A: This is interview with George Eliades, Jr. on February 21st, 2003. And I’m going to steal a pen right here. And George, a little bit of background, where and when were you born?

G: I was born in Lowell, 1943, May 5th. Actually 5th day, 5th month, 5:55 in the morning, which adds up to five 5’s, but anyway, yah.

A: Yah. And where (---)

G: I guess I can fairly say, except for, except for eight years out of this city from ‘60 –’68 to go to school, that I’ve been in the city since that time.

A: Okay. Good, and tell me about where you went to school at.

G: Well I went to the Oakland School, which was probably five blocks away from my house. Walked up there, didn’t know from buses in those days. From the Oakland I went to the Moody Junior High School, and from the Moody Junior High School to Lowell High School; and from Lowell High School to Bowden College in Brunswick, Maine; (A: Okay) and from Bowden College in Brunswick, Maine to Boston, to New England School of Law.

A: Okay. And what did you, what did you take up at Bowden?

G: I majored in political science.
A: Okay, great. And what neighborhood did you grow up in? Obviously Belvidere.

G: I grew up in Belvidere, yup.

A: Tell us a little bit about Belvidere back in the 50s and 60s.

G: Well it’s kind of interesting. I think the story goes that my father was the first American of Greek decent to live in Belvidere. (A: Really) Yah. My mother likes to tell the story of how when they got married in 1936 my father said to her, “Your choice is a diamond ring, or the house.” And she wisely chose the house. So in 1936 they bought a house on Pentucket Avenue (A: Okay), which is right off of Andover Street, a classic middle class neighborhood in terms of the houses around us. And until, until my mom suffered from Alzheimer’s and had to move out, she was in the house from ’36 to I think it was 19, if I’m not mistaken, I might not be exactly right, but it was ’88 or ’90. (A: Okay) So she was in there for more than 50 years.

A: Okay. And you talked about the demographics a little bit. The rest of the neighborhood primarily being what, Yankee/Irish?

G: Um, probably yah, Yankee/Irish. More Irish than Yankee I would say. I’m not sure. At that point the Yankees were fleeing from the city. Probably I don’t know fleeing is the proper way to characterize it, but there were certainly fewer in those days than had been from years before. Thinking quickly as I go through the neighborhood, we had a bunch of storeowners and professionals in the neighborhood. A gentleman by the name of, it was probably every other house was Yankee or Irish now that I think about it.

A: Really, yah. You remember (--) 

G: From the Gookins who were involved in the I think the store, (A: Furniture store?) yah, furniture store business to the O’Neils. And he was a, he was in the machinery manufacturing business I think, to Professor Ball from the University of, well the Textile School in those days. (A: Sure) Dr. Dinneen, who was an eye doctor, lived next door to us. And then on the other side of us was Miss Dane, who was a teacher at the Oakland School, had retired by the time I got there. And she prepped me in reading, because I had trouble reading when I was first growing up. The next one was a woman by the name of Mrs. Juan, who worked at city hall and her husband I think had been a doctor, or some kind of a professional. They owned a 1946 black Cadillac convertible that was probably one of the most beautiful cars I’ve seen even to this day. And they had a, they had a handyman by the name of Claude. I never did know his last name. That’s (--) And he was sort of like, all the kids would gather around him. He used to shine that car every single day. It was just unbelievable. Mr. Bernston from Scandinavia. He would work for the Post Office. (A: Okay) I don’t know, I’m giving you extraneous information, (A: No, but you) but it is kind of interesting of the make-up of the neighborhood.

A: When your parents first moved out there were there any difficulties (G: No I don’t think so) being the first Greeks move into that (--)
G: Yah, I certainly never experienced anything like that, and I never got the sense that my parents did either. You know I can say this, the difference probably in part was the fact that when my father came here in 1921 as a 20 year old, he came actually not from Greece, but from Asia Minor, a settlement on the Turkish Coast that was then known as Smyrna. (A: Umhm) S M Y R N A. Today it’s Ismir. And Smyrna was probably at the time the Hong Kong of the Mediterranean. It was a huge international trading center, populated by Germans, French, every, English, English British, and it was a commerce center of the Mediterranean. (A: Okay) Unfortunately at the time it was also in an area where the Turkish Revolution was going on. And at that time there were all kinds of politics taking place. There are a million stories about the Western world and the Eastern world, and how they acted and interacted as far as that was concerned, which is kind of ironic when you think of what’s going on today. But in any event my father had already gone to college, which was very unusual for most of the immigrants that came to this country, and had graduated from the International College at Smyrna.

A: Oh okay.

G: And so when he came to this country, by the way it gives you a little bit of the, also the family background kind of things. My grandfather was a merchant and had, besides my father, two daughters, an older and a younger daughter. And when he sensed and was tipped off that there was going to be serious trouble in the area, his main concern was to send his boy, his son to America for safety. And that’s what in fact he did. And they later fled from Smyrna and went first to a Greek Island called Mitilini, or Lesvos, and then from there to the Greek mainland in Athens to a place called, a suburb of Athens set aside for refugees, which was named appropriately New Smyrna. And of course most of the people who had fled from Smyrna went and settled in that area outside of Athens.

A: Oh okay.

G: In any event, so when my father came he was already pretty well educated. Entered BU School of Law and worked in Greek restaurants in Boston (A: Did he?) while he was there, to make a living doing that and then graduated from there.

A: Now Charlie Sampas, I read a column one time awhile ago that talked about your father watching Smyrna burn as he left the port.

G: That’s true. It’s something he never talked an awful lot about, but it, those days were very, very sad and awful days for many, many Greeks and Armenians, (A: Yah) and tragic days. And ironically, as I say, there’s a lot of negative talk about what was going on among the British and the French, and the Germans with regards to what they were or weren’t doing to stop, or not stop war and problems. So what goes around comes around, who knows, I don’t know.

A: Now when did your father decide to come to Lowell? He was living down in Boston while going to school?
G: No, he actually was living with an aunt of his in Haverhill. He actually had (--) My
grandfather’s sister had come, she was the first member of the family that come to America after
a broken love affair is what the story goes (A: Oh really) about, yah, and decided to strike out in
the new world. And she came here and settled in Haverhill with another one of my father’s,
actually there were two of them, a sister and a brother. And he, James, his name was
Pappadopoulos. And actually I should maybe go back a little bit and say that my father’s name,
the legal family name actually I am told was once Pappadopoulos, which in Greek is probably as
close to Smith as anything you can say. It really literally translates to “son of a priest.” (A:
Okay) And so that’s, most of your Pappadopoulos means, mean that there’s a priest in the
family. (A: Okay) Pappas as they’re referred to in Greek. (A: Okay) So, and my grandfather
was Elias Pappadopoulos. And in the, in the Asia Minor tradition, when you were the son of
Elias you were Eliades, the D E S, being like the, like the Irish version of O’Connor, the O, (A:
Sure) or some of the other Johnson, son of John, or whatever it might be.

A: Yah, yah. Okay.

G: So for business purposes he took on the name Eliades is what we were told anyways.
Anyway I’ve forgotten what I was suppose to say about (--) A: So, so your father took that name, or your grandfather?

G: My grandfather did.

A: Your grandfather took it. Yah, okay. So your (--) G: Oh yah, so what he did is he, I think he lived in town most of the time in Boston while he
was in school, but I think he considered himself connected with his aunt in Haverhill, aunt and
uncle in Haverhill. The uncle in Haverhill owned a confectionary store, an old-fashion like, I
don’t know if you’re familiar with what used to be a Boston Confectionary (A: Okay) here
downtown, the old BC, (A: Yah) where they made candies and had a counter, (A: Lunch
counter) with, a marble lunch counter with all of the (--) A: Danas, (G: Yah, exactly) you know Danas is still has something like that.

G: [Unclear]. He had a store like that in Haverhill, and his kids, that was the biggest thrill for
us, because we would go in an make our own frappes and sundaes and whatever it was. So that
was a lot of fun. Anyway I’m getting off subject.

A: That’s fine. So when did your father, or why did he decide to come to Lowell?

G: I think simply because there were a lot of Greeks in Lowell. (A: Yup) And so when he got
out of law school it made sense for him to go to a place where his clientele, where there was a lot
of potential for clientele. And he came to Lowell and settled here. I’m not even sure exactly the year to tell you the truth.

A: Okay. Now he must have been one of the first Greek lawyers around town, right?

G: Oh yah, absolutely. I think they had been, there was maybe one other at that time and I can’t think of the gentleman’s name, it might come to me, who was like the man, the Greek lawyer at the time. So my father was one of the new kids on the block kind of things.

A: Good. Now how did your father become active in politics?

G: Oh well the simplest answer to that is it’s in every Greek’s blood all the way back if you’re familiar with your ancient history, and obviously the roots of democracy, etc. I think that basically it’s something that if you even go to the coffee houses, which still exist in Greece now in every city and town in the countryside there, that’s what 99 percent of the conversation is all about, politics. And they all have their opinions and viewpoints. And even, I don’t know if anyone’s told you this, but in Lowell there were two churches, two principle Greek churches in the first instance, which still remain. There are other’s now, which was the Holy Trinity on I think, is that Lewis and Hancock? Yah, Lewis and Hancock. And the (--) A: Jefferson Street is the address.

G: Okay. Then I, then probably the Transfiguration is Lewis and Hancock. (A: Yah) And they were factions, Royalists or not. In other words, did they support the monarchy in Greece, or did they not support the monarchy? (A: Right) And that was the breakdown in the church. So even among the Greeks they had their own politics that divided up the group so to speak.

A: Where did your father follow in that?

G: My father was at the Holy Trinity. (A: Okay) No excuse me. My father was in the Transfiguration. My mother was at the Holy Trinity. So they had a mixed marriage of sorts shall we say, even though they were Greek. And I think my father came from the newer tradition shall we say, whereas my grandfather on my mother’s side was more of a traditionalist than a conservative and a supporter. Um, so I think anyway, probably the combination of being the advocate from, as a lawyer and also the Greek blood in him brought out the politics in him. But also I’m sure that I would submit, or he would submit that probably the biggest reason was he just felt that it was very important to promote Greeks in American culture. (A: Yah, yah) And if there was anything I think that my father became known for, it was the concept of promoting Greeks and young Greek, Greek-American children into the society and getting them interested in, in becoming not just Americans, but good educated intellectual Americans. Very (--) My parents hammered away at education and schooling. And I guess that was probably the immigrant idea in those days, because they all new how important education was to advancing. Getting out of the mills and getting out of the, you know, the tough jobs, the physical end of it. So it was, it was pretty easy for me. And I think it was another way that he got into politics, and
that was that there was a Greek men’s organization that still exists today called the AHEPA. It’s the American Hellenic Educational Progressive Association. And you probably know their headquarters was on Kirk Street, across from the high school in one of the buildings now owned by ( --)

A: They had a place over in West Centralville at one time.

G: Way back, yah, before they had the Kirk Street headquarters. And he was very active in not just the local chapter, but the national chapters, and was involved in the politics within the organization, (A: Sure, sure) and was a national officer at various times. And they used to, my mother and father used to go I think almost yearly to the national convention. It was sort of, it was the one vacation he took a year. And for him it was a vacation, but of course he didn’t enjoy the politics of it all.

A: Yah.

G: And I laugh with my brothers, because the conventions took place in August, and all three of us were born in May. And I, one time, I don’t know how or why, counted back nine months and figured out that August was the nine-month period prior to our births. So we kind of put together the AHEPA conventions and whatever, which was kind of interesting.

A: Well good. Good. So it was a real vacation in all the sense of it.

G: Absolutely. Absolutely. So it was from there that I think his political bent in terms of all of that background coming to the forefront, and probably getting involved in city politics in Lowell.

A: Now Louie Kolofolios was an important person for politics back then, right?

G: He was. Yah, he was a ( --) He um, Louie interestingly, and I don’t know the whole story, but Louie went to law school but never fully became a lawyer, and never practiced law. Got very much involved in politics through the church and through various other connections that he had. And as a result of that became sort of a political kingpin in the area in terms of a godfather kind of thing. And a pretty powerful guy in terms of being able [to deliver] voting blocks, which (A: Sure) in those days everything was voting blocks. Not that they’re not voting blocks today, but I think that America, and Americans consider themselves a lot more independent than what we’re known as the “vote the straight ticket for your party.” And I’m sure you know that some of the old ballots used to just be one check mark and they voted for the party right down the line. You didn’t have to bother putting a check for each office. You just voted for the party. (A: Yah) That doesn’t exist anymore today for sure. Yah, and so Louie was very active in that kind of stuff. I don’t know, I don’t know that he ever actually himself ran for political office. I’m not sure.
A: Jimmy Curtis told me I think he ran for council back in the 30’s, but I think Jim’s father Teddy Kutras ran too, and they split the vote. So neither, neither one was able to get in from the Greek-Americans.

G: There was one other and you probably, if you know your history, of the Greek tradition and the background in the city, there was one other lawyer who came along by the name of Samuel Sampatakos, shortened his name to Sampson. (A: Okay) And he was a lawyer and a political activist. And basically a rival I guess you would have to say of my father’s for the Greek vote in town, (A: Yah) which made for interesting politics I guess, in the sense that if you stop to think that it was tough enough for a Greek-American to get elected to the council, but like you just said about the possibility, I don’t remember that, but of the, of the Curtis/Kolofolios split a vote. In essence in ’47, which was I think the first year my father ran, no 40’, yah ’47, yes. They, he and Sampson split up votes and neither one of them were elected. (A: Okay. Okay) And it wasn’t until the election of November of ’49 that my father became the first elected Greek-American to the Lowell City Council. (A: Yah) And quite a triumph if I might add. And I’m proud to say we had a system, which you’re probably familiar with called Proportionate Representation that you chose your candidate by order of preference (A: Right), and you had nine votes. Nice councilor, nine votes. So he chose number 1 thru 9. Now he didn’t have to. (A: Right) And the main thrust however was that the, obviously the most important vote was to get a number 1 vote, because that was the critical foundation to going on through the voting process to try and get something somewhere there. The interesting thing was that having lost in ’47 when he came back in ’49 he actually was the number 1 vote getter, and the number 1, number 1 vote getter (A: Really) in the council in that race, which was really kind of amazing. 

A: So Irish people if (G: Everybody) French people had voted for him?

G: Absolutely, yah. He got a huge vote and ended up the number 1 vote getter, and citywide, in that, in that election, which was really kind of an amazing thing. A sidelight to that, that I think plays a huge role in it, and the person that probably deserves a great amount of the credit to that was my mother, (A: Oh really) who was yah, the classic first lady in the sense that she was probably as good if not a better campaigner than my father was. And she got out and made speeches on the radio, and got out to all the clubs and organizations to boost her husband. And years later after my father died there were people who were constantly on the phone and in public trying to get her to get actively involved as a candidate for public office, but that’s something that she never (--) She, as much as she enjoyed shall we say politics, it was really just to help promote her husband who she had so much affection for. And but a good part of the vote that he got was due in no small part to the great campaigner that she turned out to be.

A: Now he served just one term on the council right?

G: Served on term, yah, and it was kind of an interesting term. First of all, and I don’t know what your, how deeply you’ve researched the politics, but I know that the vote for mayor that year was endless. I think it went 400 and some odd ballots over two or three-week period.
Wow) and stalemated. And the short version of the story, because there were so many little political back rooting things that were going on, but the short version of the story is that at some point my father and Bill Geary, who were friends, struck a deal because Mr. Geary had I think pretty well lined up a job in the state that he knew was coming. And the deal basically was that if my father voted, gave to him the fifth vote, that after the year went by and he got his other job that Mr. Geary would leave, would not leave the council, I don’t think he left the council, I think he just gave up the mayor’s seat. And the held a new election and then my father was elected. So he actually was only the mayor for one year during that two-year term.

A: I don’t think that’s happened every before or since though, huh?

G: I don’t think so, no. Certainly not (--) I mean I, I think there’ve been years where no one has served the full, where people have not served the full two-year term, but I don’t think it was ever on the basis of a preordained deal so to speak.

A: Now your father and Bill Geary were both Democrats. (G: Right) I mean even though you have kind of a non-party election. (G: Right) So they were able to work that deal do you think from within the party system?

G: Well you know it’s funny, because recently I found, I found or I pulled out a scrapbook and saw, and started reading some of the background stories. I guess I can highly commend you, and I don’t know how much time you had, that’s a huge subject to follow, but what struck me when I was reading the, the papers about those times, there was a writer at the time whose name I’m sure if familiar to you for the Lowell Sun by the name of Frank Barrett. And Frank used to write columns. I mean they were like a half a page in the paper, you know? (A: Yah) It’s unbelievable the detail that they would go into on these stories. (A: Right) And um, there definitely was a Republican and Democratic connection to the way the settlement was made. I don’t remember all of the details of it. I remember John Janas who later became mayor and state representative, and who’s son went to Bowden with me, and we’re very friendly. And Dr. Janas, another one of his boys, we’ve all remained friends over the years. John was, John the father was a Republican (A: Right), and he was one of the parties that was involved in that election that year. But on the other side of the political spectrum, because he was a Republican a little known fact to me in those days when I was I guess, let me think I was seven, six, seven years old at the time. So I didn’t know much of anything (A: Sure, sure) about what was going on, but none of those items meant much, the political (--) I mean I certainly knew strongly the difference between, we were a much more party oriented country in those days than we are today. But anyway, yah, the other thing is that the, I don’t know how friendly my father had been with Bill Geary before that, but they certainly became very close friends after that. And Bill’s son Eugene, Gene Geary, who became a lawyer later practiced with my father in my father’s office before he died.

A: Oh okay.
G: Gene took over the office and his brother Bill, the son of Bill the mayor, practiced with him and later served on the Charter Commission.

A: The Charter Commission, (G: Right) yah. Now what were some of the issues that your father dealt with during that time on the council if you recall?

G: Um, education (A: Okay) was really big for him. And ah, I’m smiling and thinking because I can remember in somewhere and something I haven’t, and we have some tapes of some of his speeches, which somehow we should try to save and find, and get.

A: Yah, we should get those for the exhibit too.

G: [Unclear] complete trash pick-ups was a big issue in those days. (A: Yah) Trash and garbage removal and things like that. The street care and street ah, I mean they’re the basics.

A: The butter, the bread and butter issues.

G: Yah, the bread and butter issues were still big ones in those days. Snow plowing and street care and things like that.

A: You could make or break an election on some of those issues really.

G: Absolutely, yah, yah. Absolutely. You know basic, the same issues probably as today in many respects. And those were, you know, those (--) If you wanted to get to the public shall we say, issues part of things, you know, and obviously behind the scene was the critical part of ah, of promoting and making progress for Greek Americans. And that was, that was the driving force I think behind getting so many Greek Americans involved in city politics in those days. And they realized that they had to have an active voice in the political process. And that was a great rallying point. And probably ironically the fact that there was a division between the Sampson core and the Eliades core in another sense made it better, because they all brought on, but made people a lot more active and involved as a result of it. And in the long run it benefited both the community in general and the Greek community obviously.

A: Now your father, did he run in the next election?

G: No. It’s kind of interesting. I think, again, bearing in mind I was only seven, or eight years old at this time, and what I may have heard then or after that, my impression was that he for a number of reasons, first of all he was, he had a very good law business. So he was very busy in the law business. And if you’re going to be (--) Even though the position was only ceremonial, if you’re going to be in politics and make all of the chicken banquets and all of that stuff, it takes an awful lot of time away from doing that. So one of the things that I heard was that it was just was interfering too much with his law practice. A corollary to that, which is kind of an interesting little sidelight was, and I’ve said this to a number of lawyer politicians since that time, was that I, that I heard that quite often people would come to his office looking for what were,
what might be more probably legal services, but we’re looking, looking for those services from him to be more on a gratis basis, because he was a politician and they were coming to see him as the councilor and the mayor, rather than as the lawyer.

A: I see. I see.

G: And then beyond that one of the other parts of it that the story, as the story goes as I’m told, was he didn’t like the, he didn’t like the part of the politics that got into the rough part, with the usual I don’t know, I’m not sure how to characterize it, but you know, the parts of politics that deal with maybe in some cases influencing peddling, in other cases the problems that would arise among people because of the jealousies and pettiness that goes with political fights and campaigns, and whatever. So at that time there was another I guess I would say, young lawyer, who in the meantime had married my mother’s sister. His name was Nicholas Contakos. And he got the political bug a little bit. So it was kind of a natural secretor for my father, because what he just decided was he would get out and he introduced Nicholas Contakos to the community and endorsed his mother-in-law as being a good successor to him on the city council. And that in fact was the basis for the election in ’51 when there was now a Sampson/Contakos battle that’s supplanted the Sampson/Eliades battle. And based on I think my father’s popularity at the time, it was enough, he was able to throw enough weight over to and his then political machine, or whatever that might be, over to the Contakos people. And Nick Contakos in the subsequent election beat Sampson. And that really, it’s kind of ironic. It’s electing one of nine, but it really meant could you beat the person closest in your own ethnic group the way that (--) A: Yah, because of the number 1 vote.

G: Exactly. Exactly. And he became city councilor. And ironically, I say ironically, interesting would be probably a better phrase, he and, Nick and his wife at that time lived in an apartment building I remember for some strange reason, 128 Westford Street.

A: Okay.

G: Which was a large wooden apartment building that housed, I’m going to guess, at least four, but there might even have been six or eight apartments, large for those days, almost like houses. (A: Yah) And his next-door neighbor was Frank Barrett. (A: Oh okay) And they were very friendly. And Frank Barrett, if I’m not mistaken, in ’52, or 3 was elected city manager.

A: Right. Right. So was Nick one of his strong supporters?

G: Right, right, needless to say. (A: Yah) Took to you know, his neighbor and friend.

A: Now when they elected Frank Barrett they got rid of another guy, Lupien, Ulysses Lupien.

G: Ulysses J. Lupien I think it was. Yah, and he was quite a controversial character I guess, because he was probably as I recall, and the part of it I remember, he was criticized for being
more of a bureaucrat than a politician. He was a, he was a cruncher, a numbers cruncher and a you know, and a street sweeper kind of guy, or whatever. Not street sweeper, but you know, taking care of the basics. But maybe wasn’t political enough for some of the councilors at that time. So his, I forget his term, may have been shorter than a year.

A: It was, it was less than a year.

G: So yah, then Frank Barrett, of course the interesting thing about Frank Barrett was that he was a Lowell Sun columnist. We all know about the interplay of politics in Lowell, and the Lowell Sun. And that of course, that led to later on people using terms like sunflowers, and things like that, although it wasn’t directly from the Frank Barrett era, but it certainly was the genesis that got that. You know, you either were a, perceived as a tool of the Lowell Sun, or, or not along the way.

A: What do you think the role of the Sun was in politics back then?

G: Oh pretty extraordinary I would say. (A: Yah) You know, bear in mind that except for the fledgling radio stations, most of the news at that time was dominated by the Sun. And we had other newspapers in the city, in the decades before the 50s, but I think at that, if I’m not mistaken, in the 50s there was only one other paper and I think it was a Sunday, it had gone down to a Sunday, Sunday Telegram or Telegraph I think, or something.

A: Yah, I don’t think that was even much more than, than the early 50’s.

G: Right. Right. So it was, it became the sole newspaper, and sole powerhouse basically in the process.

A: Yah. How would their politics work out?

G: In terms of?

A: I mean did they have their own candidates? Did they have people on boards?

G: Oh I would say so. I would say so. Actually it’s interesting, because the other connection in there is that a very powerful, bright, intellectual city editor at the time was a gentleman by the name of Dave Connors, who basically was clearly the Kendall Wallace of those days. (A: Okay) Probably the gentleman from whom Kendall learned (A: Yah) how to, how to get involved politically and otherwise. And he was Frank Barrett’s brother-in-law.

A: Okay.

G: So that probably didn’t hurt his abilities to, to rise in the political spectrum as well. And of course there were those people who said that when Frank Barrett became the city manager, that the Lowell Sun was just essentially running the city. They had one of their own people right in
there as the chief operating officer. I don’t know. I don’t know the particulars of the situation well enough to know. I never perceived that there was any maliciousness in the process, but who knows. It’s not the kind of thing that at that age I really had a sense of. Let us say.

A: Let me ask you about just a couple of other councilors from that era, and if you have any stories, or your father’s dealings with them. How about Vinnie Hockmeyer?

G: Vincent, I know, the funny thing is that I guess I probably, you said Ulysses Lupien, I said Ulysses J. Lupien. Vincent P. Hockmeyer, I just you know, I can remember all of the little advertising campaigns of those days. And the cards, one of the biggest thing was everybody had a card to hand out. And it always had number one in a box to try and encourage people. Everyone wanted to vote number one. Vinnie Hockmeyer was the character of the day. I don’t really remember him that well. (A: Okay) He was a (--) Oh I’ll tell you. I’m going to take you away from that, (A: Sure) because I left out a story that kind of involves a lot of the Lowell, the Lowell land people. The election in ’53 brought about a Sampson/Contakos rematch. And it ended up in a final tally that separated them either by six or eighteen ballots. (A: Oh wow) And I say six or eighteen because it would, depended on who was counting which way. (A: Okay) And it was one of the, it’s kind of interesting from the standpoint of our last presidential election, it was one of the first major campaign, I mean elections that was fought so bitterly that it went actually to the Massachusetts Supreme Court to decide on the ballots and whether or not there were proper markings in the ballots. And it was landmark case. I’m sure if you still, if you did a legal research on a ballot law, (A: Yah) the case of Contakos verses the Election Commissioners in the city of Lowell, there’s one of the landmark cases on, on the intent of the voter. That was the big question. (A: Wow) What was (--) When they marked that ballot what was the intent of the voter. And that, that case brought to bear, what’s interesting about it, like I said, it went to the State Supreme Court, but it also had again, some of the same warring factions dealing and arguing the case. Because obviously there were I think no small element probably more so in those days than today, probably better than 50% of the people involved in politics in those days were the lawyers in the community. (A: Okay) And there was a lawyer, and I’m sure you know this name, Woodbury Howard.

A: Plan E?

G: Exactly. And they’re arguably one of the, one of the key people in the Plan E process who was with my father arguing the case in behalf of Nick Contakos and the Supreme Court. What it boiled down to was whether or not the marking on the ballot, which might not have been completely within the box, or might not have been a number one, or what was that and trying to determine just what, not only what the mark was, but was there an intent to vote for that person and that thing. And it was, it was something that I think held the election and the seating of the councilors, between Sampson and Contakos, off for weeks and months, because it went through the whole court process. (A: Wow) And ultimately the decision went Sampson’s way.

A: Oh it did?
G: Yah. And so he ended up supplanting Nick Contakos in the city council. (A: Okay) Ended up as the story goes, dying on the council floor in the middle of a speech, or as a result of a speech. It didn’t actually happen I think that way, but it was that, maybe that same evening, or something like that. And he was then followed by his wife, Ellen Sampson, and became I think the first woman mayor in the city if I’m not mistaken.

A: Yah. Now Sam Sampson was opposed to guys like Frank Barrett, right?

G: Oh absolutely, yah, for a variety of reasons, not the least of which was that Frank Barrett was a supporter of Nick Contakos and visa versa, and whatever. So they had their [camps]. I don’t think, I never perceived, to go back for a minute to your question about the republicans and the democrats, I never perceived, and I may be wrong because I never really had the, when I say anyway that I never perceived that there was a big connection to party in the local politics.

A: Well if you said Woodbury Howard was helping out Nick Contakas, that’s, you know, you have Republican Woodbury Howard helping out the Democrat Nick Contakos. So.

G: He’s a Republican.

A: Oh he was?

G: Strangely.

A: He was. So unlike your father, (G: Right) oh okay. (G: Strangely) Okay, but Sampson, (G: Not sure how he got) Sampson would have been Republican as well?

G: Yah.

A: Interesting.

G: Yah, I don’t know how that all happened to tell you the truth.

A: How about George Ayotte?

G: Just another name I know. I really, I was too young on it to really know a lot of these guys. I do know that as a result of being mayor, my father went, because the Chairman of the School Committee as it becomes of the city council process. And then a good friend of his, of my father’s was Judge Eno, whose son, Arthur L. Eno, Jr. (A: Louie) Louie as he’s known, was a young lawyer member of that school committee at the time. (A: Oh okay) And Louie likes to tell a bunch of stories, and I guess I recently kind of read the story again. I forget who the gentleman was, but there was something going on, some kind of a controversy in either my father’s first meeting at the School Committee, or early on, first or second. I think it was the very first meeting. And, and at some point the controversy was going on and somebody wanted to cut it off, and they jumped up. It’s a name, it’s a known Lowell name, politician jumped up
and moved to adjourn. A motion to adjourn takes precedent over any other motion on the floor immediately. (A: Okay) And my father ruled him out of order. And he then appealed from the ruling of the chair, and then it got very tense for the moment, because here’s this new mayor who’s now come in and chaired the school committee, and now these guys were getting put on the spot of were they going to uphold the ruling of the chair, or not uphold the ruling of the chair. I think my father just wisely backed off at the time and then said, you know, let them continue on and never put the thing to a vote. To think about it, there was another Greek on the school committee, and maybe the first elected Greek school committee by the name of Zenophon Nicopoulos.

A: Yah. He’s suppose to be still alive. He’s suppose to live I think in Nashua. (G: No kidding) Yah, I want to interview, but I don’t know how to get a hold of him.

G: Yah, I’ll try to find out. My brother lives in Nashua. I’ll see if he knows if he’s around there.

A: Okay.

G: And he was you know, a bright young guy. He, I think he had a doctorate at the time. (A: Really? Wow) He was in education, and a bright guy. So they had a very interesting school committee in those days. High caliber, high [unclear] today, but very high caliber school committee [unclear].

A: So the person that made the motion to adjourn, that would be Dick Donahue, right?

G: No it wasn’t Dick. Dick was (--)

A: I was guessing, because I know Dick served with Louie Eno.

G: Dick Donahue (--) Yah, but you know the funny thing is, I remember vividly the election of 1953. I went and held the sign for my Uncle Nick Contakos at Butman Road. There was a little garage there. I had no idea why it was a voting place, but that’s where my parents voted.

A: Really? Yah?

G: Yah. And I stood next to a woman, a pretty young woman by the name of Nancy Donahue, (A: No kidding) who was there supporting her husband, running, come back to Lowell and running to the school committee. And I was just at that time an eight-year-old kid, but it sort of stuck out in my brain. Who else?

A: Let me ask you about a couple of other guys, Samuel S. Pollard?

G: Oh yah.
A: SSP.

G: SSP, a real classic character, no question about it, and great [speecherfier]. Loved to talk on the council floor, [speecherfied]. A real interesting character.

Side A ends,
Tape I, side B begins

G: …not far from where I grew up, and I knew his daughters from school. And by the way I used to be in school with Sam Sampson’s daughters too. (A: Really) One of whom was older, and one of whom was younger. And there were a lot of occasional playground political shenanigans that would take place in those days I guess I can say. Sam was quite a character. Sam, I actually had, I had probably a very interesting opportunity when I came back to the city, because Sam was still around and still a vibrant member of the council, and whatever, and a great storyteller. And of course he delighted in telling stories of days when, when he and my father were involved in politics and the council and whatever. (A: Yah) And then later on, actually Sam was a friend of Nick Contakos’ as well, my uncle by marriage. One of the stories that I think, and this is kind of a classic, it tells you what, what things are like politically, or how they used to be done in the old days. (A: Yah) One of the things that, the story Sam used to like to tell because it turns out that in the early 70s my brothers and I bought a restaurant on Pawtucket Boulevard, right next to what used to be the Speare House. (A: Yah) It was a restaurant called “Peter Pan Drive-In.” (A: Okay) They specialized in broasted chicken. And the question is, how the hell does a lawyer and a doctor, and a stock analyst end up owning a restaurant in Lowell. And the restaurant was owned by my father’s best friend, a fellow by the name of Peter Georges, who is probably worthy of a book just on that gentleman himself. (A: Really) Peter Georges was probably the greatest innovator entrepreneur that I ever knew in my life, and one of the great innovator entrepreneurs in the city of Lowell.

A: No kidding.

G: As a matter of fact, Peter owned the building and the property that preclude, that preceded the Speare House. (A: Okay) It was know as “Pete’s on the Boulevard.” It was a restaurant, a family restaurant. And he was a gadget man. (A: Really) He flew seaplanes on the Merrimack River. (A: Really) Yah, in the 40s he landed his seaplanes on the Merrimack River. He had a hanger next to the Pete’s Restaurant where they, across Bedford Avenue where, which later became the “Peter Pan Drive-In Restaurant.” (A: Okay) And that’s where he would keep his plane. But more than that Peter also put up a big movie screen on the building, and he would project because he was into film and movies, and whatever, from his office on the second floor of the restaurant, “Peter, Peter, Pete’s on the Boulevard,” to the, across the street to this screen he would project movies to entice people to come up and buy their food and go out in the parking lot on a summer day and watch, summer night and watch, the hot summer night and watch the
movies, and buy food from his restaurant. And supposedly Cecil B. DeMille says that that was the first outdoor drive-in theater in the country.

A: Really! (G: Yah) Really! No kidding!

G: Yah, quite a character. Just, more so, the guy was just an unbelievable innovator, just a million different things that he did in the restaurant business. He had a potato chip, he first started with potato chips, which sounds like nothing, okay, but I’m going to tell you that he had a potato chip plant, which was just a little store in the side of a building on John Street (A: Okay) where the John Street Parking Garage was, and on Friday nights he would have a special. He used to sell the chips in a box, and the box was about this wide, about probably twelve inches wide, about eight inches high, and about six inches deep. (A: Yah) And fresh, I mean you’d walk in and the machine was spilling out, and the smell of course pumped out into the street. And the people would line up 50 and 100 deep on John Street on Friday nights, because on Friday you got two boxes for a quarter. (A: Wow) So anyway that’s a, that’s an offshoot. But Sam Sampson then says, when Peter, that’s what, when Sam Pollard was telling me the story one time about how, when Peter was running the restaurant up on the Pawtucket Boulevard where the Speare, before the Speare House, they had some sewer and waste problems, (A: Um) because it’s a low land there and whatever. (A: Right) And Sam raged with, I don’t even know. I guess maybe it was, maybe I should blame Frank Barrett, or get him involved, or whatever, but somehow Sam, who was on the council at the time, plus my, my, I guess my uncle I think, Nick at the time, or maybe it was with my father, I’m not sure, but it was one or the other, that at 2:00 in the morning they shut off the Pawtucket Boulevard with construction trucks and police on the Varnum Avenue side, up to beyond that, actually much beyond where the Speare House was in those days, there wasn’t much going on there, while they dug across the street and put a sewer line into the Merrimack River.

A: Directly in?

G: Of course it’s been taken out [unclear] since that time, but you know, and that solved the water problem for, for the guy at the time. But Sam loved that story because they had their, this included all the city people, police and construction workers and whatever to get that done.

A: Now Peter and his brother John right, they owned, did they, was it his brother John that owned the Epicure?

G: His brother John, no, they were cousins. His brother John owned another place. I was just telling somebody this story. John was an innovator too, not quite as much as Peter. John owned the Blue Moon (A: Okay) on Pawtucket Boulevard. (A: Okay) Excuse me, Princeton Boulevard, behind where DeMoulas’ shopping center on (A: Wood Street?) Wood Street is now.

A: Okay. Okay. That plaza there used to be a restaurant. (G: Yah) Okay.
G: And he had a huge nightclub restaurant there, and he put in the first stage. He used to do floor shows and everything. And he put in the first moving stage in New England, (A: Wow) not in the country, in New England. The floor actually rose up maybe six or eight feet, so that what was a dance floor then became a stage, and then they would perform a floorshow, and that of course was a draw in and of itself, just seeing the stage, having the dance floor become the stage. And John Georges’ specialty was he bought and sold the Blue Moon probably fifteen times.

A: Okay.

G: Made money every time. (A: Okay) Took back, paid for, and the people just wouldn’t make it and he’d end up running the place all over again. (A: Okay) His son Peter became a realtor in town, and never really had the greatest reputation around. Worked, did a lot of VA work. Was a very close friend of Gerry Wallace’s, but nowhere near as successful as the father. The father lived into his 90’s, and he got married four more times after his wife Rose, who was extremely dedicated to him, died in her 60s, 50s or 60s, died young. And John was quite a character. But yah, they were two very influential businessmen in the Greek community in those days, and relatives of the Epicure folks.

A: Okay. All right. And they were active in politics?

G: Oh yah, yah. In fact Peter Georges’ was my father’s campaign manager.

A: Oh okay. Okay.

G: And best friend, and best man. Each was the best man for the other, and whatever. They were very, very close.

A: Okay. Other stories about Sam Pollard?

G: Um, [unclear] and I just can’t (--) 

A: Come up with them right this second?

G: Yah, I can’t come up with them at the moment, but.

A: Who were some of the political um, I won’t call them clicks, but the different groupings back in that period? (G: Um) You talked about Sam Sampson and some of his crowd.

G: Yah, they, I mean they were actually much more ethnically oriented in those days than, than when I (--) Let’s say you know, when I came back into the city as a, having finished school and deciding to settle down here again, I mean you had the Gearys, and the Earlys and the Finnegans, and the Desmonds, and all of that stuff, and I’m sure they probably existed in those days earlier, (A: Yah) but you know what, probably I’m only going to guess not as much. Because I don’t
think at that time any non-Yankees were able to break into state jobs, (A: Okay) state representatives and state senators, and whatever. (A: Yah) So those were pretty well sewed up by the old Yankees in those days. So it wasn’t quite (--) 

A: Well some of them, there were some French reps though way back, like Achin who brought New Years holiday. (G: Yup) We did a thing on him for the Historical Society. (G: Did you?) Yah, we had, one New Years we had a kind of a Franco-American celebration and we, we honored him because he was the guy that really persevered and got New Years declared a holiday back in 1913, or something.

G: Yah.

A: And then there was, another Franco was Albert Bourgeois was a, (G: Yes) was a state rep back in the 30’s. 

G: Yah. All lawyers, not all lawyers, another lawyer type, the whole Bourgeois were (--) Aside from Homer of course, the bank thing, but all of those people were either around the legal circles, political circles, or banking circles in those days. Not while, you know, I just don’t remember. I’m still (--) 

A: Yah, it’s back in the 30’s. So it’s even almost before your father’s time. (G: Yah, yah) Now tell us, you came back to Lowell around ’68? (G: Uh huh) And how would you describe the city at that time? What were the social and economic conditions?

G: How about awful, but you know it’s kind of interesting, because I remember things that stick out in your mind. It was awful, but it never seemed awful to me. It was, it was a great place. It was the place I grew up. It was, everything was familiar to me. It was certainly, it was certainly a very positive kind of thing because of what my father had done in the community. And maybe you can call this a disadvantage in a sense, but I was known throughout the city just because I was George Eliades’ son. So, which made it difficult to get away with anything too. So my wife likes to tell the story of the, of, and my wife is a Somerville/Medford girl, and I met her in town when I was going to law school. And we got married, and her first visit (--) We got married and I was renting a house on Fairmount Street, and her first visit as a new wife to the supermarket was at DeMoulas’ in Tewksbury. And she was in about the third isle when a woman came up to her and said, “Aren’t you the girl that married the youngest Eliades boy?” So she got her first introduction to how Lowell is, what I call either the biggest little city, or the largest big, the smallest big city in America, because everybody knows everybody in town, you know. So when I got here I just kind of, actually Nick Contakos was still practicing law. (A: Okay) My family wanted very much for me to go and practice law with him. And I had some (--) 

A: Now who ran his campaign when he ran those few times?

G: Um, Dr. Kokinos (A: Okay) was one of them.
A: The dentist?

G: The dentist, yah, who became very big with the republican politics statewide, with the Volpe people and whatever. (A: Yah) Um, let’s see who else? His brothers. A lot of the same people who worked for my father. (A: Okay) Um, like I said, he sort of took over that, but he had a slight, Nick was younger than my father. So he had a slightly younger crowd around him.

A: Would the Georges have been involved, and guys like them?

G: Um, probably. The Demogenes? Does that name ring a bell? (A: No) He’s one of the owners of the Epicure. They were very close friends. (A: Oh okay) They were all related to the Georges and the Demogenes.

A: Demogenes, I think there was a Demogenes, an older timer that died maybe last year.

G: Yah.

A: George?

G: That’s who it was. (A: Yah) Yah, and he, George Demogenes was quite (--) And these guys, it’s kind of amazing how they spread out. And maybe it was through Greek circles, I don’t know, whatever, um, but as a kid when I would go to (--) The first lobster I ever had was at the, it was at the (A: Epicure) Epicure. And they had a back room. I should remember what it was. They did a renovation and they put a bar in the backroom.

A: Was that called the Nectar Lounge?

G: Exactly, that’s what it was. Thank you. And that was a big deal. But what really made me, the biggest most important thing about the Epicure and George Demogenes I remember was that he was a very close friend, somehow, I don’t know how he made the connection, with God, isn’t that awful. I’m trying to think, um (--)

A: Describe the person.

G: He was the general manager of the Boston Red Sox at the time. A former ball player. A former, and a hall of famer. Um, is it McCarthy? I don’t know. It will come to me. But what was, the reason it sticks out in my mind is because George Demogenes sort of took a liking to me, and I would spend time there with either my parents or my aunt and uncle, Joe Cronin.

A: I don’t know who that is.

G: Joe Cronin is, was the General Manager of the Boston Red Sox..

A: Oh okay. Okay.
G: In the mid 40’s. He’s a hall of famer. He was probably at that time one of the biggest names in baseball in Boston, in this area, in New England. And he used to come to Lowell. I have no idea. He was a friend of George Demogenes, and I used to periodically get a little envelope about that size, and it was inscribed “Boston Red Sox, Joe Cronin,” with his autographed signature on the envelope and whatever. And I would get four box seats to the Red Sox’s games, right. There was a Cronin box on the third baseline, right on the front row next to the visiting team dugout. Talk about a thrill as a young kid. Anyway, that’s a crazy sideline story, but yah, when I came back to the city of Lowell in ’68, it was, it was real rough.

A: Yah.

G: Real rough, and nowhere to go so it seemed. And but it was home. Number one is was home for me. Number two, I had a huge advantage, which was my entire family was so well-known. My father had been so well respected as a lawyer and mayor in the city, that it was a great entrée for me to come and be able to practice law here. Why wouldn’t I? Why would I go to another place that nobody knew me and knew the name, and whatever, and try to start new when I basically had this great opportunity. I tell people I can remember now if you start at the beginning of East Merrimack Street and Nesmith Street, (A: Okay) and go all the way up to Pawtucket, right up Merrimack all the way up to Pawtucket, probably one of the most depressing runs you could make. If you went through (--) Each of the churches was in tough shape because they didn’t have the financial support. The buildings on the left were tenements with lots of poor people in them. The family that’s still there that runs the little restaurant across from the Immaculate, Gormley’s, just basically were making a living there. (A: Yah) The Gas Company occupied the building across from the auditorium, (A: Okay) and I guess they were a financial powerhouse because of their age or so. In a sense that was an active place, but it wasn’t really an active place because no one, you didn’t know anybody in the Gas Company, and no one had any consumer orientation in the Gas Company. The auditorium was a place that you know, maybe got used five times a year. It was depressing actually. Liberty Hall was used kind of commonly, because it was a smaller venue, excuse me. And I can remember a lot of shows, Greek shows and whatever, when I was a kid, that would take place in there. Because the theaters had become really bad. (A: Really) Yah, all of those. Oh the Royal, the Rialto, all of those things had become (--) I mean they were, my parents wouldn’t let me go to three or four of the theaters they were so bad. Were, they really were. (A: Yah) I don’t know, maybe it was, maybe they thought there were perverts in there too, perverts. Anyway, so you go by there. Then you hit the next block where there was an office building that was basically empty later on, and became a pretty good night club, bar kind of thing, but before Dillon’s. Dillon’s was the cleaning place. But there was a building, there’s an empty lot there now. There was a building, an office building kind of place. I don’t think there was anything on the upper floors, but the Chiungos I think it was opened a bar restaurant there, that for a while became very successful. But then they had a fire and it, it went down the drain. Dillon’s, I knew Frances Dillon and her nephew Jimmy Sullivan was probably one of my best friends. They owned the house on Belmont Street across from Dick Donahue, where their son, Dick’s son now lives. (A: Okay, yah) It was a beautiful house. Dr. Sullivan had, Dr. Sullivan was an Optometrist who had an office on Central Street
where there was a building where the canal is now open. (A: Okay, yah) Okay. On the left hand side, on the hotel side, he had an office in there. His sister was Frances Dillon, and she ran Dillon’s. It was a family cleaning business there, but they were just sweeping by making a living.

A: So did the, did the tough conditions of the city, was that one of the reasons why you got interested in politics?

G: Oh yah. Oh yah. I mean it was, you had to do something or die kind of thing. And it just was, I can remember Lowell statistically, Department of Labor, chronically depressed was what you would always hear. That, it met the, whatever the guidelines were for the term, “chronically depressed.” Unemployment was always in excess of 12 or 14%. There was (-) I mean when you get into beyond that and into the Square, I mean there was next to nothing, next to nothing in there. It was just pretty bleak. Certainly up in, not a, nothing on the upper floors. You still had some stores around that were hanging on, or whatever, but it was, it was tough, it really was. And the neighborhoods were tough. I mean they just, you know, what you found was going to Belvidere and when we bought my house, which if you put it in anywhere else in America, would be even in those days would have been a very valuable place, but today you know, it would be in the millions of dollars in value. All of those big old houses there were selling in the twenty to forty thousand dollar range.

A: Up on the hill?

G: Yah. No one, all the Yankees were leaving town. They were going to Chelmsford, going to suburbia. There was this suburban flight to Chelmsford, mostly Chelmsford if you had any money. And the big houses on the hill were just, and they’d be on the market for a year, year and a half, two years. They’d start at $70,000, and maybe the better ones would sell at $40, but it would be a year and a half or two years later. No one wanted big old houses. The cost of heating them was incredible, (A: Yah) and all of that stuff. But there was no, there was no one who wanted to be in the city, no one of wealth who wanted to be in the city at the time. (A: Right) So all of those houses just sat there and degenerated. I mean some of them held their own because there was Yankee money that you know, that kept them up at least half way decent. Most of, I mean even, I mean you had Belvidere, and you had the expansion of Belvidere that took place in the 50s and 60s when Mr. Cooney bought all kinds of lots of land, and did Burnham Road. Andover Street started developing further out. I mean I can remember as a kid being afraid to walk on Butman Road, lower Butman Road adjacent to the stadium because there were maybe three houses between, between Butman Road and the stadium.

A: Really.

G: Yah, and we thought they were all haunted.

A: Yah!
G: So you didn’t dare walk you know, around there. The city ended. There was no 495 okay. The city, Rogers Street, the last vestige of anything that was real was Glennie’s Ice Cream Store, which was where the auto dealership is now. There’s the Sonoco Gas Station, and then the auto dealership. That was all owned by Mr. Glennie, (A: Okay) and that was it. There was nothing. Yah the stadium was there, okay, the baseball field and whatever. That was the only other thing that brought you out to that area, and that was it. And that was the good part of town. (A: Right) Okay. Think about that. (A: Right) So it was tough. And so what happened was you know, I got into the city and for a couple of reasons. You know, first of all, obviously if I was going to be here and plant my routes and whatever, that I wanted it to be a decent place to live, and there were lots of things going on in the world. I had, I was lucky enough to have the benefit of having gone out of the area to college, and be introduced to people all over the country. I started to tell the story. I got to tell you this one. (A: Yah) My first year in government 1-2 class, and at Bowden we were lucky to you know, my class was 200 students (A: Really) total. The entire enrollment of freshman class was two hundred students. (A: Wow) So most of my classes, even the government 1-2 class, which was a lecture class, I mean I don’t think there were more than forty people in the lecture class, and most of my classes were in the 6, 8, 10 variety. But we had a professor David Bradstreet Walker, who was just brilliant. Of course today they’d be characterizing him as a right wing, excuse me, left wing liberal radical professor. Ah, and he probably was, but he you know, he did the traditional more like you would expect in high school walking up and down in the isles and saying, “Who are you and where are your from?” And whatever. So it got to me and I said, “Lowell.” He said, “Who are you?” I said, “George Eliades.” He said, “Where are you from?” I said, “Lowell, Massachusetts.” He said, “Lowell, Massachusetts, the most provincial city in America.” Now this is how bad it was. I had no idea what he meant by provincial. I had to go back and look it up. But that’s what this guy had (A: Pegged) in his mind as the reputation of the city of Lowell. (A: Wow) And it is, it always was, and still arguably is a pretty provincial place.

A: Now tell us about the Charter Commission?

G: The Charter Commission was very simply to be the vehicle to Bobby Kennedy’s ascension to mayor of the city.

A: And strong mayor?

G: Right. Um, Bobby would probably deny that, (A: Yah) and I don’t say that (--) Bob and I are good friends, and we’ve always were actually. Although in those days it was kind of interesting. I’ll tell you about it in a minute. He used to drive me crazy because when the would end and we had this awful breakdown, 5 and 4, a breakdown between the group, I would, my closer friends were Bill Geary and Dick Barrett, Frank Barrett’s nephew and (A: Okay) Leo Flynn whom I had grown up with, (A: Okay) and George Koulouras was anyways, but he used to drive Bobby crazy, because to him it was to him it was them against us. But he couldn’t understand why later on we’d all be out carousing together even though we were on different sides of the issue and whatever. (A: Yah, yah) Because if Bobby, to Bobby at the time it was the be-all and the end-all to becoming the mayor in the city. And listen he had aside from
political aspirations, and there’s nothing wrong with that, we have plenty of people with great strong political aspirations, he, I will give him credit to say clearly that he had the heart and welfare and interest of the city in his mind, (A: Yah) in the process. So anyway, it, to me at that point when I, when I (--), What had happened is it was sort of a natural. I came back into the city. I was going to practice law. I was the son of a former mayor whose (--), And I was going to practice law with an uncle that, that was a councilor as well, and well-known and respected in the city, and whatever. So why not run for public office? Well to run for this you know, it was always sort of well you run for the school committee, and then the council, and all of that stuff, whatever. I really didn’t have any interest in running for the school committee, just for whatever reason. And they started talking about this thing about changing the government. No changing the government, studying the government, which seemed like a natural. I just got out of college, I was a political science student, major, and you know I thought I knew quite a bit about government and whatever at the time. I was a lawyer, and so why shouldn’t I run for the Charter Commission? So I ran for the Charter Commission.

A: A lot of candidates ran right?

G: Lot of candidates, yah. I think I came in 6th or 7th if I’m not mistaken. I don’t remember where. I do know this, I got the highest vote of Belvidere, but that was, it was almost an automatic, because my father had been so well-known and respected there. George Eliades, even though he had died seven years before that, was certainly a well-known name there.

A: Now what’s the background of the leading up to the city even establishing a commission?

G: The horrors of, the city was in awful shape I was talking about. The tax rate was awful, and being carried on the backs of the homeowners. (A: Okay) Services were awful because they had no money. (A: Yah) You know, everything was bad. (A: So there was) So it was just a natural that it was time you know, to do something. Time for a change. Time to get anything positive done in the city. And you know, remember this is the 60s. This is John Kennedy. This is the new America. This is Sputnik and all of the other things that go with that. And you know, you know you’re going to sit back and do nothing, and get lost, or are you going to become the great America that all of these people were challenging us to be. And Lyndon Johnson and the war on poverty. (A: Yah) You know, Lyndon declared that there weren’t going to be anymore poor people, and that the government was going to help, to everybody, get out of poverty. So there were all kinds. And it really was pre bad Vietnam material. (A: Right) Vietnam I don’t think really was hitting Lowell personally that much at that point. So, so it was a (--), And the city manager at the time was Charlie Gallagher. (A: Okay) And Charlie was a nice guy, but basically was an accountant who had been the city treasurer, and just sort of ascended because they had no (--). I think he was put in there because, I’m not sure why, but anyway, and nothing was getting done. Not to cast dispersions on Charlie, there was no money. There was you know, what can you do when you don’t have any money, you have no economy. You have you no, nothing going for you. So there was nothing getting done. So that was a lot of the background of what happened. So now you get a bunch of younger guys, not necessarily part of the establishment, certainly not a single, the only one that you can come close to making an
argument maybe was in mainstream and establishment was maybe Bill Geary, because the Gearys had been involved in politics and whatever for so long. (A: Right. Right) But beyond that it was a group of people who, who genuinely had an interest in the city, number one, although clearly the argument would be made, and I don’t know how much you got to talk to Jimmy Curtis about this, but clearly from the standpoint of the Gearys and Jack Bowers, and some of these other people, they were, they were all excited about the possibility that they could elect a mayor. (A: Yah, yah) Well they didn’t think of Bobby Kennedy as being the person, okay, but if he was the, if he was the vehicle that was fine as far as they were concerned. (A: Yah) They just wanted to get into electing a mayor.

A: Yah. Now when they first started getting together where did they associate? I mean where did they get together? Did they work out of Geary’s office to push for the Charter Commission, or?

G: No, no no. Absolutely the catalyst for the Charter Commission was Bobby. (A: Really) No question about it. (A: Okay) And he had put together a group of people who, in a Kennedyesque, J. F. fashion, okay, of young activists who wanted to get involved, and whatever. And Bobby was very charismatic, plus he had the name Bobby Kennedy (A: Sure) going for him, which was a huge advantage. Young, vibrant, active guy, etc. So he really, more than anyone else, was the catalyst of the Charter Commission.

A: Okay.

G: And why would you not elect a Commission to study a government in a place that had a horrible situation?

A: Sure. Sure.

G: So it was a natural.

A: So they elected nine folks and there was a couple of groupings, like you said, who would be John Bowers, Dick Barrett, Bill Geary connected.

G: Bobby Kennedy.

A: Bobby Kennedy in with them?

G: Yah, key, key (--) Well he was 5 to 4, and the key man for them was Roland Desmarais. (A: Okay, yup) Talk about an obscure person in the history of the city of Lowell. But Roland became, in another sense a critical player for them. He represented the 5th vote. (A: Okay) Bobby, Bobby pulled Roland in early on. Roland was, not nice to say, but nobody knew him. He was like a nobody, but he was the only Frenchman on the ballot (A: Okay) I believe. I may be wrong, but if he was not the only Frenchman, he was the only known Frenchman on the ballot. And there were enough French voters that out of nine they, they managed to get Roland
Desmarais. I think he was the 9th place vote getter, (A: Okay) and he got on the commission. So.

A: And what was his background?

G: I couldn’t tell you. I think he was a blue-collar worker, who was never involved in politics in the city before, but somehow decided he was going to get involved in politics.

A: Really.

G: Yah. [Unclear]

A: He didn’t have a big connection with like Homer Bourgeois, or somebody like that?

G: Zero. Zero. Zero. With nobody, he had a connection with nobody. He was kind of bazaar.

A: Now he was an older guy too?

G: Yah. Well I perceived him as older. Probably (--) 

A: Yah, I mean older than Bobby and your generation, right?

G: Right, probably I his 40s at that time.

A: And then the other folks on there, Jim Curtis, Peter Koulouras, you and ?

G: Yah, Timmy obviously.

A: And Leo Flynn?

G: Leo Flynn, yah.

A: And what was Leo Flynn’s claim to fame?

G: Well Leo Flynn, Leo Flynn’s family I think had been peripherally involved in politics in the city for years. (A: Okay) And his mother and aunts had been involved in the school system, and were teachers and a well-known and respected family name. So that’s how. And he got out of college, and decided he was going to be involved in Lowell, and Lowell politics and whatever. And actually I think Bobby assumed that Leo, and there were those people who just simply tried to break this down to Irish and non-Irish, okay. And that was, in fact, that was a big part of the yelling that was going on, because ironically, and it had nothing to do with my humble opinion, with ethnicity at the time, but you know, you had Koulouras, myself and Curtis being the backbone of the opposition, and the fourth guy being Leo Flynn. (A: Okay) The Irish kid, the young Irish kid, why, but you know. I mean in my opinion I would have you believe, I would
make the argument that Leo intellectually believed what I believed, which was the city manager form of government was the best form of government. It’s professionalism, it’s, or at least that’s what it’s intended to be. And that’s the reason why you needed to have a professional and not a political government, and that still you can have that argument to this day, as to whether, which is the better way. I can sympathize to some degree with the concept of a political leader who will bring the people in and be active, blah, blah, blah, but conversely you know, the idea to me that you have a city manager who’s suppose to be, and probably 95% of the rest, 99% of the rest of the world, it’s probably a person who has been educated and at least somewhat trained and experienced in running a government who becomes the city manager. (A: Sure) Not what happens in Lowell I’ll tell you, but anyway. So to me it’s a no-brainer. The Charter Commission was probably the hardest working, longest needing, longest debating organization in certainly the history of the city of Lowell and maybe in the country, I don’t know. I mean it was unbelievable [critiques].

A: What were some of the issues that you guys worked on during that (--) 

G: Bobby wanted to focus right off the bat to (--) I shouldn’t say that. Bobby’s strategy, and he had this well planned out, there’s no question. There’s no question in my mind of how it would all come to play. And his first piece of the pie was to bring in the consultants, to hire consultants to study the system. And if you think about it, it all sort of falls into place. Isn’t that how you do the business? The orderly fashion, you do a study first and you determine the issues, and then you make the corrections based on that, whatever. So we had put out an RFB and gotten a, three, or four, or five I forget, responses for consultants to do the study. And two professors from UMass Amherst by the name of Gere and Booth came in. G E R E and Booth, B O O T H. (A: Okay) I remember, I remember Bill. These guys were so good, especially Booth who was a Brit, (A: Okay) and he had the whole thing with a British accent, and the aura and everything about it. And he was obviously an intellectual or whatever. And I remember Bill Geary’s comment was, “You know, when I see a guy that is that good I get scared.” You know, in other words I just feel I shouldn’t trust him because he just is too good to be true. I mean the guy was extremely impressive in his deliveries and capabilities, apparent capabilities and etc. And we hired them. (A: Yah) It was almost a no-brainer, they were so much above the crown than rest of them. Then I would make the argument that Bobby married these guys and made it very clear to them as to what he wanted to result to be. And they wanted to get paid. And by the way, I should (--) That was the first, the first argument, the first issue and here’s, here’s where it actually got kind of interesting. (A: Yah) Geary and Bowers, and Barrett maybe, but certainly Geary and Bowers did not want to hire a consultant. (A: Oh really?) Why should we spend the money? (A: Okay) You know, we don’t need anybody from out of town to tell us what Lowell is like, and what we need to do in Lowell. That was the attitude. And ironically it was Bobby who was pushing for it. And he was supported by myself, Koulouras and Curtis, because we believed in professionalism and doing things in a businesslike fashion, and whatever. So it was on that basis and with that, and with our support that these guys got hired.

A: And Bobby was telling Geary, “Sssh, be quiet for a few minutes,” right?
G: Right. Well no, that never really worked you know. It was a strange marriage, believe me a very strange marriage.

A: Because Kennedy wasn’t really part of that click.

G: Zero. Zero. Bobby was a loner, absolutely a loner. Not part of that click.

A: Did Bob have, I know he had worked on I know like Sam Pollard’s campaigns and things like that. So was he connected to that kind of older crowd?

G: Only from the standpoint from having been around and knowing them and whatever, but he absolutely was, this was a solo job. (A: Okay) No question about it. So we hire these guys, and I think I may have told you this before, I should dig it out. One of these days I’m going to try and find it. All of this stuff by the way is supposed to be stored away by a city clerk somewhere, including tapes.

A: I’ve been through the attic many times and it’s a real disaster up there to the point where we even wrote a grant but it didn’t get funded to the state, Secretary of State’s Office to try to get a plan, you know, an archival plan because there’s a lot of great resources up there, but it’s just such a jumbled mess.

G: There was a tape made of every single meeting, (A: Ah huh) and they were turned over to the city clerk. And they would have been worth, you know, today. (A: Yah) I mean a lot of boring stuff, but certainly I mean there were times though. This (--) Well let me go back first. The big thing was when, no, two big things. First of all Charlie Gallagher figured that he was going to screw this group, because he knew where Bobby was headed, wouldn’t fund the organization. (A: Okay) How do you get anything if you don’t have any money?

A: Yah.

G: And they got into fights about (--) And I think I forget all the details of it, but I know Bobby was running around trying to find councilors and ways that monies would be appropriated so that all of this stuff, including hiring the consultants would get done.

A: Now Charlie, he part of Eddie Early’s guys I a way?

G: I don’t know. He must have been. That one I don’t know to tell you the truth, but I’m guessing. I mean at that time certainly I’d say the Earlys and the Gearys had the most power in town at the time. (A: Okay) So they were probably the political vested interest, although that was small potatoes. I mean the real vested interest in the city was the old Yankee money, the banks, and the Union National Bank and all of that stuff. But anyway the consultants finally finished their report, and that was the big deal. I think there was three or six months into it, I’m not sure which. And we would have these meetings. They would come up and they would present all of these different options and things, and whatever, and it didn’t take long to figure
out where Bobby was going on the whole thing. And as I said, he made it clear to them that if they wanted to get paid and stay on this job. This is where the recommendations should come to. So um, the opening paragraph, I don’t know if I ever told you this, of the Charter Commission Report from these consultants says, “Lowell is a seething caldron of competing political interest, which is was at the time. It was the Geary’s, the Early’s, the Desmonds, you know, you follow these groups.

A: Yah, so the Desmonds had a little click?

G: Oh yah, they all had their (--) 

A: Who were some of the other groups?

G: Finnegans.

A: Yah, and who was with the Finnegans, Connie and his brother Fred? Who else was associated with them?

G: I don’t know. I’m not sure. I never really got that up on those. Those guys were more involved with the state part of things at that point, than the local city government part of things.

A: How about the Desmonds?

G: Same thing I think, although some of them were in, I’m not sure if they got into the council, or.

A: Connie was the city manager back in the early 60’s.

G: Yah, Connie Finnegan was the City Solicitor and I think briefly the city manager as an interim kind of thing. But I never really saw any (--) What happened is I think in no small part, that the, the Irish got very cut-up and lost a lot of power because they got into so many different factions. So that kind of took some of that away. And that’s why, that was the genesis of the seething caldron of competing political interest. Nothing could get done in the city. (A: Yah) You had no unanimity (--) 

Tape I ends

Tape II, side A begins.

A: You were talking about the city and (--) 

G: Yah, there was no unanimity of any kind, and everybody was basically on their own, trying to take care of their own little [unclear], each one of these groups. And if one was a rep, then they took care of that part of the state house and that part of the city. If they were you know,
held some other position then that’s what they did, and it was every group for themselves so to speak. (A: Wow) And nothing was getting done on the city. So the consultants recommended changing to the strong mayor form of government. And then they, because Bobby knew there was going to be a problem selling that to some degree, because we had been hammering away at professionalism, he toyed with a combination strong mayor administrator form of government, which was a, I don’t know, it should be interesting to find out if anything like that exist in this city, in the country now.

A: Was it one of the plans? One of the ABCD’s?

G: No, separate.

A: It was a new, new thing that they had created?

G: Yah, that they said was happening in other parts of the country. And that way you still had the political leader, but you had the professional in there. So that was sort of a way that they were going to try to beat the idea that all you would have would be a political hack (A: Sure) and all of that stuff. (A: Sure) The problem with that idea is that why do you need (--) If you’re going to hire and pay the professional administrator, what do you need the mayor for? (A: Yah) So that’s, and that’s what bothered the Bowers and the Gearys and the other group, because they said, you know, they saw that as being a real problem. That that would be an easy one to kill, because you’re just putting all of these extra layers on and accomplishing nothing. So that’s why for a period of time there was a fight even within that group as to how they were going to (--) Bobby very much wanted to characterize and add the administrator, the professional administrator part for two reasons. Number one, he saw that as a potential weakness, and number two I think he still dreamed that perhaps he could get one or more of us on the descending side to come around if we could do that. (A: Yah) Ah, and but that never worked. And I say it was the hardest working body, because understand that every single vote was five to four. (A: Really) I mean we crafted this thing by pieces okay, (A: Yah) but every single element of the recommendation that went into this thing was a separate vote. What are you going to do for section 5.3? What is the job of the so and so going to be? And there would be another fight, and a five to four vote.

A: And always the same five on one side?

G: Always the same five. Always the same (--) And even, and I should say, and I don’t remember a specific instance, there may have been a few times where a position, because, and this is, let’s say you talked about an auditor, well if they knew, if somebody knew the auditor and wanted to protect the auditor’s position, then there might have been a break in the five to four vote for that political purpose. (A: Yah) But beyond that everything was five to four.

A: So the most active people on the commission, Bobby?

G: Everybody.
A: Everybody?

G: Bobby was the most active, because he was directing what Gere and Booth were producing basically. And he was telling them what he wanted and how to put it together.

A: Bower’s, was he the vocal person?

G: No, Jack was probably the least active (A: Okay) of the group, busy as a lawyer. Didn’t really care. Just wanted to get the strong mayor. And Bill, Bill Geary a little bit the same way. Two busy guys, as lawyers didn’t have a lot of time to screw around. Fortunately for me at that time, I was new. I had nothing else to do. Koulouras worked for the Social Security Administration and had apparently not a lot to do. And Jimmy Curtis was busy. Leo was teaching and not quite as busy. So an awful lot of the work that we did as a minority to try and hold these people off and maybe put in (--) What we, what we tried to do along the way was, well okay, if in the worse case scenario we’re going to end up with a strong mayor form of government, we’ll at least try to craft descriptions and do things with what it was to tighten it up and professionalize it, and make it as strong as possible. So we worked towards that kind of stuff. And then the other next interesting thing that happened was the issue of whether or not there could be a minority report. (A: Oh okay) And there was a big fight over that. And they finally did vote, because we, we put them on the public relations end. “What’s the matter? You don’t want to, you’re afraid to hear from the minority?” (A: Yah, yah) You know, blah, blah, blah. So they finally agreed, but even then, and this was another interesting thing, funny stuff; when they finished their report and Charlie Gallagher and the people in power, and the councilors and whatever in city hall, heard and knew what the recommendation was going to be, they wouldn’t fund the report.

A: Oh really?

G: And the report had to be published for it to be legal. That was part of the, part of the process to go to put it on the ballot, was the report had to be published in a newspaper of general circulation in the city, and blah, blah, blah. (A: Yah) And they wouldn’t pay. They wouldn’t fund it.

A: So what happened after that?

G: Bobby got money and paid for it privately.

A: From who?

G: Good question. People politically donating money to him to get that done, totally illegally in the sense that there was no authority to work that way, but Bobby knew he had to get (--) There were time periods within x number of months. (A: Yah) You have to do this, that and whatever.
And one of the things was within nine months let’s say, publish the minority report, I mean the recommendation, okay.

A: So would, I mean would the Gas Company have helped out with the Putnams?

G: Probably. I mean I know (--) That’s a good question. I don’t think to this day I ever asked Bobby where he got the money, but they got it and they published it. They later got reimbursed. I think he (A: Okay) politically finally got the council to come up with the money to do it. I mean it was not their prerogative. It was mandatory for them to follow the stature to do it, but they didn’t give a shit. They were just (--) That was their way of exercising control.

A: So you go for the big vote.

G: Well before we go for the big vote there’s still a lot of backroom maneuvering. Does a minority report get out? Does it get published and all of this stuff, or whatever. And that gets done. And then the rest is history as they say, but basically what happened is fortunately you would hear me say Clemie Costello took over and just absolutely decimated it. Brought up George Ash and the memory of the days, and going to jail, and whatever. And by the time he finished, and it was kind of ironic you know, because Kendall Wallace and Bobby had a friendship. (A: Okay) And in the edit, in the news section of the paper there were all these favorable Bobby Kennedy strong mayor stories that Kendall was planting. And in the editorial section Clemie was pounding away (A: Really) yah, at the time. And (--)  

A: And why do you think Clemie was so active in opposition to the plan?

G: Well?

A: Was it just philosophy, or?

G: I think it was not just philosophy, although I think it was principally philosophy. I think Clemie was a straight shooter. Clemie hated politicians. Clemie thought rules should be played, games should be played by the rules, and done straight, and straight and narrow. Um, he probably was influenced I’m going to guess, by Jimmy Curtis who was council to the newspaper at the time. (A: Okay) Certainly tried to plant plenty of bees in Clemie’s bonnet along the way. Certainly planted in Clemie’s mind the idea that Bobby Kennedy wanted to become the strong mayor and turned this into a you know, blah, blah, blah. (A: Yah) Actually ironically, ironically the newspaper arguably would be better off with a mayor race, where they could get God knows how much money spent on advertising from people trying to get first nominated, then elected as mayor. (A: Right) So to that extent I guess you almost have to say and give Clemie the credit of having been legit and having, he had principles of how, what he wanted done.

A: However if you have a strong mayor, the guy’s untouchable for a year and ¾.

G: Oh yah. Oh yah, absolutely. That’s part of it too.
A: And I mean then the newspaper doesn’t (--)

G: They can pound away at him, but certainly he can almost unilaterally after awhile, yah. And the term might have been four years.

A: Oh four years! (G: I think it was) Wow! Now obviously Clemie was also opposed to taxes. I mean that was one of his big issues, right?

G: Yah, oh yah. Yah, absolutely, but, but the major thing was that, that he just didn’t want to have a hacked politician. Clemie hated politicians. (A: Really) Hated politicians actually. I left out, something just popped into my mind that I left out another interesting facet of that whole thing, and I lost it for a second. It had to do with the difference between running a city manager, or running a strong mayor kind of a thing. I can’t think of it. Hopefully it will come back [unclear].

A: Yah. Um, during this time Jim Sullivan gets elected city manager, right?

G: Yes, very important part of the whole thing.

A: Did that change anybody’s push for the strong mayor?

G: Yes, absolutely. I’m glad you brought that up. Yah that was, that was a behind the scenes thing that took place. (A: Yah) Clearly Charlie Gallagher became the you know, whipping post so to speak, of what was wrong with the city government at the time. And one of the things that appeared to be the way to save the city manager form of government (--) I know what I just thought of. Let me just make a note. (A: Sure) Um, to save the city manager form of government was to bring somebody new and professional in. And Sullivan had done this great job. Hold on a second, I just don’t want to lose this. On Jim Sullivan, he had been very successful in Cambridge. (A: Right) And I don’t know, I know Jim Curtis and I think the newspaper maybe had some play in it, but and maybe there were some people on the council at the time, I’m weak on the memory on that part of things, but they realized they had to make a change if they were going to save the system and bring somebody in here to rock and shape things up and whatever. And that’s exactly what happened. Sullivan came in, and for who knows, a variety of reasons I’m sure, maybe as simple as just knowing how to operate things and having had the experience he was able to turn at least the facade of what was going on in the city around dramatically. And that’s not to take away from him. I think he also did a good job as a city manager, having had the experience of dealing with a strong, I mean with a big city and a lot of big city problems.

A: Now obviously Paul Tsongas being one of the key figures in bringing him here.

G: Right, yes. Absolutely. That’s right. That’s what it was. There were people in the council at that time who realized that there needed to be changes in the city. I mean it was a period of
time where I think for the first time, and I’ve described this before and I think that this is truly what happened, what I referred to at the very beginning of our conversation about the importance of education and getting people involved and whatever, that my father had said, and instilled and imparted along the way, and I said it was the immigrant experience. And I think was the case here. Now for the first time in the 60s we saw kids coming back, betting involved. Lowellians who were sons of immigrants getting involved in the city and trying to do something about what was going on in the city. And there were people like Bobby. And there were people like Phil Shay. And there was a much younger council at the time who were active and a lot more interested in what was going on. Yah, so those people and obviously Paul was probably the key to getting Jim Sullivan involved and into things here too. So that was a big part of it too. Go back for a quick second.

A: Sure, you got a new story, right?

G: Yah, the story that, and getting back to, and it was (--) When I said the hardest working and whatever about the Charter Commission thing, I mean we just got into this thing very heavily, and we were sensitive. There was a very interesting argument, and the argument is still made politically in Lowell today, which is that all you need to do is keep five city councilors happy and therefore you can do whatever you want to do. (A: Yah) And you don’t have to be a professional. You don’t have to be this, that, or whatever, just keep five city councilors happy. So Koulouras and I tried to offset that argument and came up with an idea, which I still to this day think is a, is a good (--) Their argument was, the manager is not responsive to the people. The mayor is responsive to the people. The manager is not responsible to the people. He only has to keep five councilors happy. (A: Yah) So we did some research and study on that. We found some places in the country where they had a, in order to try to offset that particular argument, and to run the system the way that (--) They had a provision for a recall of the city manager by vote of the public, (A: Okay) which I think is still to this day I think is a great system, because obviously what it does is, it does in fact answer that argument about making somebody responsive to the electorate. (A: Yah) If all of a sudden someone started a motion to recall the city manager now, John Cox, Brian Martin, whoever it might be, then that would all of a sudden make the city councilors standup and say, “Woe, what’s going on here?” You know, “Why does the public feel this way,” and this and that, and whatever. So that was going, but, but we, and we tried to and I say that in this context, we then tried to get the commission to offer alternate propositions, strong mayor, or manager with a recall. And of course that didn’t work because Bobby wanted it to be strong mayor.

A: Yah, and so that provision is not available as of today, (G: No, no) that recall that for the city manager? Yah, interesting. So you guys were doing your homework.

G: Oh we were. I’m telling you it was a very (--) I had plenty of time on my hands. I was, you know, I don’t think I had ten clients at the time. So I was putting all of my energies into that. And poor Koulouras who since, who died very young, after. In fact both Leo Flynn and Koulouras died.
A: Oh Leo Flynn is dead too?

G: Yah, yah, both died. Leo I think in his 30s, maybe 40s, and Koulouris in his 40s, maybe 50s. Tragically both.

A: Yah, and Roland Desmarais is gone.

G: I think he died within the last two or three years, very recently.

A: How about Jack Bowers?

G: Jack died also. God yah.

A: And I know Dick Barrett is up at the university.

G: Yah, Dick is up there.

A: And I interviewed Jim.

G: And Bill Geary is still around. Jim’s still around. Bobby Kennedy is still around.

A: Bill Geary. Yah. So any other issues before you get to the big day of the vote? And tell us what happened on that day.

G: Oh well it got walloped. The proposition got walloped because of Clemie’s hammering away and the George Ash, Mayor, going to jail stuff and whatever. And I think it was better than two to one it lost.

A: Wow. (G: Yah) Now there was another election that same time, wasn’t there?

G: And ironically Bobby was elected to the city council with I think the highest number of votes.

A: I think he came in second behind Ellen Sampson.

G: Yah maybe, but it was (--) Anyways he got a huge vote in there and almost everything worked out perfectly for Bobby. You know, in his quest to become mayor, a strong mayor of the city he got into, launched his political career and he you know, rose all the way up to State Rep and Executive Councilor, or whatever, but never managed to become a strong mayor.

A: Well that shows you the fickleness of the electorate really, right, to elect Bobby (G: Absolutely) and to kill strong mayor, right.

G: And the power of the paper.
A: Now that election you were running for another?

G: No I ran for the city council.

A: Yah.

G: And came in 11th I believe. And then decided that I would go for fortune instead of fame [unclear], get out of politics.

A: Tell us about the city council race.

G: That city council race was dominated almost entirely by the, at least from my standpoint, (A: Ah huh) by the issue of strong mayor verses city manager form of government. And it may be probably too much emphasis on my part, I think that there were people, you know, Bobby was, even though he was certainly associated with as chairman of the Charter Commission involved, he was hammering or weighing war at some of the issues of what was happening in the city and how bad it was and stuff like that. So that, and by the way, put out a very, Bobby had probably one of the first brochures, and a slick brochure (A: Hey look at that) about, in multi-colors and all of that stuff, and put on probably one of the fanciest campaigns that anyone had put on. You know, this is a simple three-fold thing, or whatever. Bobby’s was multi-color. It was glossy. It was, he had full-page ads in the paper and all of that stuff. It was the first real professional campaign I think that we had seen in the city.

A: He must have been quite a fundraiser.

G: Yah. Yah, and I think there were a lot of people who decided that they were, and obviously the Gas Company people thought that they could make a connection with Bobby in there as a leader. And they, they really helped promote him in that respect. But you know, and it does show you, I mean the fact that he then got into politics, and got into the council and whatever, just not the same thing. (A: Right) If you were a strong mayor leader of a city kind of thing, then you can be the buddy [unclear], or whatever it be. (A: Yah, yah) You know, the only character in town kind of thing. If you’re one of nine councilors it’s not much, (A: Yah) which I think is the big reason why Bobby moved on to other places.

A: Yah, yah. Now you had talked briefly about the Union Bank. What was Homer Bourgeois’ role in politics?

G: Well I don’t know that I can specifically put my finger on that kind of stuff, but I do know that you know, the city of Lowell probably like every other city in America is run by, when I say run by, influenced in its operations and whatever, by certain groups, interests groups, or whatever. In Boston it’s the vault, and places like that. (A: Yah) You know, Lowell’s own version I think really came out of the Yorick Club and the group of old Yankee business types and that were involved in operating things. And they were centered around the financial
institutions like the Union National Bank, and the Lowell Five, and whatever, and the accountant, or accounting houses, John Hurley with his connection with Homer and the bank was very powerful. (A: Yah) The McKittricks, and Eldrid Field, and the Locks and Canals, and all of that stuff. Those were, those were the people who were running the city, (A: Yah, yah) had the strongest influence and the strongest say. Did you hear? Did I just hear a voice, or am I hearing things?

G: Okay. And they, and they, it was the (--) It’s funny, I just had this conversation with Steve Joncas recently, because how Paul Tsongas came to me one day and said, you know he said, “We’ve got to form an organization that’s going to supplant the, this other group that’s running the city now.” And that was the genesis for the Lowell Plan. That’s how it kind of (--) I brought up Steve because it said there was a piece in the paper recently that referred to Paul talking with Joe Tully, and making a plan on a piece of paper, which I’m sure they did but it was, Paul already had the idea.

A: Okay.

G: He realized that you know, if you were going to get anything done you needed to have the movers and shakers, and power brokers involved. (A: Yah) And so if they, if you couldn’t crack the group, which in essence what was happening, he couldn’t crack into that group and get those people to do anything, that frustrated him. He went (--) All they cared about as far as he was concerned was their own invested interest at the time, and that was it. They didn’t care about any of the other things that were happening in the city, and any of the other people. So he said, so he decided that he needed a competing group. And that was the genesis for the formation of the Lowell Plan.

A: Okay. Would you describe Paul as being a new force in politics then?

G: Oh absolutely.

A: On the local level?

G: Oh yah, absolutely. And being (--) He was sort of the counterpart of Bobby Kennedy. They were both, they were both thinkers and strategists, (A: Okay) and planners. I mean they knew where they were and they knew where they were going, or they knew what they wanted to do, but they also knew what they had to do it in a thinking (--) In other words it wasn’t, for them it was not an avocation. It was their calling, and it was what they were going to do. And they you know, as I think any politician who progresses in the game, you have to be focused. You have to put all of your energies into it. You can’t do it on a part-time basis, and run another business and just fool with the thing. If you want to get into the levels that Paul and Bobby got into, you got to put yourself into it more.

A: So did Paul attempt to get involved with that group, but then was rebuffed?
G: Involved to the extent that what he tried to do was get them to do things, to move and shake in a positive fashion, (A: Yah) and was rebuffed. Yah, absolutely.

A: Yah, so what would Paul’s relationship with Homer be in that early period?

G: Probably best characterized as non-existent (A: Okay) I would say. And ironically you could even add Mike Demoulas to that mix. (A: Okay) You know, when Paul was moving through the political process that he had in his mind that he wanted to do, Mike is the kind of guy that kind of liked to be in control of things. And Paul was the kind of guy who wasn’t about to be controlled. And Mike knew Paul’s father from years past (A: Sure), and we were business friends of sorts, but Mike had his own opinion of how Paul should go through the system, which was contrary to what Paul wanted to do. And it actually ended up in a pretty serious rift as some point between the two of them.

A: Okay. Okay.

G: And so Paul got no support from Mike Demoulas in the early years.

A: Okay, and Mike was on the bank board, and (--) 

G: Yah, exactly. He was part of the powerhouse at that time. Sure, no question about it. Um, so the, the extraordinary ascendancy of Paul Tsongas relates to the fact that he did it without the typical power brokers of the day.

A: Really? (G: Yah) So was it a revolution of sorts?

G: Oh no question. No question, yah, absolutely. And he did it by planning and executing the plan, and by getting people involved. Paul, Paul’s mastery of, I’d say of more than anything else, and something little known generally, or generally spoken about was his ability to think through a problem or a process that needed to be dealt with, and then marry the right players to the problem and the process. Now there were some people who would say that was part of some sort of a group, or a cabal, or however you want to characterize it, but if Paul saw something he wanted to get done, a building fixed, or whatever it might be, he would just go and get the person he wanted to do it, and get them to do it. Not for his own game, but only to get it done. There were people who always cynically and skeptically would tell you that you know, people couldn’t believe, that a lot of people can’t believe that a politician can be a non-politician. Paul Tsongas was close to an a-political person as a politician than anyone I’ve ever known in my life. (A: Yah, yah) He was you know, truly a (--) He didn’t care about power, politics, and assuming and gaining power, and all of that stuff. He just cared about getting things done.

A: Um, okay. All right. The last segment I just wanted to talk to you about the City Development Authority, which I know you were on very briefly.
G: I was, yah. I can’t tell you an awful lot, because it was, that was my first experience I guess. I think I replaced Dr. Kokinos if I’m not mistaken. (A: Okay) And my family from years past, it had a connection with the Dukakis’ (A: Okay) through their Lowell routes, or whatever. I had, I had some (--) I’m trying (--) You know the funny thing is I’m trying to think of how it came about and I really can’t remember. I do know I was appointed by the Governor. I was the (--)  

A: So you were the state appointment.

G: I was the state appointee. (A: Okay) But I don’t remember. It might have come from my family. I’m not sure.

A: Okay.

G: When I say my family, like Nick Contakos and whatever, (A: Yah, yah) and whatever. I mean I actually think it was the case of, you know, the Governor. I’m thinking it certainly wasn’t anything I sought out to do, but I (--) My guess is that when the vacancy was there it was a combination of things that, that we had a Greek governor at the time and we had a Greek lawyer, and that who’s name he was familiar with at the time. And I was a Democrat in the periphery of politics, and I think that’s how that happened. (A: Yah) And I was really kind of there presiding over the end of the City Development Authority. Although I had some interesting times, I got to know Father Gagnon who’s another whole story in Lowell politics, and an interesting character. I have the greatest respect for him because he’s probably one of the hardest working guys and organizers. You know, some of his ideas were pretty bazaar, but I love to tell people that it was Clemie who said that we should annex Canada and Mexico to the United States. I don’t know if you know that. (A: No, no.) And he probably wasn’t far off. At the time he was considered extremely radical, but he did an editorial saying we should annex them two, because it was with reference to oil. I think it was in the late 70s and early 80s when we had the oil crisis, and both of them had oil. And Clemie thought that was the solution, because he said the Canadians always wanted to be Americans anyways, and the Mexicans are always sneaking in here and want to be Americans. So why don’t we just grab them both. Anyway, that’s kind of an interesting story. I don’t know how I got on to that, but.

A: Tell us about the end of the City Development Authority.

G: I don’t remember a lot about it except that it, it was something that really wasn’t accomplishing much in terms of, at that point anyway, in terms of what the goals had been. And I have to, you know, I have to think that I don’t even remember what the hell replaced it to tell you the truth.

A: Well it was the Department of Planning and Development.

G: I guess so, yah. And I think that rose out of the whole concept of the new young Turks in city hall. The Tsongas’ and the Shea and the other guys that were trying to do something about
changing the makeup of city hall, and how it was operating, and whatever. (A: Yah) And the City Development Authority at that time probably had the reputation of being part of the old world, the old process. (A: Yah, yah) So I really don’t remember a lot about it, other than it was getting wrapped up. (A: Yah) Going out.

A: Do you think politics affected the administration of the urban renewal programs at the CDA?

G: Well there are people who would tell you that it clearly did, because there are people who say that, and I don’t, I could never give you any reference to any proof to this, but that for example “cement village” was put up, and made into a gas consuming area because of Bobby Kennedy and the Gas Company. And that you know, they’re to blame for what was at one time a real fiasco over there. Fortunately it’s kind of been turned around.

A: So you’re referring to the issue of the brick face?

G: No, long before that. When it was first built (A: Okay) one of the big things was what was going to fuel it? And the Gas Company got in there and flexed its muscle, and made it a gas project, but there was some concessions made not the least of which was what the (-- I think, I think the concession was that it would be brick. (A: Right, right) You’re right, that’s what I [am reminded].

A: I had just heard that story.

G: Yah, yah.

A: So interesting. (G: Yah) Let me ask you about a few more CDA personalities, some of which were, proceeded you and then some you served with. Warren Griffin?

G: Warren I served with interestingly on the CDA, I later served with him on the Housing Authority too. (A: Okay. Okay) Because I got appointed by the Governor to that board to save a guy by the name of Armand Mercier’s job at the time. (A: Oh really? Yah) There were a couple of guys by the name of Griffin and Regan who were trying to oust Armand Mercier from that position. And Gail Dunfey had been the state representative to the Authority, only she got married and decided to move away, and that screwed things up. And they needed somebody to go in and take her place, who would support Armand. So that’s why I got appointed to the Authority, and probably one of the, one of the least enjoyable appointments in a sense, because I tell people, my phone never stopped ringing off the wall.

A: About, “Can you put my uncle in the housing,” and that kind of stuff?

G: Or people wanting apartments? And it was incredible Mehmed because it was not just for an apartment, it was “Can I have the third floor, room 316 at such and such at one of the projects?” And I would say, “How do they?” They knew Mary Smith just died that morning, and they were looking for that apartment. I mean it was just (-- Of course there were different ones,
High Street and whatever, that were critical places. It just drove me crazy. And I’d be on the phone, I had four friends I never knew I had. I’d be on the phone to Armand.

A: You ask each and every one of them, “Why didn’t you vote for me in ’71, right?”

G: That’s right. That’s right. Unbelievable.

A: “Where were you?”

G: I never knew that game well enough. That was why I probably wasn’t successful in the political world.

A: Now did Paul ask you to help out serving on the Housing? Was he active at that level?

G: No, no, not really.

A: No, he would have been in Congress around that time I guess, right?

G: Yah, yah. He didn’t get involved to that extent. That was something (--) Actually it was Frank Keefe who called me about that.

A: Okay. Okay.

G: And said the governor needed somebody to protect Armand.

A: Yah, yah.

G: And would I take the thing? And I said, “Yah.”

A: So Warren, who was Warren Griffin’s? Who was he associated with? Who were his allies?

G: You know I’m not sure. I mean I guess maybe McMahon, and I think he had a connection with the McMahon family. (A: Okay) And I’m trying to think of who else was there. McLaughlin, did he have a connection with him? I don’t know.

A: So maybe with Joe Tully’s little gang?

G: Yah, I think to some degree, I’m not sure.

A: You said you replaced Kokinos, and he was a republican. He might have been associated with the older gang, the bank crowd?

G: Yah, I think he managed to get into Lowell Republican circles as he was a perfect fit, because he was one of the few Greeks who was in a Republican circle. So that worked
successfully, because he was able to rally the certain group of Greek voters (A: Yah) as a republican, for Republican Party purposes.

A: How about Peter Reilly?

G: Very little.

A: Okay, Bob Gervais?

G: Yah. I mean I know the Reillys and the Gervais’. I mean they were all older than I, and they’re even older than my brothers. My oldest brother Chris is six years older than I, and those guys, they’re older than that. And I don’t mean (--) I mean I remember them as being politically active and influential people. They were, they would be perceived as part of the vault of the city or the people who were in the upper echelons of influence and wealth in this city. You know, the Gervais’ have had great success financially in this city, and have exercised (--) And a [unclear] at exercising their political prowess through that. And you know, I know Bob. I actually, probably in the early 70s represented him on a few things to a mutual friend I had. Small stuff, (A: Yah) you know, legal stuff. Collection work and things like that. And to this day I still you know, remain friends with that group there sort of. You know, his youngest sister was a classmate of mine through the Oakland School, Moody School, and whatever. So I know all of those people from there.

A: Peter Reilly, was he connected with the Courier? Was it that Reilly guy?

G: No, I think it’s the Fred C. Church.


G: Bob Mousley (A: Mousley) was an Armand Lemay French connection guy. (A: Okay) And in the I guess 80’s, I’m loosing my time frame now, but was of political influence of sorts through the LeMay, Mercier French connection group kind of thing. And he went on to become the Chairman of the Local Licensing Commission, (A: Oh okay) which can be a fairly decent appointment kind of thing.

A: Yah. How about Eddie Keon?

G: Don’t remember that much about him. He’s CDA, Planning and Development oriented in that milieu. Geary, I think Early connection if I’m not mistaken.

A: Okay. Ed Coutu?

G: Um, is he the councilor, or is he the (--)
A: He was on the CDA. I don’t know if he was a councilor later on.

G: Gus Coutu, must be, I don’t know. He must be related. Gus was the councilor. I don’t know who that is.

A: Could be Ed Gus Coutu.

G: Yah, maybe. (A: I mean he could have been) Edmond Gus I think it was. Yah, you’re right. Small players.

A: Art Pelekasis?

G: Same thing, you know, small players.


G: Where did you get, why did you come up with that name?

A: Well he worked for the CDA.

G: Oh!

A: He was the last executive director.

G: Was he really on the CDA?

A: Well maybe not the last. I think maybe Bob Gilman was you know, overseeing the end of it.

G: Vinnie, oh Vinnie. Vinnie was a character. Just a Lowell kid who came up through the system, and had enough friends to get himself a political appointment. Presided over the change in the downtown streets and back into cobblestones and all of that. And actually to some extent, really accomplished something doing that, (A: Okay) but just a character.

A: He kind of had a reputation though, didn’t he?

G: He had a probably not good reputation, and I think there were people who were saying, who would say he was driven out of town. I’m not sure that that’s the case or not. I never really knew for sure. (A: Okay) Those were rumors.

A: Yah, yah. Why do you think the city moved away from urban renewal towards historic preservation?

G: Well let me tell you about that. Let me go back to Frank Barrett by the way. I think Frank Barrett, one of the nicest gentlemen I’ve ever met in my life. Frank Barrett deserves all the
credit in the world, but I used to kid him, because he never subscribed to urban renewal. If you stop and look at the different between Lawrence and Lowell, and by the way when I say never subscribe to, I’m not sure it was because there was a, this isn’t fair to say, but I’m not sure it’s because there was just nothing going on in the city and they missed out, where there are people who would say there. There are some people who would say, “I think that Lowell screwed up, because they didn’t have anyone who paid attention to urban renewal, and this and that and whatever. But if you stop and think of, compare Lowell and Lawrence, which was an interesting thing that was happening. When I came back to the city everybody kept saying, “Why can’t we be.” In ’68, “Why can’t we believe Lawrence?” They had just turned on their entire downtown and gotten into urban renewal and built the new buildings and tall of that stuff. And what they did was they took the guts out of the city. And they have no more of the beautiful buildings that we have downtown that has been a cornerstone to a lot of the redevelopment of the city, (A: Right) and screwed the whole thing up.

A: Right. Right.

G: We were lucky. The only thing Frank Barrett did was he tore down the mills and built parking lots (A: Okay) in the days when people thought he was nuts. (A: Yah) But we still don’t have enough parking downtown.

A: Right. Right. Well now when he left city manager after the “pick six”, do you remember hearing stories about them? (G: Yah) Yah he took over the Wanskuk, which was the old Merrimack. (G: Right) And then he ripped down those as well though. I don’t know if that was urban renewal funds or not.

G: No, I don’t think so. I don’t think so. But I mean I think he knew that real estate was valuable and not necessarily old empty brick buildings.

A: Yah, yah. Now moving from urban renewal to preservation, the National Park becomes important. Some characters like Pat Mogan. Any stories about him?

G: Not really. I mean I only knew Pat Mogan as a gentleman who was in education, from Belvidere, and a name I always knew through my school days as a guy who was involved in city administration. You know, I mean Pat is known as the father of the National Park. Clearly he is. He (--) I can say, no, unquestionably that but for Pat Mogan probably Lowell would never have come back in the format that it came back. (A: Yah) He you know, the genesis of the whole idea of the park, and building on the park, and whatever. I mean I remember going to Washington thirty years ago, whenever it was, to testify in Congress (A: Oh yah) yah, about the importance of this bill, and making the park, and this and that and whatever. (A: Yah) And it really was one of the big turn around catalyst no question about it.

A: How did you get involved in testifying before Congress?
G: Paul Tsongas. (A: Yah) And actually I think my testimony at the time was, I was probably I think at that time the Chairman of the Historic Commission as it was known then, etc., (A: Okay) the Historic Board. And I think that was my function at that time, (A: Okay) and very significant. I mean there were a lot of people you know, they’ll tell you that Pat was not the, you know, that he was too ethereal and too you know, up in the air and not pragmatic, but you know, you need those guys. You need the visionaries, you know, the vision thing as Clinton says, and whatever, and he was that.

A: And one of the guys that actually helped take his vision and make it work on the ground would have been like Gordon Marker? (G: Oh yah) We talked about him as kind of a guy that did a lot of work.


A: Oh really, yah.

G: Yah, when I used to do them. I don’t do them anymore. Quite a character, hard to describe, but just that he’s the visionary kind of guy. He was the guy, if you needed you know, how the federal and state government worked when you had to put up propositions and make proposals, and grant proposals, (A: Yah) and stuff like that. I mean he could whip one of those things up in an hour’s time, you know, for fifty-page proposal or something (A: Really, yah) on anything. Just an unbelievable mind.

A: So he knew a lot about the legislation. And was he a lawyer?

G: No, no. I don’t even know what his training was. I mean he obviously had a college degree. I don’t know that he went beyond college, but yah.

A: Yah. Tell us about that Locks and Canals saga, which of course helped you know, was one of the forward momentum for the Parks. Well they had invested in the Locks and Canals, and then it was going belly-up. Have you ever heard that story?

G: Gordon you mean?

A: No, it was more with the banks and (--) 

G: Oh yah.

Tape II, side A ends
Tape II, side B begins.

G: …whatever. Eldrid told me one time that if a hydroelectric plant thing went through that his grandchildren’s, grandchildren would never have to worry financially. So yah, that was a big
part. And probably I guess, maybe it’s part of my [unclear] at some point, connecting the dots to know how the money fits into all of this stuff. Obviously that had to become a critical element of the park plan and all of those other things. That somebody was going to make some money and sell some property (A: Sure) and whatever. And I guess if that’s what the story is I can, I understand that. Part of the deal was that Locks and Canals would, would go over and become part of the process, and make, the money was made and pretty serious money I think along the way, but I’m not sure, you know. The other side of the coin is just imagine what would have happened to those systems and resources had that not been saved at that time. We were probably days, weeks, and months away from people saying, “Knock all of that crap out.” You know, “Put in a high rise this,” or who knows what.

A: Yah, or filling in the canals.

G: Yah exactly.

A: I mean even Paul had originally talked about filling in the canals.

G: Oh yah. Yah, I mean you know, I don’t, I think even Paul I think would tell you he wasn’t necessarily a great historic preservationist, but he certainly quickly lashed on to the concept that that could be a vehicle to doing things in the city.

A: Yah, yah. Was it also another avenue for him to interact with that other community, the financial community and so forth?

G: I don’t think so. Paul was very strange the way he handled that stuff. Paul was not very, Paul was not a very, what’s the word I’m looking for? He wasn’t a conciliator, mediator, middle of the road kind of guy who would go and try to meet and mend fences, and whatever. He was an advocate. If he had an idea you know, you were either with him or against him. It’s almost a little bit like George Bush I guess. “You’re either with me, or against me.” And you know, if you’re smart and you want to do the right thing then get on board. If you’re not, then get out of the way. That was more of Paul’s attitude.

A: So he didn’t often take the inside track?

G: No. No, he was always a renegade. There were not very many of the then vested people who, who wanted to do business with Paul Tsongas. (A: Yah, yah) I mean a little later on, once he got to the Senate things changed, (A: Sure) because they obviously he became a powerhouse in Massachusetts politics at that point. But up until that time he was nowhere. He couldn’t get in a door for most of these people.

A: No kidding. Um, I just want to do a final, ask you any final stories about Homer who I always think is one of the key figures from that kind of 1950s and 60s period.
G: No. I just, I can’t. You know, I mean the only (--) I never, I know he and my father were good friends, but I never, I was too young to really know that relationship. (A: Yah) Um, and I, when I got back into the city, whenever I knew him or saw him he was always very nice to me. And I had heard some of the legion of Homer’s stories, but I’m not really that familiar with a lot of that stuff.

A: Okay. What did Wang coming to Lowell mean for the city?

G: Huge, because Wang probably produced a lot of the financial ware with all, and business clout that Paul Tsongas needed to get the things done that he got done.

A: And what was his connection? I know eventually he went on the board, but what was his role in like helping bring Wang to the city?

G: I don’t think he per se helped. Well I shouldn’t say that. I’m not sure. I just know that Dr. Wang had the highest respect for the guy, and was willing to follow him anyway. (A: Really, yah) Yah that was an important part of the whole thing.

A: Yah, interesting. Any one story about Paul that you want to share with us?

G: There’s so many. You’re talking tough. I just you know, it’s hard to say. I mean I think of, some of them are bittersweet. I remember in the height of the presidential campaign getting a call from a reporter at the New York Daily News who was doing an interview, who interviewed me on the telephone. And then a story came up in the New York Daily News about how Paul Tsongas operated. And I told them that you know, a lot of his methodology was a carrot and a stick kind of thing. You know, if you were with me then you know, we could go places and do things. If you wanted to be an obstructionist then I’ll, I’ll point you out and I’ll you know, point out the fact you’re an obstructionist and make you a bad guy as a result of that. So they, there was a big story to that affect I the New York Daily News, which then precipitated some of his supporters in New York producing that pin, which I got when I (--) Actually this was, I say bittersweet, because (--) You can keep that by the way.

A: Oh, you got an extra one?

G: Yah.

A: Oh great. The pin says, “Tsongas the” and there’s a picture of a carrot and a stick “Democrat.” Yah, that’s a great one.

G: Yah. Um, when the money was running out and his health was not so good, and he dropped out of the race, he had finally for the first time connected with some Greeks in this country of means. He was never able to do that before that for a variety of reasons. And he had, he had promised that he would go to a fundraiser in Manhattan on a Tuesday let’s say, I forget what day of the week it was. And a day or two before that he had dropped out of the race. (A: Yah) But
he still, he still wanted to keep his promise to these Greeks that he would go to the fundraiser. So he called me up and he said, “Do you want to take a quick flight to New York, keep me company?” And you know, he said, “And help me with some Greek.” So I said, “Sure.” So we picked him up and we went down to Logan. And I remember getting on the plane and the stewardess immediately recognized him. And she put the two of us into first class seats. And we sat and we talked, but the, I say bittersweet because through most of the trip there was this terrible hacking cough that he had that he had just totally worn himself out from the campaign. He just wasn’t physically strong at the moment to be able to handle that. It just stuck out in my mind, but notwithstanding that he still made that trip to New York and met with those people who were just devastated, because at that point they were ready, they would have poured millions of dollars into his coffers. He had had some successes and still after that did very well in New York even though he wasn’t even a candidate at the time.

A: Oh really! Yah.

G: Yah. And (---)

A: Do you think that if his health had been better I mean would that had been a turning point, because the fundraising of course was a big, big thing right.

G: Yah, well that was the combination of the two just were not enough. I mean if his health had been better I think he might have, well he couldn’t have. Just the money problem became the big issue at the time.


G: Now [unclear] I got a million stories. I mean we were very (---) I had a, I had a very different relationship with Paul, because we were not so much friends from childhood, because I didn’t, we didn’t really know each other that well as kids.

A: Do you remember the first time you met him?

G: Oh in high school I’m sure, (A: Okay) but we didn’t know each other well in high school. He was a couple of years ahead of me, and whatever. And I’m sure when I say in high school, I’m sure I knew him as a young kid around church and whatever too, but you know, that’s another strange thing about my upbringing in Lowell. The fact that I was the son of the first Greek to move into Belvidere, I grew up with a whole bunch of Irish and Yankee kids. I didn’t, I didn’t know many of the kids in the Acre. Everyone assumes I grew up in the Acre. I didn’t. So I don’t have that Acre immigrant experience under my belly. But anyway, yah, no, but to get back to Paul, we had a, I think the commonality of our upbringing allowed the two of us to have a lot of meetings and conversations, and one on ones, that we just kind of fit and could talk easily. And you know, not, my role with him was not the political advocate, or the political advisor or whatever, because I wasn’t, that wasn’t my [unclear] work. I wasn’t involved in the day-to-day strategies of the race, or this or that, or whatever, although I did obviously a lot of
fundraising and campaigning for him, but it was on a different, a different level. I mean this was my friend is what I was as opposed to whatever. And well, anyway.

A: Well any final thoughts about your time growing up, living, working here in the city, active in community groups?

G: No. Only that I don’t have any regrets, and I think Lowell is a great city. It ah, people have to understand that the toughest part of a city, I’m finally realizing this now, is that in many ways it’s a dumping ground so to speak and not nice to say. It’s not a nice expression, but it really is. It has to deal with all of the milieu of the country. And every political and social strata is all mixed into one, and Lowell is the perfect example for it. And that, that’s what makes it tough to do. But not withstanding that I think the place is a great place to live and bring your kids up. And I don’t have any kids, but raise a family and grow up in.

A: Great. Thank you very much.

Interview ends.