did we pay you? Yeah. Well we don’t need you anymore.” Why? Because my boss’ nephew needs a job and he’s going to fire you with the kids and lower worker, he’s going to put him in. He can’t do it with the union, because with the union you’ve got to have good cause. And I mean good cause, you see. It doesn’t mean that the boss can’t fire you if you do bad work and you’re no good. He can fire you, because the union doesn’t stop that you see. (A: Right. Right) See if the boss is right, and you’re wrong, you can’t make a right wrong and a wrong right you see. We don’t want, I think the leaders does not want to run the plant. That’s a boss’ plant. A good boss who runs his plant, and he pays, and he works under the conditions agreed upon, he’s never bothered by the union. Well what do you think a union leader wants? Trouble? A business agent to go in and have troubles and headaches. If everything works smoothe it’s better for him. (A: Yup)

A wrong impression that people have about the union, see, the wrong impression. Absolutely. If they live up to the contract there’s no problem. When they start getting shortcuts and all that, and knock the people out, you know. And then by attrition don’t hire anymore people, and they double the work, they’ve got to be very careful you see, without you noticing at first. Until you start getting tired. I’m exhausted [few words unclear].

A: They uh, (--) Now did you guys (--) Why did you guys target the Merrimack for unionization?

L: Well I didn’t target anything. You know what happened? (A: What?) I was working the shoe shop at the Lowell Shoe on (A: Jackson Street?) Jackson Street, Appleton, Jack, no Appleton I think, isn’t it Jackson?

A: Yeah, Jackson Street.

L: Okay. And um, the next thing I knew, well I was in the coffeehouse drinking coffee with the old timers. I used to go there and treat them, you know. (A: Umhm) I had a good job. We worked in teams, you see. If I left, the team was broken up, because you have assembler, pullover, two lasts, two bed lasts. That was the last thing, see. Two, four, six. Anyways, I’m trying to tell you, because I’m going to tell you what happened afterward. So now when I go there they said, “can you write the (--) He says, we’re going to go in the little office, the loom fixers, the weavers and a couple of spinners.” They were the guys I knew, you see.
A: This is from the Merrimack?

L: From the Merrimack. (A: Yeah) I’m now in the shoe workers union. I’m, I’m the Chief Steward and the Head of the union there. And it was the last organized union in the city of Lowell. (A: Really?) The Lowell Shoe, yeah, the one I was working. So, Mr., what the hell was his name? The brother is good people, Jewish boys. Anyway, they said, “we want to go and uh, asked to have a union, because the loom fixers had an organization, but not recognized union, you know. A club, you know.

A: Uh huh, right.

L: So they cater to them, and they ain’t going to have to bother with anybody else, right? (A: Yeah) They took care of the loom fixers, the hell with the rest, see? So they said, “we want, you know want to demand, want to make demands.” So I said, “well get some paper and I’ll write it on for you, see?” [Few words unclear] You know that oil paper?

A: The oil paper?

L: That [words unclear] and they wrap it. They went next door. I started in, I took the pencil. [Comment unclear] [Words unclear] spinning, weaving, request that you recognize the union and the collective bargaining agents for all workers employed in these divisions, and we request the following demands, you know, from the company. [Unclear] and wages, and this and that. Group Insurance.

A: No firings without cause.

L: Yeah, that’s right. Yeah. We’re going to have grievance procedure, etc. The whole thing. Not too much at first, you see. I have to do it so these guys could understand, because they had, knew nothing about the unions. (A: Yeah) So I said, don’t bring that in there! And the leaders were mad. I says, have somebody pack it nicely, you know. [Both laughing]. Well anyways I’m at work. The next thing I know, they went in the office from what I was told now, and I was no participant, so I can’t tell you. They walked in to see Mr. Fox, who was the Master to the Superintendent. He was the Superintendent to the Merrimack Mills, like a Resident Manager, he was in charge. (A: Yeah) They said, you know, “we are from... and we wanted to present” (--) “Get out! He said, all of you, you’re fired! All of you! Fired [unclear], all of you!” I knew these people here, you see. They were out one week, two weeks, they were going over there to sign. Nobody paid attention, they were all walking in the place. Really, no strike, no union, what? There were a handful. 2000, 2 ½ thousand people, in the end there was twenty-five, thirty. And they were timid, you know, over there they were afraid. So they came to me during lunchtime. [Unclear], because we lived on Broadway, the corner of Broadway and Suffolk. (A: Uh huh) So, what the hell, I used to walk right across the track and I was at the Lowell Shoe. (A: Yeah) It was nice, you know, we had the one house. Nice, the house, sit down and relax. Bill comes, he was a weaver.
A: What was his name?

L: Bill uh, I don’t remember his name. I know his name like I know mine, but there’s so many names, you see. In fact, today I was talking, we’re going back, back to names that we knew for forty years, fifty years ago, and they came like that, but this will come too. He says, “we’re going to have a meeting at the auditorium. He said, we want you to come and speak there.” I says, “when? I’m working? I said, I got a good job making forty, fifty dollars a week.” That was a lot of money then, you see. I said, “and I’m the only guy working practically in the family.” Yeah, you know, because the shoe shops work was seasonal. They didn’t work 52 weeks a year. If you worked 30 you were lucky. You see. (A: Yeah) Yeah, seasonal. (A: Wow) So they said, “we’d like to have you there.” And he told me how everybody was fired. I said, “let me think it over. I’ll let you know. When is the meeting?” He told me. “Okay”, I said. So after he left I’m thinking it over. I said, these people I know, they’re going to be out. How the hell am I going to look at them if I don’t make an effort to help, you see. Although it’s none of my business, you know what I mean. I had never seen the inside of a textile mill in my life, see? I said, I’m going to help my (--) Changed, washed up, changed and put my suit on.

A: Oh, it was the same day?

L: Same day in the afternoon! Twelve to one, you see? (A: Yeah) Washed up, changed. I walked up and the owner was there. Onstein? Onsteins were the ones that owned the (A: the Merrimack?) no, the shoe, the shoe shop that I was working. (A: yeah) I, after a second there I went to see him. So I (--) Nobody knew, because I was having the grievance, you know, he knew that I could stop the plant just like that, you see. If I had the whistle, I put the whistle, everybody stopped. And I’d walk up, but everyday when I worked in the shop I would walked up, “boys, is everything okay. Is any, you let me know if there’s any problem. All right? “ I took care of my boys, no question. I was, I was the leader, but protective leadership. (A: Yeah) Yeah, I’d go to everybody, make sure everybody was all right. I said, “this is the situation. There’s friends of mine involved. They went in to discuss negotiations for a union, and he started to ask if it is a violation of the labor laws. But there were no labor laws in that time. So I said, and they asked me to go and speak. I said, I know that my team is going to suffer, but I’ll appreciate this.” He says to me, “look, this is the opportunity, go ahead. He says, anyplace I have a shop you can come and work. He says, as far as I’m concerned go ahead, he says, do your thing.” So he ends up a good man to say that. (A: Umhm) Somebody would say good ridance to this guy here, you know. [Unclear – laughing]

But I was diplomatic in my moves. I wasn’t uh, I was rough and tough sometimes, but I was as diplomatic as you would have to be, you see?

So I walked in the place, the auditorium was filling in. People that were trying to get out, to get into to someplace to sit at that time, because many of them were unemployed, you see. (A: Yeah) Yeah, but even from the mills were coming in. There was a pretty good crowd. [Comment unclear] Noise, you couldn’t hear yourself, anybody. So I went up there, I said boy, they introduced me to the guys, good. So one spoke, another one spoke. I couldn’t hear, nobody could hear with that noise there. There were a lot of people
talking in the auditorium. You don’t hear voices, it’s like a roar. (A: Yeah) If you notice, if you, do you remember what it was now? (A: Yeah) I said, “what am I” (--) I told them at the shop, I said, “what am I going to talk over here?” [Comment unclear] I said, “who am I going to speak to?” “You got to speak.” Okay, “well now we have Mr. Vergados who is the leader in the Shoe Workers Union to speak to you here.” I went up on stage, you had to be dramatic sometimes. You had to put the big showmanship. I just was like that from one end to the other. Every time I turned my head the noise was getting lower, and lower, and lower until you could hear a pin. And then I opened up on the bosses. Jesus, I guess I give it to them. Down went the bosses! What have you got to lose? Your not getting paid the top wage. No vacations with pay. No holidays. You’re like slaves, less than slaves. I said, “this….

Tape I ends
Tape II side I begins

L: [All I know is this is] the United States of America, the land of freedom and liberty, where people can express themselves. Can’t you express yourself to the boss, you know? Can you tell the boss when you think he’s wrong, to tell him that you’re right? He’d fire you, out from the ear! But if you have a union, ha ha, he can’t do it, because the contract would say “only for just cause”. And if the person is right he can challenge it through his steward. (A: Umhm) And sit down and take it before the Head of the company. So you have no rights at all. What are you fighting for? I mean, you have no job. If the boss wants to fire someone, can he fire you? Yes! He can’t fire you if he has a union, just because he wants. And then low wages, low wages. [Unclear] No dignity you, you have no dignity. You have no dignity. When you go home, you are a young man, or young woman, you’re yourself, you’re free. When you sleep six or eight hours, you’re free, but when you go in the mill you’re a slave. Do you know what a slave is? That’s what you are. [He creates a commotion] (A: laughs) So I said, “okay boss.” [More commotion] I says, “wait, we’re going to meet.” So they got together with him. So we met at the Lowell-Nashua Boulevard at one of the restaurants, after the meeting. (A: Yeah) 7:30, 8:00 at night. So they said, “we want you to, you know, to leave the strike. It looks like you’re having a strike.” I said, “where, in the picket line?” “You’re going to be over there, I says, and you’re going to stop everybody that goes in the mill. Two thousand, we’re going to stop them. Don’t let them go in. Tell them there’s a strike on. Go back home. And if anybody gives you any trouble, avoid them at the time, and you signal me and I’ll handle them. (A: Uh huh) And I’m going to be at the, at the bridge, you know where the high school is, the little bridge that goes, that went over to go to the Merrimack Mills?”

A: Yeah. What was it, a [thin?] bridge?

L: Yeah, the landscape blends right in to the Merrimack, on the side when they went in the gate afterwards. I’m going to take that. If they would come from Belvidere you know, in that area [few words unclear].
A: Now who was that? Like the Irish women?

L: Irish women, the Yankees and some French, you know, high society, they thought because they had the good jobs, you know? And I wasn’t going to let them get in, get by there, I don’t care what happens. If I have to tell them, I said, I’m going to throw you in the canal, you know. They start coming in, I told them, “don’t let anybody go by. Stop them. You know, push and tell them, because there’s no, there’s a strike, there’s nobody working today.” So they’re, they’re coming at us still. Don’t get any further. There’s a strike so nobody works today. [Few words unclear] so nobody goes in. And then a couple of others. A couple of [rappers] you know, that were there, you know, the people who were suppose to be to help you with the strike. When they got tired saying, “no, get out of there! We’re having a strike, don’t you understand that. We want to get you more money. We’re working like slaves you know, and all that!” [Words unclear] (A: Yeah) In the meantime, [unclear] see. Second, third day, on the second day not even a stray cat could go through there. Close the plant completely.

A: Now what, what month and year was this?

L: This was in, let me see, Spring I guess it was, because of good weather. (A: Yeah) It was good weather at the time.

A: So spring of 19?

L: ’41?

A: ’41?

L: No, ’40. (A: ’40) ’40, yeah, because ’41 was when (--) No, no, ’41!

A: ’41.

L: ’41.

A: Right before the war started.

L: Before the war, see. So uh, because I was, I was dragged in, in July of ’42, even though General Hershey, who was the Head of the Draft Board said, “all labor leaders should be given serious consideration for determent.” What determent!

A: Who was in charge of the local draft board around here?

L: The politicians there, that you can buy them tomato juice. [Both chuckle] See I was organizing, after I had organized the Merrimack Mill I was making inroads into the Boott. (A: Yeah) You know, Mrs. Rogers was uh (--) (A: Yeah) And so I said to them, “look, I know my duty” I says. “Well I’m not going to go. I’m going I said, in the
shadow of Concord and Lexington. I know what I’m suppose to do.” I said, “but these people knew to sign the first contract, they want to negotiate the second contract. And then I said, I’ll volunteer myself. You don’t have to drag me in.” (A: Umhm) Walked right through. Not only that, then they had me earmarked (A for?) for the Pacific, which meant that I couldn’t even get a furlough. (A: Yeah) You know, everybody got a furlough before they left. Me, no. They said, “no you can’t.” Earmarked. Well anyways, the hell with it. So they said, “what are we going to do now?” I said, “we’re going to have the picket line all the time there.” I said, we’re going to have meetings at the auditorium and tell them the progress, see. You’re going to establish and involve the whole city. (A: Yeah) Involve the whole city?

A: With the other unions around town?

L: No, no. To contribute, to contribute to the cause, because it was their cause too. They don’t work; you’re going to die. They’re not going to buy your merchandise. So you got to help. You, the business people in Lowell, Department Stores who rely on these people’s pay to help, to make a living and to own a business, need you now. What are you going to do? And I established committees. We went to the buildings, Department Stores, and they gave us. (A: Yeah?) Oh yeah, everybody contributed.

A: So like Gagnon’s, and (--) 

L: Gagnon’s, yeah, Gagnon’s was very good. Gagnon’s. Pollard’s, all of them. (A: Yeah) So um, and then we arranged for Welfare for some people you know, that need it. (A: Umhm) After we fought it out, then comes the negotiations. We had Roakes from Boston, the biggest law firm.

A: What is it called?

L: Roakes and what else? Big big law firm. And they had a guy there, sharp, oh yeah! Man was he sharp.

A: Now did you (--) Who was doing the negotiating?

L: I usually doing the negotiating.

A: You were?

L: Yeah. [Unclear] the whole thing. So I found out that somebody [phone rings] (--)

A: … for negotiation.

L: Yeah, somebody was stool pigeon. (A: Yeah!) I used to prepare the, the people, the strategies that I was going to use in, in my argument, see. (A: Yeah) And uh, that I wasn’t making [unclear] you know, which I, you know, making believe that I’m going that way, but I mean looking for somebody else’s daughter, see. Because, you know, not
uh, used to that type of argument you [few words unclear]. She said, they would misconstrued what my objection was. The poor people, you know, I’d have to get them educated, and find out [unclear] see how, how you lead the guy to do something that you want. Otherwise [comment unclear] down the river, see? The guy would say, well what do you want me to give? Well you’re taking everything; you’re not giving us anything. How much can I give you, which I’m not giving him anything? All right? So I tried to make him look good with the people he represents, and he’s knocking me out, you see, and he’s winning so many things for the company. In which he knows, being a pro, that I’m building him up so he could concede some points to me. Make him look good that he’s worth the money you’re paying him. [Words unclear] tricks that you have to use.

A: Now how did you learn those kinds of tricks? By reading books pretty much?

L: Of course I read a lot of books. I read the best minds. (A: yeah) Oh yeah, I only believe in reading the best minds. But of course I’d use my own inspiration and uh, myself, what I thought would be suitable and successful. See, there’s so many tricks that you have to, into the right things to do see, if you want to be successful. Little things that people, that people don’t do, and you say to yourself, what’s the matter with them? Don’t they have any common sense? It only requires common sense. When I was in Boston, did American Federation of State, County, Municipal Employees. I was, from my union, but my leader told me, he said, “you know about this, you will have to take political action getting the members together, how many [unclear] and organize. How I’m going to get them out to do the work without losing them days. He just told me, well because they’re doing their duty, see, as an organization. Had to make sure it don’t oppose with having the workers say their spiel. They should tell the papers they’re going in and then be polite, and quiet. We’ll have to do it. A lot of people don’t know what to do, what to say. So as I told you, [unclear] using skills that you have. For instance, I talked with John Prevost, he was the Director of Personnel. [Recorder shuts down for a moment] You know, you had to go through her to get the Charter. Now she was a good girl, she did some favors for Charles.

A: For Charlie?

L: My son.

A: Yeah.

L: A big favor. I didn’t think she could do it. So she saw me one day, I was a little depressed. I said, well it’s about Charles, I says, this and that. She told me, “why don’t you try me? Maybe I can help. Why don’t you try me?” So I told her. She says, “what!” Picks up the phone, twenty thousand-dollar favor, all right. Picks up, [makes sound]. He says, “I’ll reverse the decision. In two days he’s going to receive the answer, yes.” (A: Yeah) I said to him, “now Charles, this friend, this is a friend for life. See when you, if you see her leaving sometimes the office, you don’t do it direct, she’s gone now. Go to Fanny Farmers right across the street, buy a box of chocolates, put a note “dropped in to see if you were at the office to say hello, but have a good day!” (A:
Yeah) That’s all. All right. [Unclear] The Mayor, the Mayor of Lowell, the Mayor of Boston, White, who was a friend, you know, smart, very sharp, but the day to day work was done by Sullivan, who was the Vice-Mayor. (A: Yeah) Very abled guy. Nice fellow too. I told him, “look, I want you to have $1500. in your pockets all the time. You see somebody, treat him, because there is a different relationship with people that you know, you say hello, you meet them, and all that. Then when you break bread with them (--) When you see them go sometimes, you walk, you’re walking down [unclear], “Mr. Sullivan, I want to treat you to a little lunch, because I appreciate what you’ve done for me.” Don’t, don’t refuse me, you know. Like I said, when you’re sitting down you develop a different relationship my friend, when you break bread [unclear]. (A: Yeah. Yeah.) It’s not as if “hello”, and all that bah, bah, bah, and all that bologna, you see.

A: Yeah, you have to get personal with them, huh?

L: When you sit down, you break bread, it’s a different relationship. I tried to educate them, but they can’t accept that, you see. It doesn’t [unclear], the value of that. I think he’s beginning to learn now, because I developed those things when I was nineteen, and twenty, and twenty-one, because I knew that that’s the way.

A: Yeah. So out of those negotiations with the Merrimack people, then you formed a great union, huh?

L: And a good union, strong union. Oh yeah! In fact uh, (--) 

A: Now was that a closed shop?

L: No, that’s what I’m trying to tell you, an opened shop! But the first year for me it was good, because it allowed me to develop a strong membership (A: yeah) based on the service that we gave them, and the relationship, because if you were collecting the dues, you didn’t know the people that’s there. If they come to the meetings, or if they didn’t, you wouldn’t know. This way you came closer to them, because you created situations where there would be grievances see, so you could be in an actual department. (A: Yeah) I tell you what department you work in, there won’t be any problem there. You don’t have too many members in your department now. Why don’t you create the situation, I’ll tell you what to do to create a grievance.

A: So what would be an example of that?

L: Well let’s say now here in the dry finishing, (A: umhm) we don’t have, there’s a certain group, Spanish group there that is not in the union. Well nobody has developed the leadership to get them in. (A: Umhm) So you tell me, jeez, I’m the only one or two. I says, [unclear]. Is that right? Yeah. So I ask you questions, you know, what kind of people are they? Are they good people? Are they married, single? Drink, [unclear]. I’d ask all those questions, you know? And after I asked the questions, he gave me the answers. Then we’d sit down with a plan. If the boss reacts to one of the nice [unclear], who would, by taking a side would give you backing, because it would back it up you
know, because the [unclear]. Then you become the leader of a whole group, see. You’re supporting here, you’re supporting them too at the same time, and the right cause. So I walk up to you and say “look, wait a second. I’ll make you the steward.” Next time they come and he’s the steward of the [unclear] you bring up the grievance. They have plans to come in.

A: What would be the grievance that they would come up with?

L: Well you create the grievance that you think is not right. It doesn’t have to be a real big grievance. The boss goes, and he was talking to her in a way that was not polite. He was not polite to the lady, you see. So you say, “look, he used rough language and we don’t want that type of language. We want him to retain his dignity, and no boss has a right to say that.” You can ask, you can tell a person you did this wrong in a nice way, and he’s not using the proper approach, you see. Then we win the case, then we win the membership. They look to you as a leader now. (A: Umhm) In the meantime we don’t want to irritate the boss too, huh? So what do I do? I come in here, “is there anything that we can do for you?” To the boss, you know. We didn’t mean to hurt you in the grievance, but these things we can’t tolerate, you know. We might as well [unclear] we don’t have a union, you know? (A: Yup) Because is we allow, not you, because I know you didn’t mean it, because you’re a good man from what I hear. I never heard anything, but that’s what I tell him, that you are a nice man and you must have reacted you know, in a way that’s not normal for you. Blah, blah, blah! And then we become friends and you have any easy (--) Because he’s got to know that I backed you up, you see, and as a steward. So we make his acquaintance. We make it easy for him, because we’re not going to knock him off, see. In the meantime I want him to respect you as representing the workers. “You’re not to bother the girls, you know, be polite, be a gentleman.” That’s how you do things, you know. I want to build it that way, you see. (A: Umhm) Core, have core strength within each group. And once you have that strength nobody can touch you. The whistle, the whistle, that means if you hear the whistle, stop! Everything stops. Go and run your plant. You own it, go and run it. Let the bosses run it. They can’t run it. See. Like I told one steward one time, he said to me, “you know, there’s a Greek [sounds like carpenter- unclear].” He couldn’t speak English too well, but he knew right from wrong. He says to me, “the boss don’t give me [unclear]… He says, the boss don’t give me the respect, he says, that I should have.” I says, “what did he do, you tell me?” I says, “who the hell is he, he’s nobody? You control the workers, you’re in charge, you put, you put the whistle [unclear].” The boss can’t do that. If the boss did it they’d throw him out of the job.” [Comment unclear] because he can’t speak English too well, he said, but he knows what he’s talking. And the boss tries to make fun of him, you know, he’s not, doesn’t respect him. I believed it, but I asked another one. [Comment unclear]. Another one.

A: To back yourself up, right?

L: Oh yeah. No, to get the right information. I don’t need no backing, they need the backing, because that’s with a whistle I close the whole plant up, see? So I say, what do you think, is that true or not? What do you think? Yeah. Okay, I’ll handle him. I went
back, took him out to the bathroom. I says, “who’s the Superintendent of that, of that department?” “[Name unclear]”. “Would you please bring him down here? See we, for the good of the plant, I says, because I don’t want no trouble, you see.” He came down, “hello Lou”, and everything. [Unclear]. I said, we have a little problem, and I don’t want to get into any big (--) And I told him what they told me about the boss. I said, “look, if a man can’t speak English too well, and he’s intelligent, in Chinese, in Japanese, in German, in Greek, in Polish, does that mean he’s stupid because he speaks broken English?” “No, he says, no.” “This is what happened. Will you please tell that boss of yours to quiet down and stop trying to ridicule the guy, because the next time he does it I’ve given orders, when the whistle blows everybody stops in that department. They going to let your boss go and do the work.” He never bothered the men anymore. (A: No?) No, are you kidding! Most of the people would like the supervisor and all that, but there are some screwballs there, you see, and the boss you know, what are you going to do and all that. (A: Yeah) And in those days they used to have sidelines, you know.

A: What’s sidelines?

L: Well the supervisor could be selling shoes on the side, you know, for some company there, and he’d expect you and those that worked to buy shoes from him. (A: Yeah?) Oh yeah! If he, if he worked let’s say on Saturdays, you know, used to be Saturdays would be a big days in Lowell in those days you know, in downtown. They used to come from New Hampshire, from all over. Well he would expect you to buy, you know, a pair of whatever he was selling, that he was, in what department he was working for, to one of the department stores. He expects you to go there and trade, or else he can make it hard for you on the job. I stopped that. Boy, that’s the first thing I stopped. They did that. Or he’d go and work in a grocery store [unclear], then they expect you to drop in there with your family and buy, and buy there to show him, because he was getting a percentage of the money that was being spent by people that worked under him. Well there was a lot of that going on. And I was aware of it, and I was told about it. And I said I’ll take care of that too.

A: Yeah. Wow. Now the skills that you come up with as a union guy, I know you were the, went to the Clerk of the Demothenes Democratic Club? (L: Yeah) During the 30’s?

L: Yeah. How did you find that out?

A: Uh, the newspaper.

L: Is that right!

A: I got (--) You know I forgot to bring it tonight. I have a picture of Louis Kolofolios, and your name is mentioned a couple of times as reading the minutes and stuff like that.

L: Yeah. I wasn’t even a voter then. (A: Why?) I wasn’t even a voter. I was active in the political club. (A: Yeah?) Yeah, I wasn’t even twenty-one. (A: No?) No.
A: How did you get involved in that group?

L: Well I was active, that’s why. I like politics. (A: Yeah?) Oh yeah. For sure.

A: You weren’t like a regular eighteen-year-old.

L: No, no way. In fact, you know, this is not bragging. I’m just telling you what experiences you know, that happened, you see. (A: Yeah) When I went to the Berkshires as Director of the Union, I covered a big area, 52 cities and towns, you know. Some uh, what the hell is that town there over the bridge, up to (A: North Hampton?) Oh no, up to, up to [town name unclear], which borders out the uh, the Vermont line, (A: yup), across to [Stevenstown], New York line, and down almost to Connecticut and up, not including Springfield or the others. The whole Berkshire with the textile design, everything, that was my area. Pittsfield and all the, 62, North Adams, Adams, Williamstown. And um, my job was to organize them into political entity, because their minds were dwarfed by the Republicans. They were workers, and they were Republicans. See. They didn’t think, because they weren’t politically motivated, and whatever they told them they believed it. You see, you had, in Adams you had Polish and Irish and French. (A: Yeah) In uh, in North Adams you had French-Canadians and Yankee mixture. And of course in Williamstown you had a small variety of the Yankee/English groups. So you know with them I had to start organizing immediately because there was a 48th election, when Truman ran against Dewey. And they had a couple of good Treasurers there.

A: Who did? The Republicans?

L: The union.

A: Oh, the union did.

L: But they never spent money for political action. So I had to work to get everybody involved. The first thing I did was to create a leader program for [few words unclear] with solidarity through ever, you know, the theme song. And then get all the talent that we had and have them the first Sunday of each month, you know, to participate. At the same time speak from Boston, Democratic speakers, the Labor Leaders to come and speak. (A: Umhm) Uh, the first time they had it. Then we had movies taken for our pictures (A: Yeah) at the meetings, because they all wanted to be movie actors. [Both chuckle] So we took the pictures in the meeting and all that, and we would show the pictures, the movies next, next week. (A: Yeah) But take, afterwards take some more pictures, you know, for the next. So we were taking pictures and not everybody was there. The meetings were packed to see (--) 

A: Because they wanted to see themselves on film, yeah!

L: Oh course! And then we had a good, good set-up there. One meeting the Polish would cook, the Polish ladies would cook the Polish, and the other one would be the
French.  (A: Yeah) And it was very good.  (A: Yeah!) Very good.  So there I said, how am I going to wake these people up?  Let’s see, I’m going to put the Democratic structure in North Adams dead.  That Levine there, he’s a lawyer there, he’ll pay good attention too.  There were a couple that chew tobacco there, spitting, they’re suppose to be politicians.  I said, well what’s your organization?  How many do you have?  How many cards do you have to man the polls, people to work, nothing.  You have nothing.  I called Callahan who was head of the IBEW in uh, where the Electric Light Company, where the Electric, GE is in uh, Pittsfield.  (A: Umhm) He says, uh, (--) I says, are you going to handle that or should I send my men and work it out.  We can work it out together.  I says, “can you organize a group, I says, to take care of Pittsfield and your member?”  “Sure he says, I’ll do that.”  And then in Great Barrington, which was part of my area, the uh, the Head of the Democratic Party was a judge.  I called him up.  I said, “so and so, are you uh, who’s in charge over there to take care of the campaign and all that?  I said, because if you’re not I’m coming down there, we’ll work out an arrangement.”  No, no!  He was afraid.  He knew that somebody was going to take his seat.  I said, he was a judge too.  And I think in Pittsfield the Democrat was a dentist, or doctor, dentist.  Nothing, they didn’t do anything.  So I had to organize now like a military campaign, because at that time in the Berkshires, mostly Republicans you know, in the small towns and villages.  Well I checked the record, and I found out they all of a sudden they 95, 100% voting.  It can’t be.  I said, “they’re playing games here.”  In other words, I’m a Republican, you’re all Republicans.  So I changed to a Democrat, so when we checked the ballots and all that, you know.  So what they used to do, in my opinion now, (--)  

Tape II, side 3 ends

Tape II, side 4 begins

L: [Comment unclear]  So there was nobody else to challenge then, because they were all the same, same party.  (A: Umhm)  But what happened was (--)  Well anyways, so at the campaign we had, they had no restaurants over there to go and eat.  So if you worked, say you worked in the polls, well they could be there, there’s nothing.  So I had to send, I had four, four cars with food and coffee and everything in the back, to go from one place to the other.  (A: Yeah)  And the voting hours!  Jeez!  Six, six to ten, and there was twenty votes, fifty votes.  From eight to one o’clock, different voting hours.  (A: Oh Yeah!)  Yeah.  So I had to have the guys, you know, they had the map and they to pick, pick the boy, you know the one that was working there.  Pick them up and transfer him to a bigger unit, you know, which will uh, the voting extends to let’s say, four or five hours more.  Defeat them in everything.  [Unclear] campaign.  So in the meantime I said to Jay John, who was the first Secretary of the Governor Dever, I said John, we got to do something here to make sure that we can scare these uh, guys together.  That we are watching to see, we were counting how many people are going in.  I said, “I’m going to have my men make believe they’re checking, you know, who’s going in.”  The number, you see.  But they have only ten work (--)  There’s going to be only ten votes, you see, when we go to, when the guys going to go to count how many voters.  I says, and we got to (--)  I says, I’m going to send you cards that they’re members of Democratic
Committee. It’s their Democratic Committee. (A: Yeah) To allow them, after they put the posters down they can go in there, and check, I want to see how many voted and everything. See the number.

A: Yeah. So you got that from Governor Dever?

L: Oh yeah, we did that of course. Jay John, whatever you want he says! So uh, of course we wanted that election, remember. (A: Umhm) In the meantime, while that was going on, nobody is talking about Truman. He’s the guy, the President running for election, and nobody, nothing. Nothing blaring, no vote. Hire a truck. Get a truck. Get the (--) Who’s the guy that has the machine, the loud speakers? Let him set it up! (A: Yeah) I got a couple of the boys, here’s what we’re going to do. In the city you’re going to be going around, and you’re going to blare it. I’m going to dictate a spiel to put on anytime as you go. Don’t make it too loud and too often. You know, but you stop in a place, “go out and vote today!” Something like this, “go out and vote today. Don’t stay home. This is yours, for yours, because we need to have a Democrat in there! If you’re a millionaire, please don’t pay attention to this. Go out and vote for the Republicans. At that time there were very few millionaires. (A: Yeah. Yeah) But if you’re not a millionaire, I beg of you, please, for the good of all working people go and vote for the Democratic party.” (A: Laughs) It was blaring out there. Everybody was hiding. In the mean, [both laughs] in the meantime, I’m going back now, the District Attorney, there was a question, 5, 6, and 7, that’s one of them 5, 6, and 7, (A: uh huh) which was against our union you know. (A: Yeah?) Yeah.

A: On the State referendum?

L: Yeah, open shop, you know. They like to work, you know, those who like to work. So I noticed that the District Attorney [few words unclear] to vote for the referendum. I picked up the phone, District Attorney, I called him, I told him who I was. I said, “uh, I read in the paper where you have signed with the other bankers as a businessman, all signed that we are very much against the unions, against the workers. I says, and you, and you represent a strong segment of French Canadian workers. Now you should be very careful, I said, and I would appreciate you to tell me if you did authorize them to sign, to put your name on.” He says, “what, are you threatening me?” Just like that. I said, “How can I threaten you, you’re the law. I says, I can’t threaten you, but I’ll tell you one thing. I read somewhere in the Bible that says, “if you’re not with me, you’re against me.” Now I want to know from you whether you’re going to say that you never authorized them, and you want your name deleted, and I will pay for a full page ad just for you to say that. That they had no authorization, I was not for this program. [Few words unclear] are you threatening me? I says, no, but I’ll give you my answer. I got leadership, the French [unclear]. I said, “can you imagine that fellow, Cote.” He had the[accent igue?] (A: Yeah) C O T E.

A: Yeah, that was the name of the District Attorney?
L: Yeah. I said, he doesn’t want to admit that he’s a French Canadian. He says, I’m not a Cunnock Canadian, I’m Parisian. That’s why he wants to make sure that you have the accent ague on the end of Cote. That guy doesn’t represent you people. I said, I was so happy that he was, and I figured he was doing good for you, but this fellow is against the strike. “Well before it destroys us you better change it.” I worked up a strategy. [Words unclear] Just like I told you, the celebration, you know, (A: umhm) bah, bah, bah, bah, bah. [Unclear] was there. The mother, father, sister, cousin, spit it out, quiet. Don’t say anything. Don’t let them come after you, you see, to fight. (A: Ummh) They won’t know anything. That was the biggest upset. Nobody believed that he would lose. Knocked him out of the box.

A: That was the same year?

L: Same year! Knocked him out! The same campaign as the President.

A: With Truman?

L: Yeah, we elected the first time an Irish, an Irish candidate for District Attorney. In the meantime I had, some of the boys I told them to power of unity. Library Assistants, Cemetery Commissioners, in the Commission, this is, “but I don’t know anything about it”, you know, not too much education. (A: Right, right) I says, I’m going to show you how we can work with your education, all you need is the power. And I got him elected then.

A: So they had actual people from the community representing different (---)

L: Of course. And then we had another fellow then, he was a representative for twenty-three years.

A: At the State House?

L: At the State House. I called him up, I said, you know during the summer each representative if offered, is given fourteen, fifteen jobs for the summer, you know, to give the kids of your constituents a little work, you know, to help them. Because I’ve got some members who have some kids that appreciate that very much. They say, “who are you?” I said, my name is, I told them that I’m the area Director for the Union here of which many of your voters are members, I said. “I don’t know anything about that. I have no jobs he says to me.” “Is that your answer?” Another one on the list. (A: laughs) So I looked at the map, and I look at, in the area that he had. I said, “my god!” So I got a couple of the leaders, “how are we going to work this out?” I asked them “what do you think we should do here? This is what happened? Here, give me your opinion. Where do you think we should get with the boys that you know are fast on the uptake, and who can teach something. Make the presentation, you know, when we knock at the door to the people, you know. And they’re polite, presentable, you know, nice soft voice, smile you know, make the people like him.” (A: Yup) So we, they would be voting for people that are asking them to vote, instead of the candidate. (A: Yup) You’re
a candidate? So we got the group together. Then I said, “I’m going to show you how it’s done. This is the choice.” So we go into unopened space there, Florida city [unclear] up in the Berkshires. If it snows over there and you’re hooked, you can’t get out! Wilderness! (A: Uhm) Did you know Florida City? Have you ever got the idea it was (--) 

A: Well I’ve heard of it, but (--) 

L: Up in the Mohawk Trail as you go up, paved. And we were going to go to the store, the little store on the right, with stairs going up on the, on the, on the second story. I looked by the window, big window you know, as you come in the door there’s a big window next to the stairs there going up. [Unclear] I see political posters. Oh, I said, this is, this is going to be (--) So I told the boy, I said, when you go in there buy ten, fifteen dollars, buy some things. I’ll pay for it, don’t worry about it, just buy anything you want. (A: Uhm) We got to give this guy some business today, because I have other motives. So we bought (--) “Hello! How are you? How’s everything?” “Good, fine. You got a nice little place over here. By the way, what’s up there? The steps I said.” He said, “that’s where they vote, upstairs.” And uh, now he sees us buying and they’re ringing, the cash register is ringing you know. I said, “do you think it would be all right if we put some, a couple of posters here? Yeah, I’ll take the others, I’ll put them up.” He says, “put them up.” He says, the name was Luther. (A: Who?) His name was Luther. 

A: The guy that owned the store? 

L: No, the candidate that we had. 

A: Yeah. 

L: So we left there, everything cleaned out. We know we got the display, Luther. When they go up that’s all they’re going to see, Luther, right? And he’s going to say, nice people, you know. You know, because we went there we spent money. Nice genuine people, nice people. So we’re going to [few words unclear] with me, you see. [Knocks] Elderly lady come. How do you do? I’m not allowed to come in here. I said, I’m sorry to disturb you, but there’s a very important election that we’re having. And I think that the citizens and the voters of this area deserve to have a better representative, because this man has been there too long and he takes for granted that he’s going to be voted all the time and he doesn’t do anything. I would appreciate I said, if you could give this gentleman Mr. Luther, from Williamstown a vote, because I think you will see a difference in the area, because he’s going to try to help and improve the area. She says, “young man she says, I sure will vote for him. You’re the first one that ever knocked at my door and requested for my vote. And I’m going to tell my husband, and I’m going to call some of my friends.” I said, “and I certainly appreciate it very much. Thank you, you know, genuinely. Now I said to them, [comment unclear]. If you get it, polite, very few words, don’t offend them. Be courteous, and they will do the work for you afterwards. These are nice people. [Few words unclear] but you have the good persuasive you know, way, smile. And that’s what we get, that means we have to knock
on every door. That son of a bitch, I said. Then I told him to help our people and they
tell me, who are you? I don’t. He said, I better find out, he’s going to find out who we
are. Is that right?

We knocked that guy out. He never knew what hit him. He was telling friends what
happened. He never told anybody he was going against him. (A: Yeah) He just worked
underneath. Softly, quietly, cut his legs from under him. Two, two victories. (A: yeah)
But uh, then, there I had the college with me.

A: What? Amherst?

L: No, no.

A: North Adams?

L: Williams College.

A: Oh Williams. Where’s that?

L: In uh, Williamstown.

A: Oh is it, yeah.

L: Williamstown, just north of um, North Adams. (A: Yeah) Just the same street going
up. (A: Yeah) Well James MacGregor Burns, the Pulitzer Prize Historians, Kennedy,
you know, James MacGregor Burns, big name. Friend of mine. He was a good Professor
there. So we got pretty friendly. I was invited to the Professors’ meetings that they had.
I met some of them, some big ones there. And in fact, I think he was uh, he was teaching
at Bennington College for girls there. Big time lawyer, and he uh, he negotiated the uh,
the Treaty in [unclear]. The Candleman, Max Candleman, big time lawyer, big fellow,
big fellow. He was still Secretary to uh, to Humphrey when Humphrey was Senator. (A:
Yeah) And uh, he knew Candleman very close, because he was from Minneapolis area.
Very close to uh, to Humphrey. And uh, he asked me one time, he says, “can you, can
you take over my classes a couple of weeks so I can have some vacation. He says,
[unclear] and tell them what you told me. That the class, because he told them what I did
at James MacGregor Burns, taught Political Science. So he asked me to take over his
class one day. (A: Yeah?) Oh yeah! And uh, he says, tell them exactly how you
planned the campaign. [Unclear] and everything. (A: Yeah) So, now these guys are,
[unclear] from South America, Senators, wealthy millionaires. In fact uh, savvy [lance]
kids, that’s where they went.

A: They went there? Yeah.

L: So the [unclear], I told him this is a campaign which, the campaign was not complete
yet, you know, this is the preparation, all the preparation. I said, this is the way to plan a
political campaign, because of the various hours that the polls open and close. [Few
words unclear] has been going on for a long time, in which 99% of the people vote when we know that these people are very rich and you know, business people that they will be out of town, you know, in many, in many times. But somehow they happen to have all the votes. And um, we had to have food for them. And then how to get the people to feel these people are here, maybe they have a good cause to go. Last minute reminder here to change some people’s minds if they’re not, if they’re not convinced of how they’re going to vote. The last minute, give them a nice presentation, how do you do, we’d appreciate it very much, and all that. We can change votes you know. Don’t let anybody tell you that (--) If somebody who has never been asked to vote, and you ask him, they say, why not vote for him. Why not vote for him. [Unclear] I explain to him the whole operation. How it’s got to be timed. You got to pick this one, take him there, food, like a military campaign. Like [few words unclear] in South American countries. He said, “and who’s going to do this work?” I said, “the people that work in the mills and the plants.” “What?” He says. He said, you know, he thought that an educated [unclear], you know, who in the hell is going to go and run a campaign like that. No, I says, they can learn because we teach them just what to do. And the fellows are intelligent enough to follow. And I says, from that group unknowingly to me and to themselves, you find people have been made qualities of leadership. And that’s how you develop them after you find out initially, and then you develop them to become leaders. See.

A: But did you develop a lot of your qualities working with Kolofolios?

L: No, I didn’t have much to do with Louie, no. (A: No?) No, just at the beginning at that time. Our paths diversified you see. (A: Yeah) And um, I did a lot of it on my own. I’m not bragging. I did a lot of reading you see. And uh, see, once you read the best minds you see. Take for instance now, to give you an idea, um, Emerson wrote you know, what you say, “silence is golden.” (A: Umhm) Well not just silence is golden, there’s a whole list of things. Because he says, “consider the significance of silence. It is boundless. Never [unclear] to be exhausted. Unspeakably profitable to thee. Seize the chaotic hubbub when thy soul runs two ways to confuse suicidal dislocation and stupa. Out of silence comes thy strength. Speak is silvern. Silence is golden.” Right? [Unclear]. So why do you say by continually talking bah, bab, bah, dislocation. Stupidity. So you know that. You don’t know only “speak is silvern, silence is golden.” You know the whole thing that goes with it. Why it’s golden? All right? (A: Yeah) And then the tongue twisters for instance. Hilton. Hilton, right. (A: Umhm) “[cannot transcribe quote]”. Bingo. All right. Now, [few words unclear] memorized it sixty years ago. Now I never read the book again. So you put it in your mind, see. Then what is the best, [unclear] in the country churchyard, right. [Unclear] If he had only written that piece of work and wrote nothing else, he would excel as the best writer of English literature. (A: Yeah) Bigger than Shakespeare and everybody. So you pick out the quality of the words and phrases, see. He wants to show now that there are many people who have qualifications, innate ability, strengths that have not been developed, see. So how does he put it? We have now, he’s been sitting in his chair in the kitchen overlooking, it’s turning dusk now you see. And a worker is coming down with the cattle that he has, you know, to go home. At that time the curfew, you know, the bell. (A: Yeah) So he says, the curfew tolls, the knell of parting day. You notice the L’s for the
bell. Now the poem in [unclear]. “The curfew tolls the knell of parting day. The lowing herd went slowly [unclear]. The plowman, now look, plowman, [rest of sentence unclear] and leads the world to darkness. And to me it doesn’t, the opening stanza. Now I made it my practice to read the best. I tried to remember you see. And that’s how you get those things. You analyze them. You say uh, I read [unclear]. You know I wanted to be a diplomat. Diplomacy. (A: Yeah) Yeah, that’s what I wanted to be. But uh, depression, forget it. That was a high-class operation you know, to be a Statesman. There’s a lot to [unclear]. I could have done it. Now Rochesterfield was a great, a great man of manners. You’d know of his works by the letters that he wrote to his son and godson. To his godson I think he wrote in French. I practiced my French so I could read it (A: yeah) at that time. Yeah. Now he would say, “to confer kindness is an act of superiority. To receive one is a knock to subordination” you see. You do not favor, you know what I mean? But make sure that you don’t have to ask for favors, right? Get help. And uh, things like that. And you repay them you see, and then they always come handy for you. You’re like an analysis you know, you never (--) Now [clear] in the country churchyard. Eloquent phrases. [Few words unclear] ocean air. Soon many a flower form to [unclear] and waste its sweetness on the desert air. What does that mean? That means you can find a flower in the desert, but what good is it there, right? Wasting its time. Somebody with quality hasn’t got the opportunity to go and show what he is. So once you go after the best works, and I knew I was concentrating on what I wanted to do the power of persuasion. Theoretic, you know. Analyze how you’re going to present your case and just state what the other guy is going to do. Get your good points across. Don’t say anything about your bad points. Let them find out, you see. And you, you didn’t, well he was weak. But not deceitfully you see. (A: right) You got to be honest, honest with yourself, but for the sake of argument, you see. Now you want about thirty and forty, right?

A: Yeah, let me ask you, let me ask you a different theme.

L: We went around all over.

A; Well it’s fun. It’s great. That’s the way I like it.

L: You can pick them up anywhere you want.

A: Yeah, um, what do you know about the Harvard Brewing Company? This is another project I’m working on.

L: The only thing I know is that it was a big company. With all respect the German, from what I found afterwards, was communicating with Germany through one of those high um, [unclear] directly. And they ruined the man afterwards. Who knows, what could he do? What could the man do? And that was a very good company.

A: Yeah. Do you know uh, where was, where was this guy operating out of?
L: The owner?
A: Yeah.
L: Well they say that he had it in the building that they had his business up in uh, the balcony someplace.
A: Really? Yeah. VonOpal, that’s the guy's name.
L: VonOpal. I don’t think that man was doing any harm for God sake.
A: Let met tell you a little story, because it’s a family story. My great uncle was Joe Markham, and his brother was Bishop Markham.
L: Is that right!
A: Yeah, and one of the other brothers was James Markham, and he was a big shot lawyer down in D.C.
L: Yeah, but wasn’t he with the Tierney? Markham and Tierney. No, they were good friends, they were big lawyers the time that Tierney was here.
A: Who is Tierney?
L: A big time criminal lawyer. Tierney, Donohue, and Markham.
A: Where? In Lowell?
L: In Lowell, yeah. (A: Yeah?) Oh sure! (A: Yeah) Tierney and Donohue, Donohue’s father, but they all died, all the Donohues died young you know. (A: Yeah?) Yeah, ’53, ’57, ’50. (A: Yeah?) Yeah, they were the big time lawyers. They used to (--)
A: Tierney. I better write that down.
A: And uh, so when he was down in D.C. he was the Alien Property Custodian. And he was the guy that said, “VonOpal is a Nazi. Take his brewery!” You know? I’ve been trying to find out what exactly happened.
L: Well at that time you see, like they chased the Japanese, right, and they put them in cabins. There’s a German uh, they probably had all contacts in Germany, well with his friends and all that, and maybe they had already contacted with him, you know, through radio communication. And um, what the hell could he do? He couldn’t do anything. He wasn’t uh, he didn’t have armor. He didn’t have pistols and guns, and machine guns and
tanks. What could he get, beer? There was plenty of beer in Germany. Believe me they, they do.

A: [Laughs] Um, have you ever heard of a guy, Walter Guyette, Walter Guyette?

L: Oh yeah, he was one of the French politicians. Guyette, yeah. A long time ago. Well I don’t know too much about him.

A: You don’t know that much about him? Okay.

L: I knew a lot about him, but you know, it wasn’t too important at that time you see. (A: Yeah) I mean to bother with.

A: Yeah. The brewery had a pretty strong union, didn’t it?

L: Yeah, they were good. (A: yeah) They paid good too. Clean. Clean. Clean, clean place.

A: Well I’ve talked to a lot of people who worked down there.

L: It was a disaster when they closed you know.

A: Yeah. There were a lot of building, uh, a lot of businesses closed in the 50’s huh? Like the Tannery closed I think in the 50’s. (L: Yeah, yeah.) That employed a couple of hundred, right?

L: Oh sure, shoe workers. (A: Yeah) The tanneries were closing because the work was being done in the south. You see the velvet and corduroy, Lowell was the biggest producer. And then it went down south and they weren’t producing too many velveteens here. And you’d have to go down to the lower part of uh (--) And of course they didn’t have the long staple cotton.

Tape II, side 4 ends
Tape III, side 5 begins

L: …they had the short, and they couldn’t make a lot of the fine, (Really? Yeah) fine cloth. (A: Yeah) No, they couldn’t you see.

A: Well wasn’t that a decision on their part to only make rough cloth?

L: No, that’s what they could get over here in uh, (A: in Boston?) no, no, in uh, from Texas and from the south, see. [Few words unclear]
A: Oh I see. So cotton in Egypt was different like, better?

L: Oh yeah, it was like silk. Long staple, yeah. (A: Yeah) In other words, the length of the, has the opening like that, you see.

A: I see.

L: In the 50’s, in the 30’s and the 40’s, depression. You have no idea what depression is.

A: Now where did you grow up?

L: In Lowell.

A: I mean what neighborhood?

L: In the Acre. The Acre.

A: Where?

L: Lewis Street, (A: yeah) right after the Greek Church.

A: Yeah. Now did you get, were you still living, were you still living there when the housing project went in?

L: No.

A: No. Were your parents still there?

L: No, we’re living there before the housing project. (A: Yeah) Again, my father, my parents were living there and then we moved to Broadway.

A: After, when they, when you guys got moved?

L: No. Well they were, you know, they weren’t keeping the apartments right. We found out that they built that one better, so we went there.

A: I see. Yeah. What year was that?

L: I can’t really tell you. Let me see. Now I have to figure which, when we went there. Well it was before ’41.

A: Well the housing project started in ’39.

L: I know. Then before. We had just moved over there. (A: Before, yeah) That’s the time when I told you when they came for me to go and speak at the auditorium. (A: Yeah?) I was there because I was walking from there to the shop and back.
A: I see, yeah. (L: But uh) What did you think about the housing project going in the heart of the Greek Acre?

L: Bad. Bad. You see what they did was, they didn’t allow space enough in the front and the back so that when they have a funeral you know, the cars can go around, or people could park their cars near there. They closed them in you see.

A: The church you mean?

L: They closed (--) I was so God damn mad you know, with Kolofolios and the rest of them. We should have never accepted that. We should have fought it down the line. And I was only a kid, eight or nine years old you know. (A: Yeah) And I said, you’re closing in. I said, you’re going to regret the day that ever happened. I says, first they take, first they take the Greek population I says, and sold out like they did in East Boston, you know, where they built the airport. (A: Umhm) I says, and they had to go and spread all over the place. I said, and uh, their area is the French area is to remain there, the Polish area is to remain there, but they build it over here. And that wasn’t the place where they should have built it.

A: Where do you think they should have built it?

L: They should have built it in Pawtucketville, they should have built it in Centralville.

A: Where they had open space already?

L: And higher. High elevation, see. (A: Yeah) They could have built it at the Highlands. (A: Yeah)

A: Why do you think that site was chosen? [Recorder seems to be turned off, then on again at some other point of conversation]

L: So you add Macedonia to that from Thessaly, you had from Sparta, Laconia, Islands. Each group within their own area where they knew the people, you know they came the same town, or the neighborhood there, they were related, they would have a bakery. And they would buy from that bakery, right? (A: Yeah) And on the book, you know, and they pay them when they got paid. The milkman, the same thing. The grocery stores, the bakers, that’s the important things. So when the things were getting bad, like my father (- -) There were seven in the family. Like my father said, you know, he caught Mr. Koukias, who was a milkman, and high class man (--) 

A: Yeah, over in Pawtucketville, right?

L: Yeah, Mr. Koukias says to him uh, “look he says, we got to cut down a quart, a quart and a pint, he says, because you know, I won’t be able to pay.” He said, “Mr. Vergados, if we’re going to go down, we’re all going to go down together. He says, I’m going to
bring you that extra quart and a half, don’t worry about it.” The bread man the same
way. The grocery, see we’re working part time a little bit, but we’re seven in the family.
I remember the bill was $600.00. That was a lot of money, you know.

A: That’s what your family owed?

L: To the, to the (A: grocery?) grocery. [Whistles] That’s a lot of money at that time.
(A: oh yeah!) But he was paying some, but the man says, “look, I know you’re going to
pay me. You come here, you buy. Nobody is going to stop you. Keep buying. Don’t
worry about it. If we’re going to go, everybody is going to go down together, but I’m not
going to let you go.” For the kids, you know? (A: Yeah) So the table was always full in
the house. I have to swear that I don’t know anything. They didn’t have, they eat
potatoes, you know, I used to say, not in my house. Every Sunday we used to have, (A: a
good meal huh?) oh yeah! Well ever so, every day we used to have lamb and all that, but
on Sunday we used to have the macaroni with the gravy, or because my brother didn’t
like anything covered in gravy, my mother had to melt the butter, you know, butter with
the (--) We had beef and chicken the Saturday, the Sunday menu, and other things you
know, vegetables and all that. So unless things changed. My father told Nick, he said,
Nick (--) The man now had the store closed. Closed.

A: What was his name?

L: Uh, Neofotistos, Neofotistos from Dracut. He was living in Dracut. My father, “you
take this, my six hundred some odd dollars.” And he was going to pay him. Oh no.

A: Where did your father get the money?

L: You know what happened? The next door neighbor Mr. Gavriel was director of the
church, janitor and all that. So one night he saw a dream that he was in a church, the
Holy Trinity Church, and that a woman dressed in black told him, you’re going to play
190, or 150, one of the two now. They’re going to announce 190, but it won’t be 190,
they’re going to retract it and they’re going to come back, because a number that’s going
to, that’s going to be the winning number is 150. Get up now and knock next door, you
know, tenement, and wake up your neighbor Mr. Vergados and tell him about it so the
two of you can play it. He was a religious man true to that he knock that door, 3:00, 2:00
in the morning. [Both laugh] He said, “this is what happened. My father, don’t say
anything he says. Well do you know the man used to collect during the depression, 50
cents, 30 cents from people, you know, for the church membership. And he didn’t have
50 cents for himself, and his family had four kids. So my father said, “okay, how
much?” He says, here’s a dollar, you play it too. So they played it. My, my, they told
my brother, my brother played some of it, my father played over a dollar. And my
mother said, “I want to too”, and threw in ten cents. Come Saturday now, see what they
did was they would stack the number from a certain amount of money that you would
have, that was a payoff in seventh race I think, two, five and seven, and that’s how they
got the number. He used to get the call at six o’clock at night at the coffeehouse.
A: On Saturday?

L: Yeah, because the bookies, you know.

A: Yeah.

L: They called up, 190 let’s say. And Nick was there to hear it, because he was, you know, he knew it was the number. The guy almost fell down. The first number, you see. He said, while he was there he was trying to take his breath. The call came, he said, “that’s a mistake!” It’s not 190, it’s 150. He got his breath back. He runs up, he runs up at the house.

A: This is Mr. Gavriel?

L: Mr. Gavriel, yeah, Nick. Good man. And he said, I don’t know, he said, but we won it. I hope. We won, we won. My mother says, “oh, I don’t know. We won, we won! Pull my father there, come on we’re going over. We’re talking about eight or nine hundred dollars. That was like twenty thousand dollars now at that time. Bla, bla, bla bla bla, what a lifesaver. And my sister was going to get married, for the dowry and things like that, you see? Bless you. So they made it, they made it also in the paper you know. Now to collect the money. Nick uh (--) Seven o’clock I had a date in Haverhill, MA. And I was to stop in Lawrence and [Sporty?] was going to pick me up and come back here. This is where I’m going. This is on Lewis Street, you know where the Greek Church is? (A: Yup. Yup) Right at the corner facing the rectory on Cross Street. We lived up on the second floor. Big apartment, and I heard the Greek music, it was blaring up at the house. What the hell is going on? “I don’t know if it’s true, my mother said, we hit the nigger pool.” That’s what they called it, the nigger pool. (A: The nigger pool?) I said, “of course it’s true. I says, what do you worry about!” You know? Like [unclear]. They got the money. So, he come back, the next thing my father told him, is this what we owe you, to make sure? He said, “wait a second. You’re the only one that came he said, to pay me in a year, a year and a half. He said, you’re the only man. No, you just give me four hundred dollars.” (A: Yeah) I said, “gee, my father told me to pay you.” He says, “you tell your father that’s what the bill is, $400.00.” Right.

Now the milkman, I don’t know, fifty, sixty, seventy dollars. Ten cents, and eight cents you know, a milk. Mr. Koukios, my father he’d meet him at the coffee house. “He says uh, I think this is what you need too. Here.” “Thank you, he says. I have people he says, that make money. He says, now that they have children working he says, and all that, not even one cent that came. You he said, you pay me. No, I’m not going to take the whole amount. (A: yeah?) Just that.” But my father said, “no, no, no, no, no.” He says, “that’s it.” See? “Thank you very much.”

[Recorder is turned off then on again]

…the bread man you know. [Unclear] Then we had the money now for the sister, for the extra. See every, in those days you had to prepare the girls the minute they were born you might say, to prepare for the trousseau you see?
L: The trousseau for the girl when she gets married to take home. You know, beds and everything. So every so much, every week, every other week my mother she’d go and buy things for each of the girls you know. (A: Yeah) And so now the wedding, it cost money, right? This guy from Dracut, Neofotistis, he said to the boys, “anytime you hear that they need any help or anything, that has to be first to go over there. Like get ready, and get fruits and vegetables because they’re going to have the wedding, and go fill the house over there. And they did too. (A: Yeah) So these are good people. So my sister got married, we paid the bills, but others are less fortunate. (A: Yeah) I worked (--)
catch up with him. He thought you know, because they told him this guy is a good worker, he’s fast you know. So he was trying to show me up you know, by getting in trim.

A: And you guys get paid piecework back then?

L: Piece work, yeah.

A: So you made more than most?

L: I made over forty dollars. That was big pay then. Big, big, pay then. In fact thirty dollars took care of the whole family. (A: Yeah?) The whole family, yeah. So it was funny. At that time you could go out to the Commodore Ballroom, for fifty, seventy-five, hear the biggest band. (A: Yeah) You go down the Plaza after the dance, twelve, one o’clock. [Unclear] fifteen cent, twenty cents, [unclear] twenty-five cents. You couldn’t spend the money. And so you’re working, you got to have one good habit. Every Friday I would go on Chelmsford Street. You know where Chelmsford Street is?

A: Oh yeah, right next to the church.

L: Right. It’s not there anymore.

A: Well you know it is still there, but it doesn’t go all the way through, but they have the sign up.

L: Now there used to be a barber he had a red goatee.

A: Was he an Irishman?

L: Greek.

A: Greek, yeah.

L: His name was Pikos, P I KOS, and in the back he had the showers. Then I belonged to the YMCA so I could take all the showers I want. I would go there because of the machine, the steam box. (A: Yeah) I was in the steam. Take the thing, pull with the latch, bring it over holding the hand, bababababa with the nails. You know, but at that time we had wire, a new style that run away with the, they took off the tacks and it was wire. (A: Yeah) So I would go and take a mud bath, a mud kind of massage.

A: At Pikos?

L: At Pikos. Trim my hair, a shave nicely to go to the Commodore. (A: Yeah) But that’s, you know, because the pores, had to open the pores you know, because of the steam and of the dust that flows. I wasn’t going to let that get [words unclear]. So if I’m going to spend the money, the heck with it, it’s good for me. So, and then go to the
dance. They had some good dances over there at that time. You know what I want to tell you? [Unclear] One Saturday I was sleeping late, I was at the dance with my mother and father thing, you know. I see the young man, you know, he’s working, he brings the pay in. Let them have the pay next week.

A: The whole thing?

L: The whole thing. (A: Yeah) He said, hey, let them you know, be flex you know. You know, turning it in you know. Four five dollars was the most. I didn’t care. Where are you going to use it? I was eating, sleeping at the house, huh! Like I tell you, fifteen and fifty. Where are you going to go? You couldn’t spend your money even if you wanted to. And if you went out sometimes you had to put up with your friends that weren’t working, didn’t have any money. Because before that we used to go downtown and we used to say how much have you got? I’ve got a quarter, how much have you got? Fifteen cents. How much? I haven’t got anything. (A: laughing) So we all patch up, you know, so everybody could go and have something at the Plaza. And if we didn’t have enough money, I said, John, I got to set up some uh, okay the bill and I’ll pay it later. See. John was the uh, John Stamas.

A: He ran a ?

L: No, he was the cashier, but he was a good guy. Pappas used to own it. Pappas.

A: Yeah, where was that park? The uh, restaurant? Right in the Square?

L: Right in the Square! Right opposite from Pages. (A: Okay) You know where the clock is [unclear]? It used to be the Plaza. Then there was a building in-between them, the Waldorf. Two big ones. The Waldorf was from one, from Merrimack Street to the other side. (A: Yeah) Big one. Big operation.

A: Merrimack to um ?

L: In the back there.

A: What is that, (L: where the garage is) Paige Street, or?

L: Paige Street. And uh, the theater was there, the Merrimack Theater. (A: Yeah) Big theater there. So comes Friday, the pay, hand it in. Only thing that week I didn’t need any money, because I had money you know, for the family. My parents said why didn’t you keep it. No, no, no, it’s special treatment because I’m working. Everybody, if I’m going to keep it then everybody should keep the next pay, you know, one at a time. I said, no, I won’t take it. I said, no.

So one Friday I had an urge, I had a desire for liver. See my body needed it. Every Friday my mother would make sure, you see, that she would have it there for me. But this Friday she said why don’t we do something better you see. Because liver, the Greeks
used to go to Somerville and get it for nothing you know, because they used to throw the liver away and all that stuff.

A: Yeah, out of the slaughterhouses?

L: Yeah, they’d throw it away, they didn’t use them you see, until they found out liver was good for you. So then the, well the price skyrocketed. So it was very cheap, reasonable. I don’t know, five or six cents a pound, but I loved it, see. So my mother used to, on Friday, [few word unclear].

A: How did she cook it?

L: She fried it, but she fried it with a little, a little flour. And she had some herbs and [unclear]. I don’t know why she did it. [Comment unclear]. They thought they were going to do me a favor you know, by getting something better, because it’s cheap, cheap food you see. (A: Yeah) So I said, “hey, why haven’t you got the liver? What’s going on?” You know, I have a loud voice you know. Jeez, I was looking to eat the liver. My father said, “don’t start. See, your mother cooked something else for you. Who the hell, who do you think you are, that you’re going to get special services? Everybody thinks just because you’re working he says, and you’re the only one working bringing in the money, you got to be treated differently here? Not in my house he says. When you buy your own salt and pepper he says, you come and talk to me then.” In other words, you run your house you come and tell me, but not now, not in this house. And don’t you ever talk to your mother like that again. He says, if you think he says, you take your pay and go. He says go down your own house. [Few words unclear] I said, “well I didn’t mean it that way. I just figured (--)” I kept my mouth shut. I said, he’s right. I shouldn’t have opened my mouth. Then I always liked the rice and spinach. Certain food that I liked, you know.

A: Yeah. Do you still eat any of that?

L: Oh yeah, all the time. Everybody knows me. [Unclear] Because when I used to, I used to go different places, anywhere I ate. [Comment unclear]. So, well when I was playing ball, and I was in good shape see, I had read where rice and spinach equates to a big pound and a half of steak and better, you see? Gives you power, you know. So I said, I love it you know, with olive oil, nice and soft. Not burnt, not under. Just right, see. And I would eat it and it’d make me feel good. Not expensive food.

A: Yeah, yeah. Simple food.

L: Yeah, that’s what I liked. That’s what I enjoyed you see. Lamb, everybody can make the lamb that comes out of the bone. They eat it; it’s so nice. I enjoy lamb.

A: Are there any good restaurants out there in the west?
L: Oh yeah, they have restaurants, good restaurants, but not like over here (A: no?) for Greek food. There’s one Greek restaurant over there, but they deal with the Americans. They have to satisfy the palate, go after the palate, you know. Not mine you see. I say, “what the hell, I’m Greek. I said, what are you cooking there to eat yourself?” I remember one time when I was, before we went overseas, now this is from California where our base was. This is, you get off the base, these two Greek brothers, you know, just a stool. There’s nothing there. They just put the counter. They put a couple of ovens in the back there, and some pilot lights, and they were running a restaurant. Before I was leaving I was going to go to San Fransciso, I wasn’t suppose to go, but I was going and I asked the boys to call me at the hotel, [unclear] every four hours, because we’re ready to depart from there. That was the departing area see. So as soon as one of them talked I knew they were Greek. I said to them, I don’t want to eat any of this American food. I said, what do you cook for yourself in the back? [Words unclear] don’t worry about it; it’s all taken care of. He said, don’t worry we’ll take care of you. He said, can you give us any help over here. We are buried with these people. He said, where did they all come from? Money, we’re making money! [Comment unclear]. I said, you have a [conspiria?] here. A counting, money counting agency here. He says, [comment unclear]. The younger guy that come before him, he said, I never saw so much money. [Few words unclear] I said, if I could help you I would, but I explain to him in Greek I was on call to leave overseas any moment. [Few words unclear] If I knew I was going to stay here for two months, or three months, I said, when I get out I’ll come and help you. Like this, I don’t want no money, anything. Just come and help you. He said, thank you very much, we appreciate it and all that. So, Jesus Christ, man oh man. Every place (--) 

A: [Comment unclear]

L: It’s been kind of fun.

A: Um, what else do we want to talk about?

L: You name the subject.

A: I’ve got one more for you. In the Greek language spoken in the Acre, um, places around town, what would you guys call for instance, “downtown” in Greek?

L: Downtown? (A: Yeah) Umm!

A: Would they call it downtown? Or did you guys invent your own name in Greek?

L: Well the downtown would be Agora.

A: Agora?

L: Yeah. The meeting place. The center.

A: How would you spell that?
L: A G O R A, agora. A G O R A, agora. The soft “g”. (A: Okay) When you read ancient, you hear of the agora. Where the philosophers used to [few words unclear] and gymnastics, and the philosophy. And, well that, that would be the center. The Kentrn we say, the center, the kentrn of staoudeus. Kentrn, the center of the city. Staoudeus. Staoudeus is the city.

A: Yeah. So you say kentron too?

Tape III, side 5 ends
Tape III, side 6 begins

L: …kentron, center.

A: K E N D R.

L: D R O N. No, K, C E N T R N, no K E N T R N. The pronunciation is what you want. Kentrn is the center (A: yeah) of the community, (A: yeah) and the city.

A: Yeah. What about other neighborhoods and different things like that? Did you call? I’ve always been trying to figure out now, my family always called like Merrimack Street above City Hall, that was uptown. (L: Yeah) What did you guys call that? Any idea?

L: Well they would, they would not, they would not have any expressions for that.

A: No?

L: See, no.

A: What about other parts of the city? Anything?

L: Well no, they would, they would announce it as Centralville, if it’s a name. Pawtucketville. They can’t give it any other name. See, they would have to give that you see. And uh, it’s not a county, it’s not a state, it’s not a city, it’s a provision of the city, you see. And uh, that would be like you say, what the hell they call the word? Part of the city, of the city to which you refer as Centralville, or Pawtucketville. (A: Neighborhood [Petti Fair?], you know, but that would be just a (--) I haven’t used my Greek since I’ve been over here. If I was over here talking to, talking to the boys and the old timers there the words were coming back to me. If I had a couple of more days that I talked to them I would know. The neighborhoods, [utonia]. You see, they would say the neighborhoods. (A: Yeah) That would be utonia! And that’s the word they would refer it, see. But they have more refined words that don’t, that don’t just come to my mind now. So go ahead now, what else?
A: That’s pretty much it. What do you uh, the uh, (--) 

L: You see the thing, the 1930’s, 1940’s were a very bad time in the city. (A: Uh huh) Not only depression, but it was degrading for most people who had come here for a new life, you see. Very proud people. Others had just come from having been in the army, or the military service, the naval service of the country [unclear] in Greece for years. Faced Turks from hand to hand, you know. They went from Peloponnesos to go and liberate the other parts of Greece.

A: Yeah, Thessaly.

L: Thessaly, Epirus, Macedonia, the Island, and they ain’t going to have enough manpower, because you know, the Turks almost eliminated the population. And those who went to the mountains and all that were the ones that survived, you see? And I think any in the islands, because the Turks couldn’t, couldn’t put enough military power in the islands, because two thousand islands you know what I mean. (A: Uh huh) And the Greeks had to maintain the language and the religion, otherwise four hundred years and we would be extinct. Nobody would know Greek, how to speak Greek, no religion, nothing. The Greek name would be erased. The language would be erased, see. Was 1821 when they liberated the southern part of Greece. (A: Uhm) The tactics and the strategy was to throw all the weight, all the money to put condensively priests, scholars, teachers underground to make sure that the language is set to teach the children the religion, and have a cohesiveness. And that was done in the occupied areas. So the people in southern Peloponnesos were the ones that suffered, because they went into Asia Minor. All of Asia Minor were the Greek population at that time, because the coast was all Greece you know. There was no Turks there at the time. All Greek.

A: Right, yeah. [Name unclear] and all those places.

L: Yeah, yeah. In order to maintain the language, the southerners, they were, the southern Greece, Peloponneses you know, Athens and down had to make the sacrifice. So all the teachers and the professors, rich people that were paying, priests nothing, Mount Athens and the other places were going in having a religious teachings, teaching the language. People from Russia, you’d come in you know, from family from Germany, from England, going there to help to maintain the language. Four hundred years my friend, not twenty years, not ten years. And then you had, you had the uh, the bands, the bands of Greek Gorillas up in the mountains where the Turks said, “the hell with them.” Nobody is going to go up there you see. That’s why many villages in Greece you go up the steep inclines of the mountains. I said, how in the hell can they, why are they moving over here now? Most of them are just a summer residence. But they went over there because the Turks wouldn’t go there, you see? In order to get there, because they didn’t have airplanes and all that. (A: Yeah) They didn’t have cannons you know, big cannons you know, big [berths?] to hit them. So in order to try to go over there to catch five hundred, or two hundred, they would lose two thousand, or three thousand men, you see. And they could go up the rocks and have landslides and kill them. So they said the hell
with it, they didn’t bother with them. And that’s how the nation survived. (A: Yeah) And as a result those lost an education, you know. To be a high school graduate at that time was something big. Big during the, the Balkan War is 1912 – 1913. If you could read or write they made you a non-commissioned officer right away, because you know, at least you could know the messages, you know, read what you have to do, because most of them never went to school. They didn’t want us schooled. They had school in some areas, but you had to walk three hours. So what’s three hours, nine miles to go, to come back. You couldn’t do it, you see. (A: Yeah) So they were left there [words unclear].

You had to scratch, what? Scratch rocks? Rocky mountains? Very little land was uh (A: available) of course, except for that (--) A: Yeah, the Turks controlled the fertile land, right?

L: No, no, they didn’t control the uh, the fertile land, but they were spread all over, you see? The headquarters were in, in uh, Epirus, Ioannina, Ioannina, you know, Epirus. That’s the head of headquarters. And uh, Messinia is the fertile area where everything grew, you know where Kalamata, in that area, and all that. Good places. And uh, so they made (--) My father went on to the third, fourth grade. The reason he went there, because he was in the [unclear], see. And then when he, when he was about fourteen, fifteen years old he found out that a man from town had risen to a high position. He was Head of the railroad, [unclear] the Railroad Auto Patras. It’s the headquarters, Patras. And that man had left the village, how the hell did he do it, walk, whatever he did, so many miles from, from Sparta, outskirts of Sparta right down to Patras, it’s the isthmus of Corinth you know. (A: Yeah) And he went by himself, but he had a lot of guts. Strong, my father is very strong. Small, but strong. [Makes sound of someone knocking at a door] He knocked at the door, you know, midnight, one o’clock in the morning. Woke him up, and he said, the wife of the Superintendent came. He says uh, so young girl, young boy, what are you doing at this hour? Well he said, I came from uh, and I wanted to talk to Mr. so and so. She says, what do you want him for? He said, I heard that he could get me on so and so. I came from the village and he said, I was told to come here to work in the railroad. So her husband came down and he says, who are you from the father? Sir I beg you. He said, okay, come in. I slept there for a couple of nights until they got him a job. They made him become a conductor. (A: Yeah) And we’re doing the Gorilla affairs before the deliberation of Thessaly. My father joined the Gorillas (A: Yeah?) 1897. Yeah! (A: Wow!) And uh, he lived there, fought there, and then uh, he was about eighteen years old, or so. And then because of the casualties, and because they wanted to transport a lot of the things you know, for the emancipation of the, of the state, they called him to duty. It was military duty. I had to go there, because this guy considered us in the army. So after I he did his stint he went there, and he was the railroad. And then at 21 no matter who you are you got to serve you know, either the Army or Navy, something like that. So my father went and served, and he became a military police afterwards. Chased the criminals particularly, and go into towns and act as the Mayor, the arbitrator and all that.

A: Yeah, to settle disputes and stuff, yeah.
L: Yeah, he had two men with him you see, when they went there. He would be, he would be the boss of the town when he went to the village. They didn’t have no mayors, nothing. And when he came back to this country in 1904, when he went to one of the places, the Cosmopolitan, where all his countrymen were, you know, [few words unclear].

A: The café there?

L: The beer they used to have. But that time it was much better place. People, the people that drank, they were high-class people. They used to have the beer and buy pizza. [Unclear] pizza, you know. So he walked in, a lot of people that knew him, because you know, he had gone from town to town. (A: Oh yeah!) Yeah, in [name unclear] and uh, in other areas [name unclear] and stay there you know, villages. Yeah he was there for two, three years.

[Tape is turned off then on again]

[Comment unclear] This man saved my life one guy was saying. He told me afterwards himself. In Greece if he married a girl and you was not the master, that she came into your house or property in your town, and you went to the girl, it’s as if you’re looking to get out of the rain. No count. You have no value as far as the villagers are concerned. So this poor guy, and they were tormenting him, you know, as if you’re no good, and all that.

A: Because he had gone to the woman’s family?

L: Yeah, because he had gone to the bride’s town, and as if he was uh (A: dead weight) dead weight, yeah, that they’re talking care of him because he uh, he hasn’t got anything of his own. So when my father came with the two men there, he set up you know, announced, he called the town in you know, any problems and all that I want to know.

A: Like a town meeting almost, huh?

L: Yeah, yeah, that’s right. Any problem I want to know. The man waited afterwards, he went and told him that he was having trouble with the [unclear], you know? And I said, I can’t do anything. I don’t bother them. He said I got married. I came over here because I like the town here better for me. [Comment unclear] He said, I understand that we had a little difficulty here. The man here, a very good man he says, was good enough to marry one of your daughters. Because in Greece, if you were Marilyn Munroe, the most you could vote here in America. If your father didn’t have a dowry, forget it, she couldn’t get married, okay. And the higher the position of the man, the higher the dowry. You got money, un cattle, un property, okay. This man married one of your daughters you’d be very happy. If an outsider should help him, why you turn him down for? He’d never understand, he never did anything to you. Then castigate him, and create situations for him. If I hear, he says, if anybody ever bothered this man again, or pass false rumors against him, I don’t care where I am, in any other part of the country,
I’m going to make this a personal matter. And I’m going to come over here and I’m going to straighten it out my way, with the authority of the Greek Government.

[Comment unclear] So the first man that he met when he came to Vegas, he went into the place was him. He says, there’s are my savior. He saved me, he says! Five years ago, six, whatever it was you know, because he had come to America too. So, but he had been stabbed you know, in gun wombs you know, when he chased criminals. He had his uh (--) He was, my father’s brother Arthur [unclear] in the Balkan War, American soil.

A: Was he? Now were they in Lowell and they went over?

L: The three brothers. They first came and then my father came.

A: And then?

L: They didn’t like it, you see, the oldest brother didn’t like it.

A: Didn’t like Lowell?

L: No, didn’t like it. He says it looks different to me, the houses and everything, you know what I mean. And the cramped quarters you see. (A: Yup) So he went back. Arthur was six feet seven. Everytime my mother used to say when you come in the house you had to bend down to get through the door.

A: What did she say?

L: You have to look like that. And my father was about five foot six, five foot seven, because he’s a twin. He was a surviving twin. (A: Oh yeah!) Yeah. And uh, but my grandfather and my grandmother on both sides, tall. (A: Yeah) They’re all tall, yeah. And uh, my father had a bad experience when he first came here. Even my father you know, having been an officer you know, with a whistle you know, with sprays and everything, and you know how, (--) You know, it’s not an arrogant way, but it’s a (--) A: He had a good sense of pride.

L: Pride, the way they walked you know? Authority, with authority, you know, because he had the authority, see? Even around the corner the first couple of days that he was here, he had some Irish cop at night kicked him. My father was good [few words unclear], but he knew the points where he can get you and paralyze you. You drop down, if you make moves you fight against yourself. And he could fight with the head you know, the Greeks fight with the head you know. He could hit you from here to there. (A: Yeah) Yeah, and hit you with a head. It’d be better to get hit with a baseball bat than with that you see. So he sized them up, he says, I’m here five days [unclear]. What kind of animals are these? Why am I going to go shoot this thing? My father always carried a gun at that time, you see? (A: Yeah) Let’s shoot them he said, you know I’m an officer of the law, this guy here. So one of the men saw the scene at the coffeehouse. So when he saw my father just moved a little bit, he said, ohhhh, we got big trouble. [Unclear]
My father you know had a lot of guts. He wasn’t afraid of anything. You knew how to handle himself with his hands, with his head, and General Sullivan style, you know? (A: Yeah) Yeah, they were taught that, see, in the police (--) And how to grab a guy and paralyze him. There are some areas here that you can grab a man and he’s going to go down no matter who he is, the minute you press it. He knew all those tricks. He said, he’s going to [words unclear]. And of course my father, “let’s go he says to”. He said, “do you see what that, he did? He says. I’m not going to let him get away with it. He says, [words unclear].” He says over here, that tick, he said we’re going to get rid of him. He said, I want you to take me to the police station [few words unclear].”

[TAPE IS TURNED OF AND THEN ON AGAIN]

L: He says, “wait a minute. I want, who’s that man who can speak English over here?” Bring him down and tell him, “look.” He knows everything, he had the pictures, you know? It just came out of the military police with commendations and everything, you know? “I come and hear that man preaching as if I’m a drunk and I’m no good. I uphold the law and this man, he doesn’t know who I am.” Oh they took him out of there. Because somebody tell them, “look, get them out of there because he’s not long in this world you know, if you keep him over here, because if he’s not going to get him somebody else will get him, see. Because we’ve seen this guy overdue it.” (A: Yeah) So the first few days he was in America, my father [unclear] discrimination and wise guys.

A: Yeah, yeah. When you were growing up, was I mean I know everybody has friends from different (L: nationalities) nationalities. Do you think there was a general feeling though that a lot of people didn’t get along?

L: Woe! Well they divided the mills you know.

A: Who?

L: The Yankees that compared the mills, the factories. Did not want people to organize, to get together you know, because once they got together they understood that they had the same problem. If you were Polish, Irish, or French, you don’t get enough money. You can’t pay your bills. You’re shot of this; you’re shot of that. They didn’t want to get in conversations like that. So what they did was they’d say uh, I’m the boss you know. Those are Greeks; they’re no good people. They have a knife on them and all that. I wouldn’t trust them at all. They’d tell the French about the Irish, the Irish about the Yankees and about the French. About the Greeks. Divide and rule. (A: Yeah) [Words unclear] for a long time. (A: Yeah) So they had the people divided so there was no communication between them. It was after that they began to realize that the misfortunes that they had with, were also the most misfortunes of the people that would work next to them.

A: Yeah, yeah.
L: So that’s the way they ruled. (A: Yeah) They divided. And of course people were stupid too. They didn’t have too much education at the time. Generalized you know, they’re just human beings like we are. (A: Umhm) They’re trying to make a living, you know, bring up their children, dress them properly, send them to school.

A: Maybe have a little fun.

L: Yeah, enjoy themselves you know, in their own customs, you know, their own race. It was later they thought about that. If the unions brought anything out, it’s what they did besides giving the worker his dignity in the workplace that they had outside, you see. Because you had your dignity outside the workplace, but inside you were nothing but a slave.

A: So what do you think the unions brought out?

L: The pride and dignity in a human being. The [unclear] that they were working. They were afraid to talk. (A: Yeah) They were grieved and they couldn’t bring their grievance. (A: Yeah) They were being killed by uh, by uh, by health problems, because the windows were not opened. They were breathing all that lint there. (A: Umhm) And the steam that they keep so the, so the fabrics as they were being turned would not break. (A: Right. Yeah) Sure. And the people in the weave room, they’re all, after awhile they were hard of hearing. [Makes machine sounds] continuous, continuously to the eardrums. You yell, but they couldn’t hear. (A: Wow) Then you had some other. [Unclear] is the fellow that works on the shuttle, [unclear] the shuttle to sharpen knives and everything. He would put a deep cut over here, five stitches, ten stitches there, you think the guy would be out for six months. They’d fix it up; he’d go and work because the [unclear] didn’t mean anything to him. Because I represented the Federal workers, the Lowell Federal too.


L: We had it under contract. I organized that place myself. (A: Yeah?) Yeah. I say I got a picture of the group there.

A: Do you?

L: Yeah. (A: Yeah) The date and the vote also.

A: Nice.

L: But a weaver who has to take, if the yarn breaks and he has to twist it back in, to detect a [unclear] he’s out of work. He can’t because he needs that to be able to fix the thread. Today it’s a big, big injury. The guy is cut over in stitches all over his hand, but depending on the job, the hazard. [Comment unclear].

A: So they were, they treated people differently.
L: It was their job. (A: Yeah) Here if you went in a bobbin shop you’d expect the best things, or nothing. [Comment unclear] and everything. (A: Yeah) But with a weaver that would be disastrous. Cut, he’d be out six months! You follow me now? (A: Yup)

A: Hey uh, I was going to ask you too, uh, you know we’re going to be putting on this Greek exhibit in the Fall. Um, you don’t have any pictures involving yourself during the 30′s, do you?

L: I think I have some.

A: Yeah, involving with the union, or with the Demosthenes Club, or whatever?

L: Whatever I have I’ll send it to you. Maybe you can send them back to me.

A: Okay, yeah. We can make some copies and stuff like that. Yeah.

L: Yeah, I have some pictures of me. (A: Okay) You see at one time we had the State Department bring in people from Norway at one time, from Egypt, and then from France. (A: Yeah) [Unclear] business, labor, and government. We had like a little uh, united. They’d be asking me questions, I would answer them. And they would be transferring them in different languages.

A: Yeah. To learn about American labor stuff?

L: Kind of like the United Nations, see?

A: Yeah.

L: And um, they had two, two or three of them.

A: Yeah. (L: Yeah) And those were held where? In Boston?

L: In my office.

A: In your office, yeah!

L: Oh yeah, they used to come to Lowell.

A: [Chuckles] You don’t go to them, they come to you.

L: The corner of Central and Market, upstairs. It used to be Pinkham and McQuade (A: umhm) downstairs (A: yup). They’d be in my office up there [unclear] the hall.

A: I see, yeah. Okay, is there anything else you want to talk about?
L: Well I think the critical period of 1930 and 1940 (A: yeah) for you to understand that that was [unclear]. You know about the depression. (A: Yeah) You’ve had information on that, you see.

A: Right. I wanted to, I wanted to think about, when do you think the depression really started in Lowell. Was it '29, or was it earlier? Because I know, didn’t the Appleton close in '25, and the Hamilton closed in '26, and all those, those employed a lot of people, did they?

L: Yeah. There was [words unclear].

A: So did depression in Lowell start a few years earlier than the rest of the country?

L: Well based on the number of workers that had not been working because the plants closed.

A: Well in other words, my question is, when these mills closed was that a disaster comparable to when the stock market crashed, or was there other places for these people to go and work in Lowell?

L: I think the disaster started about 1930-1931, (A: yeah) the real disaster.

A: So in other words, when the Hamilton closed in ’26 there were still jobs somewhere else where people could go, and it wasn’t a catastrophe, and later on it bottomed out, huh?

L: They used to, they used to at one time used to go in sections and [unclear] in the streets so people [unclear].

A: Yeah. What do you think caused the worst affects of the depression?

L: The people that had the money didn’t invest it into production plants. (A: Yeah) They held it you see. There was a lot of money left [unclear] at that time, big money. [Unclear].

A: They were worried about losing it?

L: No, they were satisfied. They were okay. You’ve got to understand that when the entrepreneurs, the real motivated people that wanted to create a dynasty (A: yup), building these big mills brought the best [words unclear]. The brick laying that you see in those mills there is the best in the world. (A: Yeah) You look at the mortar, you never see any loose over there. (A: Yeah) You know that little watershed that uh, that is across from the park that has the uh, that the [unclear] went through there?

A: The what?
L: Where the [unclear] from Boston to Lowell?

A: I don’t know where that is?

L: Did you notice you go over the railroad in Merrimack Street? (A: Yeah) Well where the lights are?

A: Okay. Okay, yeah.

L: There’s the, there’s the, the canal!

A: Yup, in that little building?

L: [Unclear], you watch that uh, the masonry there. The best. Best artists they had here. So there is no question that as a result of that they built big factories, mile of mills. (A: Uh huh) Many of the walls one-yard thick, all bricks to hold the foundation. Those beams that they had, you’ll never find beams like that then. [Unclear] to throw the weight.

A: The whole tree, whole trees.

L: That’s right. So the were masters. They were out there to develop and become rich, and they became rich. (A: Yeah) But there’s one thing about your successors, they got all that money, they could not invest in modern equipment. You could tell, I would go in a factory, or in a mill and I could tell you whether they were going to last or not. But the equipment they did not buy, the new equipment, or they did not eliminate certain jobs that they could by, as I told you, synchronizing equipment where one man could run the three machines without working any harder. See? (A: Umhm) And they did not replace, you see, they, they would take out for every year the machinery that they had, deduct.

A: Oh, as a tax deduction you mean, like depreciation?

L: Depreciation. It would depreciate.

A: Yeah.

Side 6 ends
Tape IV, side 7 begins

L: Depreciation, they would depreciate. (A: Yeah) So it’s after ten years they depreciate all that money. (A: Yeah) They didn’t buy new equipment to replace that
machinery. They start, every, any part that broke they had the machinery replace it, and
they charged the company because the machine shop was separate, was separate entities.
It’s hard to get the money and cheat the government. So it came about that the equipment
was obsolete. (A: Yeah) The buildings were not being kept up to date. They didn’t have
a system where we start from here; we here to start painting, right, painting. They’d have
a crew, maintenance crew for one year, make the round. In one year they end over there
and start again. [Coughs]. They didn’t do that you see. (A: Yeah) Then comes the
competition now. First they said, well if you know the new building is better, we don’t
have elevators, and two stories. One story building, why two? You start here and you
end up at the other end, the finished product. (A: Umhm) That’s the way of the future.
(A: Umhm) Well in the south they did it. Then they said, well, why should be build
over here? Maybe we’re going to go down south, because we’re going to have to pay
the price for the bales of cotton to come here, or we can get cheap labor. We can get the
bosses here to train the guys over there. Big money. We don’t have to pay taxes,
because we’ll make arrangement, ten years, no taxes.

A: Yeah, with the town.

L: With the town, sure. We didn’t have, didn’t have anything. They didn’t care if
during the summer most of them didn’t go to work, because they have to take care of
their garden and vegetables and fruits and all that. (A: Umhm) Maybe their kids went to
work, but you know, many of them wouldn’t work in the summer because they had to
pay, tend to the (--) They didn’t care because they made the money. Now the companies
that kept up with the equipment stayed alive and made money. (A: Yeah) Let me give
you an example. One of the best companies in the world is the New Market
Manufacturing Company. Rayon, acetate, and all that.

A: On uh, Market Street?

L: Market Street, where they have the uh, inscribed over uh, where the apartment house
is. They would, for four and five years, I forget how long (A: Umhm) change their
equipment. Play the machine, take it out, bring a machine. That don’t sell it to anybody
else you know, because they have (--) That machining, for someone that comes, it would
be brand new, after they weren’t used for four or five years by then.

A: So what would they do with the old machinery, which was still in good shape?

L: They do something, which they didn’t give to the opposition you know. I think they
destroyed it. They destroyed it. Now why were they successful? Did you have any
100% production? Not 100%, 105. You think that’s impossible, right? You can’t go
over a 100%. (A: Right) Well you can, I’ll tell you why. The work force has certain
hours that they work right. Let’s say from eight to twelve, and from 12:30. So one half
hour to eat, okay. Those weaving machines in New Market didn’t stop between twelve
and twelve thirty. (A: No) They were so good when they [unclear] that there would be
very few threads that would break in the course of that half-hour.
A: And they would let them run?

L: Yes! They would be producing for the worker at the same time, because they were brand new machines, good, well taken care of. Huh, while the others if you, if the weaver wasn’t there every minute the threads would break. (A: Break and crack) Crack, yeah. So uh, they had to the equipment, they had the production and they made money.

A: Who ran that outfit?

L: Um, [comment unclear]. I should know. The names will come to me, but I can’t get them. They had the uh, (--) In fact my son was talking to me about this kid that was running for office in Tewksbury. Jim Gaffney was the Personnel Director. Harvard, Harvard man, the captain of the football team. He lost his leg with Patton in World War II.

A: Really? Yeah.

L: Yeah, he lost his leg. Good, he was a good boy. He was the Personnel guy, but he represented a tough company. He’d pay, but your not going to tell him anything; he knew everything about that. So I used to have some trouble with this guy.

A: But they paid the workers pretty well?

L: Yeah, they were straight though, they lived (--) [Tape is turned off and then on again]

L: [Comment unclear], but he was up to [unclear]. He’d written a couple of books with his wife on labor relations. I remember one time, I had read his book.

A: Do you remember the guy’s name?

L: Yeah, it’s a Jewish name. I forget now. I had all those written down.

A: He taught where?

L: Harvard.

A: Harvard.

L: Harvard. He was an author too, (A: Yeah) to uh, on strategy you know, and grievances. So I use, I says, as an eminent authority on the subject in the workplace [laughing], eminent authority on the subject of the matter that we’re talking about now. Let me read what he says about this particular (--) I was reading this, excerpt from his book, you see. (A: Yeah) He looked at me, he says, “well he says, you got something there.” You couldn’t tell him I won the case you know. He didn’t, he was fired you
know, but we brought him back, and that was just for back pay. (A: Umhm) But because the circumstances [laughing] didn’t call for pay because my member was a little abusive you see (A: yeah) with the boss you see. (A: Yeah) What happened to be, I think there was educated kind of trouble in Greece, and he went to Argentina so he could speak to (--) He was a high school graduate in Greece you know, but he came from a good family, but he got in trouble. So they got him out before the police found him, see. (A: Yeah) So he was in Argentina and he learned Spanish right away. He speaks Spanish fluently and everything. (A: Yeah) So he came here and always dressed up. Never wore khaki, or working clothes, nothing, always dressed up. (A: Yeah) And he said to me, you know, what happened? They fired him. I said, you know, tell me what (-) “Can you imagine me he said, the boss told me, go and clean the toilet.” He was a helper, maintenance. (A: Yeah) I told him, “you son of a bitch you’ll never need to pay the boss.” He said, [unclear]. (A: Yeah) So he came to me. I said, “is that what happened, he told you to clean the toilets?” “Yeah.” The grievance comes up at the second level.

A: Where did this guy work at?

L: At uh, New Market.

A: At New Market, yeah.

L: James Gaffney. I said uh, oh, and he asked the [unclear] to go up on the steps, on the ladder to get something, and he didn’t have good balance because he’s a little hard of hearing in one ear you see. (A: Yeah) And you know, [few words unclear] because he doesn’t have his equilibrium. (A: Right) And I had read about that, you know, in the cases, you know, when you have a case like that. I said, “did you tell this man to go clean the toilets?” “No he said, I didn’t tell him that!” “What did you tell him.” He says, “we had to pack there where we had the seats, not even opened he says, and I told him to take it and move it from there because he’s going to put the ladder for him to go up.” I said, “you told him to go up on a ladder.” He said to me, “no, I don’t want to go up there because I don’t feel good. And you told him to go up.” See, I’m switching off instead of from the toilet, you know, because my case would be stronger if I tell them (--) A: Right. Right.

L: I said, “and you told him to go up there? This man I says, that you know, when the man is hard of hearing, if he loses his equilibrium he could fall down and kill himself.” The guy said, “I didn’t know that he (--)” “Well you know now!” Well anyways, Jimmy had to support the badge. When they come you have to support the badge, because otherwise there would be anarchy you know. They wouldn’t respect the boss and everything. And we took it that way, you know? [unclear] You know, they were hard nosed too you know. So he went to uh, I’m trying to remember his name. It’s humming into my mind at night.

A: Your Harvard professor?
L: Yeah, the Harvard professor. That’s why I brought out about the, the case. We won. We got him back on the job. (A: Yeah) That’s all I wanted. You know, I was asking for everything else, but I wanted to get him back on the job you know. (A: Yeah) So I got him back on the job and he says to me, “I didn’t tell you the toilet. I said, I meant boxes, what’s the matter with you?” But he’s unclear. “You know who I am?” I says, “I know who you are!” [Both chuckling] [Comment unclear] It, I am, you know. It’s good to have that, people can’t get up, you know? Get back up, because they can’t back it up many people. You know, I am. You’re what? In 1930 and 1940 so you’ll know, I’m going to make a summary. (A: Yeah) The people were very poor. No worked. [part of you?] became beggars almost. They wanted to support the family. Guy’s rough, you know, nothing. Bend down you know, from the first station [Unclear] welfare, no nothing. Bent down you know, from the frustration. You could see that, totally dejected, frustrated. You saw lawyers and doctors there with [fright, knives in their shirts]. Different pants, different coat. (A: Yeah) Sure. The heels of their shoes one way, and then you could see men, they were something at one time you see. That time, nothing. Everybody started smoking with uh, smoke uh, what do you call them?

A: Bic like?

L: Yeah, the, the, what do you (--)

A: Holders.

L: Holders! Cigarette holders. (A: Yeah) Do you know why?

A: Why?

L: They used to go and pick their butts, remember you go and pick the butts in the street. [Few words unclear] put them in a smoke. A cigarette holder [chuckling], a good way to get Parisianne, you know, because why? They didn’t have any money. They didn’t have money to buy the thing to (A: to hold it) hold their own cigarettes. I remember a doctor came in one time at the house [words unclear], nobody had money to pay them until the unions came in and we had the small group insurance. Five dollars for the doctor and six, seven dollars for hospitalization, you know, to pay the hospital a day. You never had it. No one paid. Who’s going to pay them? Visits two dollars to guys like the best doctors in the country for God’s sake, that we had. In back of the YMCA, where the bank used to be, where the Gas Light Company used to be too.

A: The Institute for Savings?

L: That’s right.

A: Shattuck Street.
L: Shattuck Street. There were two Yankee doctors, fathers and grandfathers doctors. (A: Yeah) And this friend of mine went over there, he wasn’t feeling good. He went to see one of the doctors who was a surgeon. He said, “you’re going to have your (--)” Then he said, “you’ve got to get ready, go to the hospital because it’s an emergency. You’ve got to get an operation.” He said, “oh wait a second doctor. I says, I’ve got to think about my salary. I’ve got two kids, my wife he says, how am I going to go like that just for surgery. He says, I can’t go now.” He says, “you’re going to need the (--)” [Unclear] near the City Hall, the office, the big office building. So he walks down in a daze. You walked over the [unclear] the YMCA here was at the corner. Right in back, was the doctors. Dr. Farnham and a girl that I knew from Bartlett School, her father. Her brother became a doctor afterwards. He walked in, the lady at the desk, the clerk said, “is there any one you want to see?” He said, “I want to see a doctor?” “Which doctor?” “A doctor.” That guy died, that I’m talking about now, he died two weeks ago, three weeks ago. He was ninety-five, ninety-six years old. (A: Yeah) And he walked, the guy was strong. (A: Wow!) And uh, he said, “I want to see the doctor.” So the doctor came out, brought him in. A young doctor. He told him, “[words unclear]. No problem he says. You take these pills.” He didn’t give a prescription, go and get uh, (--) He says, “here, you take these pills. You take one today, one later. He said, you’re going to be all right after that. If you’re not you come here. Don’t worry he says. You know, because there’s no money, don’t worry about the pay. $2.00.” The second pill, perfect. (A: Yeah) No sick. The other guy wants to operate on him. So I’m with him at the time, I don’t want to mention the doctor’s name. The doctor that told him operation right away died. And the procession was coming by and I’m talking to him at the corner. And he goes [makes sounds of spitting on ground], “may your bones never rest.” Can you imagine, you know what he told me he says, to operate on me, there was nothing wrong. And I went to a doctor I don’t even know he says, and he gave me a pill there and I became all right. No sick, nothing. There’s no problem with you he says. That guy [spits the ground again-a few words unclear] the hearse was going by. All those things are happening. So that’s why always, never except the first when it comes to a major operation, because there’s somebody else that knows better. [Unclear]

A: Do you think these guys saved the city?

L: They did a great, they gave it a great boost. Nobody else, nobody else would have done it. [Phone rings] Hello! Yes! [Tape is turned off then on again] Now this fellow is my (--) 

A: Yeah, who is that, Howard Hall?

L: Yeah, over here. Now who else? This guy is my age.

A: Yeah.

L: Is it Hurley? Let me see, what’s his name? The one sitting down. The one sitting down.
A: Uh, let’s see. Yeah, John Hurley.

L: Yeah, he was nice. He became pretty good. He became a good lawyer. (A: Yeah) Pearson uh, Professor Pearson, Pearson near the uh, who is the other guy there? Martin Lydon, the President of Lowell Textile Institute. Yeah, he was a good boy Martin Lydon. (A: Yeah) And this guy here, Cook. So don’t, don’t believe anything about anybody telling you that they had a bad time up to the war, and even after the war and during the war. They didn’t pay them any money. (A: No) They froze them. And I remember I was up to hear with the woolen industry, because when they asked them to make the blue, the blue shirts for the Air Force, I remember a couple of companies, one of which we had under contract refused to do the work, this is during the war, unless they got the prices they wanted. They got the price.

A: So they took advantage of a National crisis huh.

L: Of course they did. Of course they did.

A: That’s too bad.

L: So the depression, you know about the depression. You’ve read about the depression. It’s the horror stories you know, of what happened. (A: Yeah) But the people, but the people suffered so much. Man oh man! I was in the thick of it, I know. In Brockleman’s Grocery Store, which was opposite the Sun, you know the corner (--) A: In the Fairburn Building.

L: That’s right. People used to go in the back where they used to throw the garbage and the fruits and everything, and pick up. (A: Yeah) Okay, I was up to here. Do you know at that time if Roosevelt had not shut down, had not closed the banks to protect the industry and the bankers, there would have been a revolution here?

A: You think so?

L: That was going to be one of them.

A: So when he closed the banks he (--)

L: He saved, he saved the financial institution.

A: What he was doing was preventing people, well-off people from getting the rest of their money?

L: No, he protected the financial business. They were going to break down. There was a breakdown in the country! Breakdown! The people were ready for a revolution here! (A: Yeah) I was one of them myself. (A: Yeah) I couldn’t stand it anymore what I was seeing in the streets. The people the way they were treated. Nothing, they were dying.
No hope. (A: Yeah) And the government wasn't moving. Roosevelt came in and he started. The first thing he did was to close the banks, (A: Yeah) to protect the people's money. All right? Then he came up with the idea of the uh, the profession of the banks' is not that the nation is going to guarantee the mistakes of those that are entrusted with the people's money. (A: Yeah) We help them, but that's their responsibility. You know when they bailed them out with so many billions of dollars, that was not part of the program. (A: No?) No sir. I'll show you the, I'll send you the clipping if you want. I got the clipping. (A: Yeah) Because how was I going to debate and argue? See? The man, the man that was the light of the language of the Social Security Program.

A: Who was that?

L: What the hacks that guy's name?

A: Ickes? Harold Ickes?

L: No, no. Ickes was a Cabinet member at that time. No, this was another man. (A: Yeah) And um, indicates that, hey look, we're not guarantor of the mistakes of the bankers, they're responsible. If they violate their oath and duty to the, which is a public, public duty, then he should put him in jail. No, let them, let them pay the penalty (A: Yeah) like anybody else. Like any other thief.

A: When they spent the money too frivolously, right?

L: Well naturally you come (--) You know what happened, don't you? The bankers found out that they could make much more money, and the real estate was going big you see. Give them money to build and they would get a cut. You had no background to build. You had no money of your own, substantial money that we can help you, or that you're building and we're paying a part. As you went along we inspected, we saw that you spent that money, then you go. No supervision.

A: Just give them the money, let them go.

L: Give them money! Then nobody built anything.

A: Yeah, or the guy would build the stupid building in the (--)

L: Yeah! Then we waste the money. Millions and millions of dollars you see. And then they came out with the, the special groups there, the lawyers so they could feed them good. And they were suppose to take care of the banks, and tried to get them to join together with others, you know, acquired, be acquired by other stronger banks. Then they would pay them. They would pay the banks in default; they would pay the banks that acquired the money to carry them over. (A: Yup) To build them stronger you see. Then what happens? After they got a little stronger they had all the money and the government had nothing. The government was only paying bills, paying the banks who survived. (A: Yeah) They argued. The biggest argument in the world is what happened there.
A: There’s a couple of bankers for you?

L: Yeah, I know.

A: What do you think of Homer Bourgeois?

L: Homer my boy! [Chuckles] Homer was a good man. I’ll tell you what. When a man looks after his own, (--) See, don’t forget the French community did not have any leaders, see.

A: Why was that?

L: Because he didn’t, they didn’t have the education. They were workers, you know, [words unclear] work and everything. Very few came out on top. Like the undertaker became the Mayor.

A: Archambault?

L: Archambault. High-class people (A: yeah).

A: Judge Eno.

L: Judge Eno, and then his son.

A: Yeah, but very few.

L: Not as much. The people that had Gagnon’s, you know, good people

A: Paul was a good friend of Bourgeois, huh?

L: Yeah, oh naturally. So the only strong man they had was uh, was Bourgeois. They got the hospital, right? (A: unclear) St. Joseph’s Hospital (A: umhm), which was the Corporation Hospital, see. Bourgeois extended his banking system to create the, the bank, the French bank facing on the corner of Cabot and uh (--)

A: Jeanne D’Arc Credit Union?

L: Jeanne D’Arc, Jeanne D’Arc, that’s right. Then he’d get all the French would come in and he helped the French people, because they wouldn’t, the others wouldn’t give them any money. (A: Yeah) So they created their own. He said, you’re going to come, join the union and we’re going to give you money at good rates. And he used to go there every Friday by the way.

A: Yeah, to do what?
L: To help, to work every Friday night. I remember him because I used to stop at John [unclear] at Sweetland, right across from the bank. And I used to see Bourgeois come in. Homer and I go back, because I know his brothers, and I, he was the one that was a representative.

A: Uh, Raymond?

L: Raymond. And then his other younger brother, the playboy there.

A: Who was that?

L: [Unclear] I forget his name.

A: What did he do for work.

L: Playboy.

A: Huh, playboy?

L: Yeah, and they found some job for him they would put him in. They’re politically strong you see.

A: Yeah, one of them was the Clerk of Courts.

L: He is now, isn’t he? No, no, he was, he was the assistant. Maybe could have been assistant. (A: Yeah) So Homer, let’s say you would go to get a loan, but the bank said you had, not credit wise you know, to give you. So he’d tell you to go see John Georges, he was a financier with him. (A: Yeah) So John says “okay, I can do it for you, I’ll sign for you, but you have to pay the tokens you know”. You know what I mean, the [unclear] the bank will give you, and I’m going to give you. So with John’s signature they would guarantee the loan.

A: The Union National would.

L: That’s right. With John’s signature, see. Him and Bourgeois were together. Now there’s nothing wrong in that you see?

A: Uh huh.

L: And they built (--) Many people now, many Greeks that own restaurants did through John. John would go and set them up, pay for everything, and then tell them “okay, you just pay so much.” Now I’m a cook, or chef, and I come to John and I say, “John, jeeze, can you find me a place John, so I can run myself. You know, I can’t be working, not for that kind of money.” John said to me, “well what do you want? How much do you want? How big do you want it? Where do you want it?” So okay, so let’s say it costs John to furnish it completely, stainless steel inside and presentable restaurant, or, we’ll
say probably $30,000 at that time (A: Yup) So there was nothing wrong with John to say, look, $50,000. huh? We got to make some money, $10,000. I’m giving you a business, you haven’t got a dime huh? So you just pay so much a month you know, so you won’t get [unclear]. You can pay that amount. Yes I can. Okay. That’s how they made the money, big money. John made big money there. John Georges.

A: What did John Georges do?

L: Before? (A: Yeah) Oh before John was a salesman for a big restaurant equipment company owned by Greeks in Boston. (A: Yeah, huh) And he was such a good salesman setting up business outside, you see. All the Greeks in New England, he set them up in business. (A: Yeah) Yeah, and uh, he made so much money that when he left the company they owned him $350,000. in pay.

A: Yeah!

L: Yeah. He had made some money.

A: Did he come from Lowell?

L: Lowell, yeah. He’d [words unclear] before. (A: Yeah) I remember during the depression in order to feed his family we had to go to Boston. He found a job in a place that uh, in uh, in a place that uh, agency, employment agency you know, for Greek people for restaurants in need of them. We used to travel back and forth. One time we didn’t have two dollars to put the gas. Cost two dollars to go to Boston and come back. (A: laughing) But then when he got that other job (--) A: So when, when did he start working for the restaurant sales?

L: Right after that. No long after because he made the connections.

A: Right there in the war, or before the war?

L: No, before the war.

A: Before the war, yeah.

L: His brother was Pete Georges who owned Pete’s at the Boulevard. Potato Chip?

A: Oh, the one that became the Spear House?

L: No, no. The one beside, (A: next door) next door. (A: Yeah) A lot of money there. And Pete, you know John was a playboy. Peter’s brother, younger brother got tired of it see. He says, the hell with you. He says, you don’t want your family and all that. Well they started in the Royal Theater. They had a couple of theaters when they were young and going to school, you know they use to go with the candy bars and the ice cream and
all that, use to go up the isles. (A: Yeah) They had, they had a couple of theater that they were doing that. The Royal Theater and I forget, some other one. He went from there to develop the potato chips. And that was a big item you know, big money. Then Peter made big money. He went afterwards to Ogunquit, and he opened a place over there, another one. His wife was running that. And uh, John of course became a big financier. Then he opened the “Blue Moon”, the biggest nightclub south of Boston. (A: Yeah) That was John Georges!

A: Oh, that was their place huh?

L: The biggest nightclub south of Boston.

A: Right there in Middlesex Village.

L: That’s right. The biggest night club south of Boston. John’s a good guy. I told you we drove when he didn’t have a dime, flat tire. Two dollars to get gas. Okay.

A: Now he was a close associate of Homer?

L: Very close. So John would put up the money see. (A: Yeah) If I had (--)
A: Was he?

L: Oh yeah! Can’t you see the way he looks?

A: I know, he looks like a General huh? How was that guy uh, what did they call him, Moe Palefsky?

L: Over here, good man. (A: Yeah) He’s the guy that put up the money to build a building. (A: Yeah, yeah) He took the gamble. And you know what’s sad about that?

A: What?

L: I found out afterwards. See I wasn’t (--) The second building, (A: yeah) instead of saying you build it, because of the risk [words unclear], they contracted with somebody else (A: oh yeah!) to build it. Even though there’s, I don’t know whether it was open bidding you know, ten thousand, thirty thousand difference. They shouldn’t have had open bidding. He should have negotiated with him and let him, because he had (--) 

A: Make the money, let him make the money offer, (L: sure!) yeah.

L: He took the risk. (A: Yeah) I was angry when I found out about it, but I wasn’t (--) 

A: That was after you had already left?

L: Yeah after, yeah. They’d never do that if I was there. (A: Yeah) I would have put (- -) It should have been nailed in. I would have gone to the paper. Tell them, “if you do I’m going to go to the papers.” (A: Yeah) Oh yeah! Because you don’t do that to the man that did such good.

A: Yeah, yeah, took a big risk on his part.

L: Of course, but it’s the right thing to do. (A: yeah) It’s the honorable thing to do. There’s no honor among these people here? (A: Umhm) See honor, people have forgotten that this one word honor, which we’re missing in our, in our movements in this country lately you know, they’ve forgotten that word you see. There’s nothing, nothing honorable anymore.

A: Yeah. How do you define honor?

L: Honor means respect for the other people’s rights, the other person’s rights, and to treat them as a human being with dignity. Like you want to be treated. (A: Umhm) And if the challenge comes where you have to take the risk with your life for the good of somebody else that’s dear to you, you have to take it without even second thought, you know, that your life is in danger or not. But honor doesn’t mean just risking your life. (A: Right) It’s a question of (--) The Greeks have a word for it, [pronounces word in Greek, sounds like philosthemes]. And [says same word, philosthemes], the best,
closest word in the English language that comes to [says same word, philosthemes] is class. See. There’s no other word that I can (--). It means friend of honor.

A: [Tries to repeat word in Greek].

L: Yup, [sounds like: philosthemes] Friend of honor. Themes is honor, philos, friend. See. (A: Umhm) You see, somebody that you can take advantage of, it’s dishonorable for you to take advantage of that man, because you can handle him. You may know that doesn’t show any courage. (A: Right) [Unclear] when you do that, you see? You don’t disgrace a man, call him names, when you know it’s going to hurt him and it’s not going to help you. (A: Uh huh) Why are you talking about somebody else? That’s being honorable too you see. (A: Umhm) You defend a woman, it’s the honorable thing to do. The woman says, “no, you’re before me.” Well now my headquarters you know, up in Tacoma, I says, “no, but I’ve learn to defer to women, I says, I’m from the old school. You first.” “My God, she said, I hope we have some more like you [few words unclear].” Those are things. All it means is doing the right thing at the right time, without fear also you know. Don’t be afraid of anything if you’re going to do the right thing, the honorable thing you see. [If you’re fifty?] you have to do the right thing, you do it you see.

A: Do you think these guys had, all had honorable intentions?

L: To tell you the truth, at this stage, when I was in with them, they’re honorable people I have to say it. Everybody according to their ability to their capacity, how much they could do depended upon what they had, you know, in intellect and money, and ability you know, but they’re all, they all were honest, good people. Some gave great effort than the others, see. Some just went there for, take my picture you see? (A: Yup, yup) But they didn’t mean any harm, and I was watching for that very carefully. (A: Yeah) To see how much weight they’re going to put in, in the undertaking because the minute I put my name in there for me it was uh (--)

A: You wanted to make it succeed.

L: Yeah, I don’t go into anything unless I, I give my all, see, (A: Yeah, yeah) because I mean business. I want, I go in I will do what I have to do for the thing to succeed. And uh, we have all kinds of people, all kinds of motives for that. In this instance here they knew the city was in dyer circumstances. They knew something had to be done you see. And I believe if we didn’t do that and be ahead of everybody in the construction of the industrial park they wouldn’t have advanced along. (A: Yeah) Because they didn’t have an objective of what modern days required in America. They could not understand they were so confined in their thinking to the same buildings that they saw on Central Street and on Merrimack Street. With me took, tear them down! See. Right in the middle where they have uh, between Market and Merrimack, you had nothing there. You remember those old buildings there and the railroad track was coming in between there, tear that down and build a modern city, you know! Build buildings, hotels, theaters, more parking. You know, set up a park area where people can relax and go and shop,
pull out them buildings. Tear them down. What historical? What historical? Used to be mills and factories?

A: Now what do you think today since the National Park’s come in there and all that historic preservation?

L: What historic preservation? Like the mill buildings? There is a fellow from the Globe or the Lowell Sun. He called me up and he said, I want to ask you this and that about the city. What do you think the city, we should do and everything like that? I said, “who are you?” He told me. I forgot to write his name down. I can write it tonight.

A: When, when was this?

L: Last year. (A: Yeah) I can get it if you want to know. He told me about, well what do you think can make the city, improve the city and be good for the city? I said, you look at Saint Anne’s Church, on the way I says down to Kearney Square, tear everything down. You know the buildings on the right? I said, from below the City Hall all the way down, I said, tear them down. What did you do? You tried to improve, spend millions of dollars to improve the inside of buildings and they’re out of date. But you can’t put the modern conveniences in there, the controls that are needed you know for air condition and all that. You’re spending money for nothing. And then build an inner city. We’ll knock out all the outline districts where they have those big shopping centers, knock them right out. I says, they would come over here, they’d be, they’d be that new world, nice, clean city with park benches, hotels, restaurants, lights, the whole place lit. People can go there at night. (A: Uh huh) Have, have uh, have the buses run all night (A: umhm) so people can come down. Because (--)  

A: I don’t think that guy put that in the paper.

L: I said that’s what you need I said. What do you want, I said? This is the first planned city in America I told him. Did you know that I said, first planned city in America, the way they did it I says? You know that you can’t leave the center of the city without crossing a bridge. Never. (A: Umhm) I said, the mills were on the rim of the rivers, the mills because of waterpower. (A: Umhm) In within the perimeter you had the house of workers in the city, and others that were not working, businessmen that needed to be near their places. In the center you had the downtown.

A: The business center.

L: If you go one bridge you go Pawtucketville, Centraville, the other one Gorham Street and the flats. The other one Pawtucketville. I said, suburbs. Build the homes, nice homes with everything, as they improve from the lot as workers. (A: Umhm) So what you have though in between in the downtown you had mills, small mills and small factories like Ayer Company. (A: Umhm) That’s where they developed the lipstick with the lanolin. You know that don’t you?
A: No, I never heard that before.

L: It’s real. They extracted the oil, the lanolin. They had bought new machines. You know like the water fountain that you have? (A: Yeah) Well that [words unclear]. And as they, the refuse coming from the oil that was extracted from the wool, they were scouring it, you know, cleaning it. It could go into this, this machine at the bottom and come up, and the oil would be up and the water which is heavy would be down, right? Or vise versa. So 99% of the lanolin would be clean because of hot water right? The heat when you, when you try to clean the wool. (A: Umhm) It was the scouring. One, two, three phases. They found out that they make more money by [unclear] machine that they had. I know because they [unclear] them. I represented the people in (Switzerland). And I, where they [unclear] all that American Woolen, because American Woolen used to have the woolen center where they used to sort the wool, you know, the size and everything, then throw it in the gunk and everything, throw it in. And they had the cleaning process, and they had the machine [words unclear]. Gold, yellow gold. So that’s what they had for burns, you know, they use for burns, lanolin? So the moisture for the lipstick, for the (A: makeup and stuff) makeup and everything, yeah lanolin. That’s where they get it from. So the wool, they didn’t care about the woolen business anymore, they just extracted that see. (A: chuckles) So [words unclear]. Then Ayer, I used to talk to the guys that worked there in the chemistry department, the two boys.

A: When did that place close?

L: Oh that closed, let me see it was?

A: In the 50’s?

L: It must have been. [Words unclear] was working there, was working there for years. That I knew well, you know, we used to talk. (A: Yeah) Of course I would you know, ask questions you know, because I want to know, see. So he told me how they were researching on shampoos, hair. They had monkeys and things like that over there that they (A: Did they? Yeah?), oh yeah, research.

A: On Middle Street?

L: Right, the second building. Up there you could see it. (A: Umhm) “Ayer”. They owned it. I think it was Park Street, New York, they owned all that. (A: Yeah) Ayer, Ayer Pharmaceuticals, Ayer, that’s them. That’s them from those days.

A: Are they still around?

L: Oh sure. They have these companies, Ayer, Ayerst, A Y E R S T you know, they’re from over here. (A: Yeah) They’re the ones that used to own, that used to own the French orphanage and all that, you know that building there?
A: Right. Right.

L: They’re the ones that headed that you see? And uh, in fact they used to have a nun come over here to check the accounts of the property that they had here for money, collecting. There was a guy that used to come in every so often with a dirty [unclear]. He used to come here, you could tell he was from the Ayer Company. [Comment unclear]

A: Well I don’t know [unclear].

L: No, there’s nothing there. So what, what? Do you want something to eat? Uh, why don’t you have a sandwich huh?

A: Yeah, maybe take another break huh?

L: Yeah.

[Tape is turn off for lunch break]

L: When you went in the Union National Bank you had the granite and the marble [comment unclear] they had the uh, you know, the pillars, and on the left they had a few, that it depends like you buy a house and things like that. You went up the elevator on the left, there’s Homer Bourgeois and the private deal, you know, loans, [unclear]. Then you went on the right, looking down from the uh, there was the bank, the teller, special teller that would pay off what Bourgeois okayed, you see? That was the business transactions upstairs. It was archaic. (A: Yeah) It was confining. I was not a bank that you go in there and feel relaxed, see. People come in, and thank you very much, put the money in, get the hell out you see. They didn’t modernize. That’s the way I saw it you see. (A: Umhm) But the appearance within sometimes reflects the appearance of how the company moves you see. Now Bourgeois was a very astute businessman. (A: Yeah) In fact there’s been so much you know, in running the bank that they automatically told him you have to take a week off every month. (A: Yeah) Yeah, so he, the decisions, you know. So he won’t be tired for people to make their own decisions. Once a, once a month he had a week off to come back fresh, relax. But banks have to have people that are well known that can attract business. (A: Yeah) You got to have a Board that’s facing the times. Do you want to stimulate activities in the city, but you can be relaxed a little bit with the money, (A: Yeah) and not be tight. Example: Exhibit A. When DeMoulas first wanted to open a store on Dummer Street, he went. His father was in business for over forty years. The boys took over, we got to expand huh? Buy the buildings there and build uh (--) They went to Bourgeois at the Union National, they refused them. (A: Did they?) Refused them outright. They said, “look, we’ve been in business here all these years.” And you know they had the lambs they used to uh, they used to own lambs you know, out in Dracut there.

A: Um, they used to have a sign in the window that said “[unclear]”.
L: Yeah, yeah [unclear] from the farm. So they refused. So the boys, in order to get the money, they called their friends. You know, they said look, I don’t know what interest was at that time that they paid. 3%. He said we’ll pay you ten percent, [whistle] we need the money to open, you know, buy them because the banks refused. They said look, you want us, we want to be a part. No, we’ll take the gamble, you know. (A: Umhm) So what happened was they arranged to get, get I think they had oil in uh, some link to the Gas Company or the Electric Light Company, which it gave them a break if they were to have you know, gas, oil, or I forget which one it was. (A: Right) So they made the deal there so it won’t be costly, see, that they would furnish the apparatus involved and the machinery. Then the kid that had first come from North Carolina, Psinos, he was a contractor, construction man. His brother-in-law was a carpenter. So together they built a square, a block building, right. Like a warehouse. And they built it for uh, for Mike.

A: Yeah. Mike’s wife is a Psinos eh? Mike’s wife?

L: I don’t (--)

A: One of them. One of them.

L: Yeah. Yeah, Mike, yeah. It could be. I don’t remember exactly who Mike married, but I think Psinos, yeah. So they built it there. And when I was talking to, to Mike, the word was that if they make two, three thousand dollars a week they’d be hitting it good you know. (A: Yeah) In the meantime I met the father. The father is a red head you know. (A: Was he?) (L: Yeah) What was the father’s name? Was it George?

L: No, no. He used to come in the coffeehouse before. I used to treat him, he’d treat me whenever you know. And um, I knew him well you see. So we were in front of the City Hall, you know, facing Carroll Parkway where the store is. I said, “you retired, I’m glad to hear that. I said, and the boys now.” He said “look Louie, forty years I supported them [few words unclear]. Now here, let them, you got a place here.” “How about yourself?” “More money for me he said, for my wife and myself he said. Let them do it.” So there were three you know, George, Thelema is the sister, and uh, the kid that does the um, the fellow taking care of the account, Mianis, you know Mianis. You know him. Well. (A: No, no) They grew up together, see. And he always worked at the store with him. And I think DeMoulas’ father and his mother are brother and sister. (A: Oh yeah) So he was related, yeah. He took care of the accounts and everything, you see. So they went and bought the building from the lady next to us, next to their house where they had, I mean where the store, little store. (A: Yup) They broke them down. And the husband of the woman had said, “if I die I’d never sell it to DeMoulas.” She said, you know. And they were from the same part of the old country, you know that?

A: How come?
L: I don’t know why. But, but she said no, I would not let the boys, you know, not get their wish you know, to build themselves. So they bought the building, broke it down, built up a store. The first day, second day, booming business. What two, three thousand dollars? They made it in two days, one day! They said, “where have we been all this time?” Improve. The next thing, they didn’t, they had a lot of guts you go to give. They didn’t, the minute they found out that this is a business, and they knew because they were brought up since they were kids. (A: Yeah) Immediately they had the guys with the clock certain places to check how many cars went by, how many people went by and all that. That’s part of the trick to find out how many people that past by. (A: Yeah) They did the same thing in Chelmsford. (A: Yeah) The next thing you know, another store.

A: The one uh, Eastgate, by the, yeah.

L: There’s this big one this time, you know. They went for the works, you know?

A: Yeah. Did the bank loan them money that time?

L: They didn’t need the bank. The bank, sure they wanted to give them. Of course when you’re successful they want to give you all the money you want. So in fact Mike became a Director.

A: Yeah, of the Union National?

L: Afterwards. Yeah. (A: Yeah) [Unclear]. So, big, big business, big business. I couldn’t believe it. Second store, third store, fifth store. [Unclear]. No only for the business, but the real estate. He owns other things. Hotels, and everything, you’d be surprised what he owns throughout the country you know. And uh, I’ve got Greek priests in Lowell that get free cars from him you know. (A: Oh yeah!) Change brand new every two years. (A: Oh yeah!) Yeah free! He’d buy them. And uh, very philanthropic, helped a lot of people. I know people that they helped [unclear], nobody knows [unclear], see? And uh, it’s too bad these things have to come against him, you know. The sister-in-law. You know, Mike took the pledge you know, to protect the family beyond other family you see. Not to give a bad name, because she was flipping around in Florida, you know, after awhile. (A: Really?) Yeah, and Mike found out about it. [Few words unclear] you know, reputation. And uh, he had given them a lot of money you know, give me this, give me that. And Mike was [unclear] you know, and he would be uh, how much, until it reached a point where the percentage dropped you know, from the money that she was, that he was giving her and the kids. Part of what was the portion that they were entitled too, you see. Then the shortcuts of investing the money see, from the fund. Well everybody does that, trusts and all that. (A: Umhm) Invest the money. He said a certain trust do not permit you to allow the investment of amount of money certain type of investments you know. You have to protect the percentage of the money that you have in trust, see. Not too many uh, anybody like uh, US Bonds and all that. You got to have a stock percentage so the money can be [unclear] so you don’t foolishly knock the whole front out. (A: Yeah, yeah.) Mike was using that for a good purpose and it built the fund up a hell of a lot, but they didn’t worry about [words
unclear]. So they screwed the whole thing up (A: Yeah) trying to get after Mike. And then the disgrace you know, what they said about their uncle and all that. (A: Yeah) A big insult you know. (A: Yeah) Mike said, “all I did for this to keep the family together and this is what I get he says.” (A: Um) I said to him, I met him uh, the last time I met him was in the um, in the funeral parlor [unclear] were together. And uh, you know, everybody tries to go “Mike.” Big shot, you know, they’re trying to be a seem associate. (A: Yeah.yeah. See money and all that). I’m an associate right, but I sat down. I said, “hi Mike, how are you?” This and that. The only thing I told him one time, I said, “look Mike, I said, nobody knew anything about the Greeks here, the average American until Onasis bought the President’s wife. Bought her like he buys tomatoes as in a store. Bought it out see, and then he was ready to sell it back, see? I says, I found out what the Greeks were, Onasis. Onasis died, you now honor the Greek name. You bring it up there where they recognize us over here. See the Greek [few words unclear]. He felt so good you know, about it. Hey, not that I meant it. I wasn’t, I wasn’t stupid in telling him you know, that I was [words unclear]. And in the discussion that followed uh, some of them were asking Mike (A: yeah) what about [unclear] am I in the will, you know, joking and all that. Where are you going to take all that money? There’s all these stores, where the hell are you going? He said, “boys, let me tell you something. Once you reach that stage he says, with the money, they’re figures, they’re only numbers, only numbers.” Can you imagine the money, cash money that flows into the special place where they bring the money every night? He supplies the banks with cash. (A: Yeah) He’s a big banker! Well I hope that you got some information there.

A: Oh you know I did. Thanks for sharing all this.

End of interview