

## ***George J. Mitchell Oral History Project***

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**Severin Beliveau**  
(Interviewer: Michael Hastings)

**GMOH# 033**  
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**Severin Beliveau:** ... and he's always making these appearances, he speaks at these political events but he won't contribute any money. So people ask me to contribute money, I said I'll match Mitchell, whatever he does, I'll match it. And I called his bluff. He had to give the speaker of the House five hundred bucks the other day, I got a letter from him yesterday and he called me to tell me that he had given five hundred dollars to this.

**Mike Hastings:** The following is a recorded interview of the George J. Mitchell Oral History Project, an activity of Bowdoin College. The project director is Andrea L'Hommedieu. This interview is being conducted at the office of the law firm Preti Flaherty. The office is located at 45 Memorial Circle in Augusta. The date is Friday, September 5, [2008]. I'm Mike Hastings the interviewer, the interviewee is Severin M. Beliveau. Mr. Beliveau, before we begin the regular questions, we have some standard questions we ask of every interviewee. Could you please state your full name, spell your surname, give the date and place of your birth, and provide the full names of your parents?

**SB:** All right. I'm Severin Beliveau, that's spelled B-E-L-I-V-E-A-U. I was born in Rumford, [Maine], on March 15, 1938, and my parents were Albert and Margaret Beliveau.

**MH:** And your mother's maiden name?

**SB:** Was Margaret McCarthy.

**MH:** You were interviewed on September 2, 1999, almost exactly nine years ago; Andrea L'Hommedieu interviewed you for the Edmund S. Muskie Oral History Project. That interview captured details in your family, your upbringing in Rumford, and your early career and involvement in the Democratic Party. I will not ask you to repeat today what you said then. Instead, I will ask you some questions which came to me after I read the 1999 interview. I'd like you to fill in some gaps in your biography.

**SB:** Maybe I'll (*unintelligible*) –

**MH:** And one of those involves, a couple of them involve your education. You indicate you were raised in Rumford, a town dominated by a paper mill. What was it like to leave Rumford and go off to a boarding school?

**SB:** I was, I think I'd characterize it as traumatic. I came from a community that was self-contained, dominated by French and Irish Catholics, and a very secure environment where our family was prominent and I felt obviously quite secure. I was then placed into an environment in a private Catholic boarding school which was dominated by wealthy Catholics primarily of Irish descent from the north shore of Massachusetts. And most of these men that I was, that I got to know and relate to came from families that were for the most part fairly wealthy and probably more socially aware of the world than I was. I'd led, as I said, a rather insular, restricted life in Rumford, so it was traumatic, I'd say.

**MH:** How old were you when you went away?

**SB:** I was sixteen.

**MH:** Sixteen, and the name of the school?

**SB:** St. John's Preparatory School in Danvers.

**MH:** In Danvers, and you were there for how many years?

**SB:** Two years.

**MH:** Two years, and then where did you go.

**SB:** Then I went to Georgetown.

**MH:** Went to Georgetown, so you were there for your junior and senior years.

**SB:** [I was a student at Georgetown for four years.] It was a great experience, and it was due in great part to my mother's urging. I was a fairly good student but, as she said, I had never realized my full potential, and I'm convinced had I not gone to [*sic* St. John's] I would not have been accepted or admitted to the schools that I applied to, including Bowdoin ironically, and the reason I didn't go to Bowdoin was because – that's another story, but -

**MH:** Bowdoin would be interested. What's the story?

**SB:** It's a great story, it's a great story.

**MH:** I'd like to hear it. Obviously we're interested in anything that's Bowdoin-related, or anything that's George Mitchell-related, so any anecdotes would be great. I mean we're really trying to get, we're trying to get stories that aren't out there already. And I have to tell you, Mr. Beliveau, that of all the people I've interviewed, there's more out there about you than virtually anybody else yet, so.

**SB:** Well, it's an interesting story. I had applied at Bowdoin, been accepted, and I spent a

weekend at a fraternity house with some friends of mine from Dixfield. It was Newty Stowell invited me to his fraternity house. I returned home on a Sunday night and told my father that I was very impressed that I had – at that point I was a junior at St. John's, I'd applied to Bowdoin, Holy Cross, Georgetown, and the University of Maine, and been accepted at a lot of them. And my brother at the time was at Georgetown, and my parents were leaning that way but I didn't think that they really minded.

So in any event, apparently that previous week my father had been presiding in the Superior Court in Cumberland County and a couple of Bowdoin kids appeared before him and – on some minor charge, nothing very serious, I've forgotten what the situation was but it was for some reason they were before him. In any event, their lawyer argued that these two young men came from good families, attending a prestigious school, and a conviction would affect their lives forever and that as a consequence the court should be lenient and recognize this and treat them accordingly. Of course my father's background was that he was not from a privileged family and had never gone to college, and his response was, these two young men have been provided opportunities that were not available to most Maine citizens, most Maine men at that age, and rather than be lenient on them he was going to set an example. And I don't know what he did, whether he fined them heavily or sent them to jail for twenty-four hours, he did something dramatic.

So I returned home that weekend, announced I was going to Bowdoin, whereupon my father said, "No, you're not going to Bowdoin." He said, "After what I saw this week, you're going to Georgetown where your brother is."

**MH:** Interesting.

**SB:** That was it.

**MH:** So you had an older brother, Albert is older than you are.

**SB:** Yes, yeah.

**MH:** And did he go to St. John's as well?

**SB:** No, he went to Cranwell Preparatory School in Lennox, it was a Jesuit prep school, and as a matter of fact he cautioned me, he's the one who counseled me not to go there because he said, "Much too strict, too demanding, you won't like it, Severin." So I went to the St. John's with the Xaverian Brothers where it was far worse, far more demanding, far more restrictive, you know.

**MH:** Why did you pick Georgetown? What factors went into that?

**SB:** Well, I think it was Washington, D.C. That was my mother, though, my mother, and my father to some extent, believed that [since] I came from a small rural town, it was so important

they thought for the boys to be, and my sister went to Trinity College in Washington as well, so, and we were all kind of fascinated with the political world, plus D.C. My brother had a great experience at his first two years at Georgetown, he was two years ahead of me, and I had been down to visit with him and it's a great school, great town, and for me it worked out very well.

**MH:** So what years were you there?

**SB:** In '61 to '64.

**MH:** You didn't overlap -

**SB:** I'm sorry, I don't know what I'm talking about, '57 to '61.

**MH:** Fifty-seven to '61.

**SB:** Yeah, it was; law school was '61 to '64.

**MH:** So did you overlap with President Clinton at all?

**SB:** No, Clinton was about eight years behind me. Six or eight.

**MH:** Eight years behind you, okay, all right.

**SB:** Yeah, undergraduate, yeah.

**MH:** I see. A question about law school: your mother's father was an attorney?

**SB:** My grandfather, Matthew McCarthy, graduated from the University of Maine Law School in 1900. At the first -

**MH:** That's when it was still in Bangor.

**SB:** It was in Bangor, it was the first graduating class.

**MH:** Is that right, the first class?

**SB:** The first class, and then he moved to Lewiston, practiced law there for a few years, and then in the early 1900s, like 1904 or '05, moved to Rumford, and he was the second lawyer in Rumford and eventually became the first judge, first Municipal Court judge, and my father clerked for him. My father had worked in the bag mill, the International Paper Company bag mill, and Matthew McCarthy hired him as a clerk, and that's how my father got exposed to law, then he read law in his office.

**MH:** He read law in his office.

**SB:** Read law in his office.

**MH:** Without an undergraduate degree or -?

**SB:** No undergraduate degree, no, no. Then that's how he met my mother – my mother's twenty-one years younger – because he used to kind of, he was like a handyman around the house as well, he would bring firewood to the house, worked in my grandfather's office, did odd chores around his home, and ironically, he was probably, what, eighteen, nineteen, twenty, and of course my mother wasn't born then, and then she was born a few years later, then many years later they were married.

**MH:** So your father becomes a lawyer and eventually a justice in the law court.

**SB:** Yeah, the Superior Court, then ultimately in the law court, right.

**MH:** Did you always think you'd end up being a lawyer, or did you actually toy with other possible careers?

**SB:** No, I don't think I ever gave anything, any thought to any other profession. And this wasn't done overtly, it wasn't part of a concerted effort, I think it just kind of evolved that we were exposed to my grandfather, my father. My uncle, my mother's younger brother, was a lawyer and then became a Superior Court judge as well, and we were just exposed to law and politics as kids. And so that was the environment in which we were raised, and then going to Georgetown, where you're obviously exposed. I worked, my first year in law school at Georgetown I was a Capitol cop, I was a United States -

**MH:** Yeah, that was one of my questions, is how did that happen?

**SB:** That was a great story, it was a great story. At the time, I was going to go to Columbia Law School, and Muskie had, both he and Congressman [Oliver] [ ], Democratic congressman at the time. [ ] I learned that there were, that each of them had certain patronage positions in the Capitol, either Post Office, elevators, or police force. And so a friend of mine had been on the police force, he said, "You'll enjoy the police force." At that time there weren't many, there were probably eighty cops. Now there are probably two thousand there. But, so between Muskie and Congressman [ ]?

**MH:** Was it Hathaway?

**SB:** No, no, long before that; it was a Democrat. Whatever, between them, they were my patron, they sponsored me -

**MH:** Frank Coffin?

**SB:** No, no.

**MH:** Because he was a congressman in '58 to '60 I think.

**SB:** Yeah, before Coffin, before Coffin, because the interview, at the time all police officers with the exception of the sergeants, lieutenants, the senior officers, were metropolitan police officers, but the patrolmen were all Capitol police officers, mostly graduate students, law students, medical students, graduate students generally. So that was it, he nominated me and my training consisted of going to the White House police shooting range with a .38, as soon as we hit a silhouette twenty-five yards away, any part of the body outline, we qualified, we had a half-a-day of training, we had a couple pamphlets and booklets about some of the laws we had to enforce and that was it.

**MH:** Did you make a lot of friends in Washington when you were there in Georgetown, undergraduate?

**SB:** Oh yeah, undergraduate, yeah, most of them in law school, but undergraduates, yeah, that was the network.

**MH:** Any that you deal with today?

**SB:** Oh sure, oh yeah, oh yeah, yeah, many of them I deal with today.

**MH:** People that are here in Maine?

**SB:** Some in Maine, some in Maine, a couple of judges, a couple of lawyers, a few undergraduate –at the time there weren't many people from Maine at Georgetown. My brother and I, and I think in the college, undergraduate at the time, it was a male school, it was really a southern school back then, very formal, dress code, and the Jesuits of course were in charge, and very demanding intellectually and academically, we were required to take all these philosophy courses, and it was all good stuff. But I had met a ton of people from all over the world, because it was truly an international school, and to this day I have friends in Europe and Africa and all over the country.

**MH:** In the 1999 interview it's clear that your family in Rumford and the Muskie family go a long, go back a long way, and there was obviously some competition, conflict, whatever, between the families. You seem, you and Ed Muskie seem to have worked out a very solid relationship that worked. When Ed Muskie left to become secretary of state, did your professional life change at all when George Mitchell went in as a senator? In other words, the way you dealt with the office?

**SB:** Yes, it did, it did, yeah. George was certainly far more accessible than Ed Muskie. Ed Muskie was a very difficult person to deal with, he was very demanding, not as engaging, not as outgoing as George was. George had a policy, as you know, whenever a person from Maine

appeared in his office he wanted to meet them, even though it was just a meet-and-greet for a minute or so. And Muskie was just the converse, he was not as accessible; just different personalities, totally different personalities. I have all kinds of stories I can tell you about Ed Muskie which are not, are accurate, but yeah, George was very helpful to us in the sense that, I mean to me as a lawyer, to my law firm, and Ed Muskie was, well he was difficult in the sense that he was, his staff was far more protective of him. And of course that was something that he conveyed to them; that wasn't done in the abstract. And Mitchell, on the other hand, made it clear to his staff that he wanted to be available and accessible to citizens from Maine. Muskie did not – his disposition was completely different than George's. So Muskie was a little more insulated. His sense of self-importance was far greater than George's. I guess that's another way of describing it.

**MH:** In the Mitchell Archives at Bowdoin College's library, there's a wonderful picture, it's really my favorite picture in the whole collection, of you, Harold Pachios, George Mitchell, and one other person all decked out in aprons at a barbecue. And you, I assume it was a Democratic Party function –

**SB:** Jefferson-Jackson thing probably.

**MH:** An outdoor barbecue, and you all look like you're having a great time. Your relationship with George Mitchell and Harold Pachios, that goes back to the mid-'60s?

**SB:** Back to the mid-'60s.

**MH:** Could you talk a little bit about that?

**SB:** Sure, sure. George was chairman of the Democratic Party for a couple of years; I succeeded him as chairman of the party. I also succeeded him on the National Committee so we got to work, I traveled with him, not a lot, but fairly often we'd go to Washington together attending DNC meetings. But also after he became a judge and Muskie was appointed secretary of state and Brennan appointed him [Mitchell] to fill the vacancy, George's attitude didn't change in any way. It wasn't as if he viewed himself as a different person on a different plane, he was still accessible to us and always available to assist Democrats. He never, ever forgot his roots. And there are a number of examples of how he assisted defeated candidates for the legislature or for congressional races, and therein laid the difference.

By way of example, Lucia Cormier, she ran against Margaret Chase Smith, she lost. She wanted to be appointed at the time Customs director, U.S. Customs director for Portland. It was a political position, political appointment, an attractive one, and Muskie didn't help her. Now, had Mitchell been in that position, he'd have made every effort to do it. Now you can see examples of that with Joe Brennan at the Maritime Administration, and Charlie Pray, former Senate president who lost the state Senate race, got him a job with the Energy office. There are examples like that all over, George never forgot his friends.

**MH:** Again, the 1999 interview talks a bit about your service on the Democratic National Committee, I guess you were on the executive committee for a couple years?

**SB:** I think so, yeah.

**MH:** Steering committee or whatever they call them.

**SB:** Hmm-hmm

**MH:** It sounds from that interview like you did play a role in both the '68 presidential campaign and the '72 campaign. Could you talk a little bit about what you did during those campaigns?

**SB:** Well the '68 campaign, I'd just been elected party chair and I attended the convention in Chicago in '68. At the time the selection process was far less democratic than it is today, it really consisted of the party leaders appointing themselves as delegates. Prior to that time I'd been county chairman in Oxford County, so the delegates were divided among the counties, it wasn't based upon race or sex or other factors. So I appointed myself and the others, and we all showed up in Washington. At the time Humphrey, as you know, was ultimately nominated; Muskie was under consideration, was one of those being considered for VP. And I was there when the Mississippi delegation marched out of the convention when Richard J. Daley, mayor, stood up, gave the finger and said, "We're leaving," and urged them to leave.

But I also drove Muskie from the Holiday Inn on Lake Shore Drive in Chicago to Daley's office; he asked me to drive him to the office and, which I did. I waited there for an hour or so, or longer, they had the meeting, and Muskie got in the car, drove back, never disclosed to me what occurred. [I] later learned that evening that, and subsequently that Daley had informed Muskie that he would be the vice presidential nominee, and that he had met with Humphrey and said, "If you ever expect to carry Illinois, you better have someone like Muskie, a Polish Catholic, on the ticket." And I learned about that just -

Then once he was nominated, we decided to have an event at the Holiday Inn to recognize him. So I talked to Ed Bonney, our executive director, I said, "Ed, let's invite all the delegates to Holiday Inn to an event to recognize and to honor Ed Muskie." He says, "We don't have any money." I said, "Yeah, but let's-," so I, Freddie Vahlsing – remember Freddie Vahlsing? So Freddie Vahlsing had flown in with Ken Curtis, and so I talked to Freddie, I said, "Freddie, we don't have any money, can you fund this for us?" Back then it was probably a couple thousand dollars. He said, "Sure, sure, I'll take care of it." So we invited everybody, had a hell of a show, we had a thousand people show up, eight hundred, what a huge, we overdid it.

So the next morning we're leaving, and no Freddie Vahlsing. So the manager came up to me, he said, "Who's going to pay for this?" And I said – back in those days credit cards were just coming into vogue – I turned to Bonney, I said, "You have a credit card?" He had an American Express card, and I said, "Put this on your American Express," which he did. And I said, "We'll,



and I'll make sure you're covered." Returned to Maine, a week passed, tried to contact Vahlsing. Robinsville, New Jersey, that's where he lived. And finally I went up to see the governor, I said, "Ken," I said, "this is embarrassing." I said, "We can't afford this, Vahlsing's trying to stiff us on this two thousand dollar bill." So he picks up the phone and calls Vahlsing, it was taken care of.

And the other story – want some other stories?

**MH:** These are perfect.

**SB:** Peter Kyros was congressman at the time. Peter was not the most likeable person on Earth. Again, I think he was in the second term, seeking his third term. And Richard J. Daley, then mayor, recognized the power, the political power base, meaning that party chairs back in those days were powerful positions, I mean you really, you control the delegates, you control committee appointments, things which are not the case today. So as a consequence, when I arrived in Chicago I had a car and driver; I had a Plymouth with a Chicago detective as my driver. Hathaway had, no-no, no-no, it was Muskie at the time, and so he had a car and driver, the governor had a car and driver, the governor had a limousine and a driver, the congressmen, that is Hathaway and Kyros did not have one because there weren't enough. So in Daley's mind, they were of less importance politically.

So anyway, that's what happened. So one day, I was single and I had a friend of mine, I had appointed Dr. Lynn Nash from Rumford as the delegation physician, and he was English, didn't vote, but he was my friend and I said, "Well come on down," and he flew down. We had chartered a plane; we chartered a 727, which never happened before. And so Lynn and I, we had met a couple girls and so we wanted to impress them, so I asked Ken Curtis if he was using his limousine that particular night. He said, "No, you can take it." I said, "Fair enough." So Peter Kyros [Sr.] went to Ken afterwards and says, "I've got some members of Congress and I want to host an event for them, I'd like to have your car." "Geez, I'm sorry, talk to Severin, see if he'll release it." So he came to see me and I said, "No, but you can take my Plymouth." That's the first story; he was so upset.

The second story was, the Cianchettes, as you know a high-profile Democratic family, all good people, hard workers, for the most part consistently Democratic. Carl Cianchette was then a state senator, vice president of Cianbro's at the time. So Carl had a touch of the Irish disease, so Carl had been at a bar next to the stockyard, the Stockyard Inn, next to the convention center, down where the stockyards were. And so Peter Kyros had asked me whether he and Alice could ride back in my car from the convention center to the hotel because they didn't want to ride the bus with the rest of the delegates, and I said, "Sure, I'll meet you outside." So I was waiting for them and Carl stumbles out of the Stockyard Inn, obviously had had a few drinks. And he's a big guy, about probably six-three, six-four, weighed at least three hundred pounds, just a big person. And I said to myself, "I can't keep him here, something's going to happen to him," so I said, "Carl, get in," so he gets in the back of the Plymouth. Of course there isn't any more room so we take off. Peter and Alice show up, no car, no driver, had to get on the bus to come back.

So that was my second confrontation with Peter.

**MH:** What about '72?

**SB:** Seventy-two, well the background of '72 is, I was a volunteer for Muskie, Mitchell was his deputy campaign manager, and it really began – and I have a photograph in Rangeley of when he was in Manchester and appeared before the *Manchester Union Leader* and was challenging Loeb. And I'd flown with Mitchell that night – well anyway you can figure that out, I don't have to repeat that stuff.

So '72, when McGovern was ultimately the nominee, Muskie stumbled in New Hampshire, even though he clearly received the strong majority of the votes. But the votes weren't at the level where mostly pundits thought it should be, and his campaign really deteriorated from that point on, and ultimately McGovern was the nominee.

Again we chartered another plane there, too, we chartered, I don't think, yeah, '72, we chartered a plane from Portland to Miami. I was on the selection committee of the DNC at the time, I had gone to Florida – I was single then of course – gone to Florida with the selection committee, interviewed and reached the conclusion that Florida was the right site for it. And George was, let's see, at the time I was party chairman I guess and he was on the National Committee, I think that's what it was. Oh, I know what it was, I was president of the Democratic State Chairs Association, that's what it was, that's what gave me a seat at the table at that point. Then I became a -

**MH:** I didn't catch that, that's not in many of your bios.

**SB:** No, no, I was the second pres[ident]. We formed this organization, the Democratic State Chairs Association, that's when I had a battle with Bob Strauss, real battle with Bob Strauss.

**MH:** Talk about that for a minute.

**SB:** Oh yeah, that's a great story. This is back probably '71, '72, the same time frame. And I will give you, I got to show you this, you would enjoy this one. Bob Strauss had just, he was from Texas, started a small firm called Akin & Gump; it's now a nine-hundred-person law firm. At the time he ran against George for party chair, I don't remember, this is '72 – wait a minute, I think – '72 or '73.

**MH:** Yeah.

**SB:** And we worked our bloody tails off, and George only lost by a few votes, as it turned out. So anyway, he was elected. Strauss came before us and he said, "I don't want a salary, I'm not expecting to be paid for this, just pay for an apartment, and for a car and driver for me, that's all I need." Of course it turned out that his apartment was a suite at the Sheraton Park Hotel up on Connecticut Avenue, and the car, a Lincoln car and driver.

And I'll never forget this, this is another Muskie experience, Muskie mentioned this to me later that Strauss had made an appointment with Muskie and he had the presidents, either the president of General Motors or the president of Ford, or both of them. That was when Muskie was proposing all these air emission laws, the first ones, and of course that had an impact on Detroit. So they'd hired Strauss to lobby for them, so he shows up at Muskie's office and Muskie practically threw him out. He says, "Here you are, you're the national chairman, you're the party chairman, and our platform promotes these new environmental laws, and you're lobbying against them." He says, "Get out!" – threw him out of his office. It's a great story.

So then Strauss, at the time a group of us felt that he was on his own, he was more about Bob Strauss than the party organization, trying to help the organization develop a national network of political operatives that would in fact strengthen the party and contribute to our success. And we also believed that he didn't appreciate the value of the party organizations in the various states. And many of us had worked very hard to develop organizations, Maine became a very effective – we turned the state around in a few years. We had a full time operation down there; I had five people on our staff. I think our budget then is what it is today.

**MH:** Who were those staff people? You mentioned Ed Bonney.

**SB:** Ed Bonney [was my executive director and] lives in Freeport. Mary Jane Lesperance, who had worked for George at one point in Washington [was our executive secretary]. Sam Shapiro, another great American [was our treasurer]. Then we had a printer, I've forgotten his name, and we had a, oh, we had Dick, what the hell's his name, from Augusta here. But anyway, so I'll finish that party chairman thing. So it culminated in a meeting at the Mayflower, when we asked the DNC to fund our offices, [which] ultimately led up to the Watergate, as you know, my involvement in the Watergate, so that was another issue. But the background is that we asked Strauss to fund an administrative position for the State Chairs Association. He wouldn't do it. I said, "Fine, we're going to create our own organization; we're going to leave the Watergate, have a separate political organization," which he didn't want. He said, "All right, all right, I'll fund it." And that's when we hired Spencer Oliver [as our executive director] [ ]. I hired him; he was my executive director when I was president of the association. I used to travel from Rumford once a month to Washington just because, again, I was single; it was a great, great time.

**MH:** You said it was his phone?

**SB:** Well, when the Watergate, when the Puerto Ricans placed listening devices on Larry O'Brien's phone, there were two offices. O'Brien's phone was here, the state chair's was here, it was my telephone, it was also tapped, which was Spencer Oliver's. And my secretary, it was her desk that had been rifled through. They were allegedly looking for evidence that the party chairs, that she was providing prostitutes for the party chairs, which is of course absolutely untrue. And when they went in the second time, the listening device on our phone worked, they taped all our conversations. The one on O'Brien's phone was not working, that's why they went

in the second time, to replace the listening device, and that's when they were caught.

**MH:** During the Watergate investigation, did you have, were you interviewed?

**SB:** Oh yeah, oh yeah, absolutely, oh yeah, we filed a lawsuit. I've testified in court at least three times against G. Gordon Liddy. I sued G. Gordon Liddy, my secretary sued, I was in court in Philadelphia two years ago in a civil lawsuit against Liddy. Oh, deeply involved. Matter of fact, at the time, Strauss didn't want us to pursue it. Strauss – the U.S. attorney, Republican U.S. attorney under Nixon was investigating and he wanted to disclose the contents of our telephone conversations, which was not legally required, ostensibly to embarrass us. They weren't pursuing it. And then when we brought the lawsuit, Strauss tried to persuade me to dismiss it, he didn't want us to pursue it. And we had to hire the ACLU, because we couldn't find anybody to [represent us].

**MH:** Why do you think Strauss did that?

**SB:** Because he and Nixon were very good friends. Why do you think he was ultimately appointed ambassador to Russia? They had a discussion, and he had a new law firm and of course he's hustling, you know. And it was apparent. Before you leave, I'll give you, I'll show you an article somebody sent me yesterday about Strauss. He's ninety-two, ninety-three years old, ninety years old, and he still runs that law firm.

**MH:** You've made mention a couple of times that during the '68 campaign and during the '72 campaign you were single. It strikes me that the connection between the Beliveau Democratic clan of Oxford County, and the Murray Democratic clan of –

**SB:** Penobscot.

**MH:** - Bangor is one of the great alliances in this state. Is that a correct -?

**SB:** Well I think it is, I think it is. You have two families who played a prominent role in the Democratic parties in their counties, yeah. And you look at my wife's side of the family, the Murrays. Bob Murray was city chair and county chair in Penobscot County at the time. In '72, when Elmer Violette ran against Billy Cohen, Frank Murray was his campaign chair [and] that's [when] I met Cynthia. I was party chairman, I was at an event in Bangor [where] I was speaking [ ], Cynthia was there helping Frank, printing name tags at an Elmer Violette fund raiser. That's where it all started.

**MH:** Is politics different in Bangor than it is in Rumford?

**SB:** In terms of its intensity it was. I mean, we were really into it in a big way. When I returned from, after I got out of law school and I finished my Coast Guard [service], I returned to Rumford and I ran for county attorney. Think about it, it was ethnic driven in great part, there was the Irish Catholics -

**MH:** In both towns.

**SB:** Both towns, French Catholics, Irish Catholics. And Cynthia's mother's a Guité, there's French blood there as well. Yeah, I think that it just may have been a matter of degree. In our case, we were all engaged. They were too, the Murrays were all involved. Just think about it, Frank served in the legislature, ran for secretary of state, lost by one vote, he was Elmer Violette's campaign manager; Buddy served in the House and the Senate, he's now a judge; Cynthia's great uncle Ned Murray, old Ned Murray was appointed to the Superior Court in 1935, the same time that my father was appointed, and the same time that the first Jew, the first Catholic I think, both Irish and French, Abe Rudman was appointed. Rudman, Beliveau, Murray, I have a picture in the *Lewiston Sun*, photographs, by Louis Brann in '35. That was historical, you know.

**MH:** I remember shortly after I met you and worked with you, I recall that President Carter came to have one of his town meetings in Maine. And lo and behold, I open up the newspaper and I believe that your wife's family was his host and you were his escort. Could you talk a little bit about how that all transpired?

**SB:** Yeah, that's an interesting story as well. At the time, President Carter, who was conducting a number of meetings around the country of course as part of his reelection effort, and it also involved visiting various homes, and he would stay in people's homes. And Maine was selected because Bill Hathaway was seeking reelection at that time, and he wanted to help Hathaway and wanted to help himself. So Bangor was selected because the polls showed that Hathaway needed some help in the 2<sup>nd</sup> District.

So I was, let's see, it was right during Loring, too, Loring was happening, because I had to be in Washington with Paul Haines a few times, and I learned about it. And so I was at the White House on Loring business and I chatted with Carter's assistant, the fellow just died -

**MH:** Judge Gunter?

**SB:** No-no, no.

**MH:** Oh, Hamilton Jordan.

**SB:** Hamilton Jordan. And we're chatting about Maine generally, and I said, "I understand the president's going to Bangor." In the meantime, various high-profile professional families were all vying to have the president stay at their homes - I won't mention the names of who they are aloud - and so they, so Jordan listed these names for me. I said, "You don't want to go with all that," I said, "you want a real middle class family." "Who do you have in mind?" I said, "The Murrays, my in-laws." I said, "He's a white goods salesman at Sears, mother works at the University of Maine Credit Union, the kids are University of Maine graduates, and my wife had been in the nunnery and all that stuff, you talk about a high-profile, respected family" - that's

when the whole thing changed.

**MH:** Mr. Beliveau, it's ten of ten, do you, are you ready to go on?

**SB:** Yeah, yeah.

**MH:** Okay. You also, I think, I mentioned the President Carter town meeting, but I know you also have had a number of episodes and relationships with the Carter family. Could you talk a little bit about those?

**SB:** Well, obviously that was a big event. Just to follow up on that, he was there, then we all had breakfast with him at the Murray's the next morning. But the previous night we were all in the living room, and the Murrays have a very modest home on Maple Street in Bangor, [and] Carter noticed the new Sears catalogue on their coffee table. And he picked it up and he started looking at it, and Bob Murray of course worked at Sears at the time, he said, "Is this the new catalogue?" Bob said, "Yes, it is." "We haven't received it yet," said Carter. "Oh," said Bob Murray, "why is it a concern?" He said, "We order, most of the things that we have in Plains, Georgia, come from the Sears catalogue." And they spent more time looking at the Sears catalogue than anything else.

Then of course my youngest son Emmett, who now works for Obama, was just a child, was just a year or two old, and there was a great picture of Emmett on Carter's lap in *Newsweek* magazine, it was just a great story. Incredible.

A further sequel to that is, speaking of Loring, Carter had no organization in Maine. Ted Kennedy was considering running, as a matter of fact was actually seeking the nomination, he had an organization together. Joe Brennan was governor. Brennan called me one day and he said, "I want to chat with you." So I walked over to the Blaine House, and Joe was leaving for Ireland. He said, "I'm endorsing Ted Kennedy tomorrow." I said, "How can you endorse Ted Kennedy when we have Loring Air Force Base pending?" It hadn't been finalized yet, we had the new bridge in Bangor, we had a lot of, we had several huge projects in Maine, which I knew were pending either in the Congress or the executive branch. I said, "Joe, you can't put this." "Oh," he says, "the Kennedys and I go back a long ways." I said, "Well I'm not supporting him."

So Joe left for Ireland. There was an event in Washington sponsored by the DNC, a large fund-raising event. We were invited to it, so I took some people from Maine. A client of mine offered me his jet plane. I took John Martin, who was then speaker, I took Shapiro [who] was the treasurer, Rod Quinn, secretary of state, Barry Hobbins for some reason, I don't know how he got on the plane. We went down, met with Hamilton Jordan again, and at that point Carter had no organization in Maine. We said, "We're prepared to help, but we need some help from you." And so I said, "We've got to have a favorable decision on Loring, you got to act on that. Secondly, we need that Chamberlain Bridge, the Bangor-Brewer Bridge, that'll help Hathaway." Rod Quinn wanted to control all of the workers who were undertaking the decennial, every ten

years they have a -

**MH:** The census?

**SB:** Census. He wanted to control those jobs. And there was a Section 8 project in Rumford which we needed a waiver for, big project. I said, "We need your help, we'd be glad to help you." So to make a long story short, as you know, Loring was at the point that they -

**MH:** Could you just for a second, because many people now fail to remember that the federal government tried to close Loring in the '70s.

**SB:** Twice.

**MH:** Can you just give a little bit of, briefly give a background on that first Loring closure fight.

**SB:** Yeah, the battle resulted from an announcement by the Pentagon that Loring was one of several SAC bases that were going to be closed for a number of reasons. In this case they claimed it was inefficient. We later learned it was because the senior officers didn't like the Maine winters, they didn't like the brutal Maine winters, even though from a strategic perspective, that is its efficiency, its location to, its ability to respond and to have its aircraft, the B-52's and the KC-135's, in the air over the Soviet Union in a shorter period of time than any other SAC base in the continental United States.

So as you know, we, the Save Loring Committee was formed, Paul Haines from Loring, not from Loring from -

**MH:** Limestone.

**SB:** - Limestone was chair, raised a lot of money, the legislature appropriated monies, formed a committee, hired expert witnesses from D.C., from the Georgetown Center for Strategic and International Studies, and we analyzed the Air Force rationale and refuted all its points. And it culminated, ironically, in a hearing at Limestone High School, Ed Muskie presiding. I guess I've told you, you've read that story, that story about, it's a great, great story, one of Muskie's finest performances.

The Air Force was there conducting hearings, and we were there with the Save Loring Committee, and Muskie was, he was co-chairing it with this colonel, this JAG colonel. [ ] The hearing consisted of just a parade of witnesses as to why Loring shouldn't be shut down, we had experts, we had local residents. So around six o'clock, the colonel approached the microphone, and said, "Well we're taking a recess for dinner." They're all going to go to the officers' club at Loring Air Force Base, and meanwhile the rest of the audience are just to hang around. So Muskie grabbed the microphone, "No you're not," he says, "you're not going back, you're staying here until this hearing's finished. We're not here to accommodate you; you're here to

accommodate us.” Boy, the response from the audience, because Muskie read the audience well and it was the right thing to do.

It wasn’t unlike when Cohen was holding the hearings the second round; we had hearings before the Senate Armed Services Committee. Paul Haines and I were down in Washington and we walked in the hearing room, and the first, let’s see, there were, the first row of chairs were reserved for the military officers. So Paul and I walked up, and I started to sit down. This lady comes, “Oh no, these are reserved for General-this, Lieutenant-.” And I said, “No they’re not.” I said, “We have as much right to be here as they do.” And, matter of fact, the other part of that was, who was our congressman?

**MH:** I staffed that hearing.

**SB:** Did you? Yeah, did you? Yeah. But anyway, when our good friend Congressman – one term congressman, two terms, he’s the Republican that George defeated.

**MH:** David Emery.

**SB:** David Emery was with us, he came with us to a meeting at the Pentagon. David was on the Armed Services Committee, I think, was he on the House Armed Services Committee?

**MH:** No, he was actually on a different committee, but he sat in on the House Armed Services Committee whenever these issues came up.

**SB:** That’s right. But anyway, he had arranged this meeting. We showed up at the Pentagon, Dr. Kilmarx, Paul Haines, myself, and David, and you could just sense the tension all these officers -

**MH:** That’s Dr. Robert Kilmarx of the Georgetown Center.

**SB:** Yeah. And who’s an expert on Soviet air warfare; that was his expertise. He’d written books about it, he knew more about it than any person in the Pentagon. That’s why they were embarrassed, because he refuted all their claims on strategic issues. So we’re seated there, and these young officers are kind of mulling around waiting for the two-star general to show up, and as soon as he came in the room they all stood up. And the congressman, David [Emery] starts to... and I said, “David,” I grabbed him, I said, “wait a minute,” I said, “he works for us.” I said, “That’s the problem here,” I said, “everybody’s so deferential.” And so Paul Haines and I and Kilmarx wouldn’t stand up. Why should we stand up, he’s just a general, he just works for us. But again, it gives you an idea of the environment. So, all kinds of stories like that.

**MH:** You were hired by the Save Loring Committee, they were aware both of your law practice, your lobbying activities, and obviously your connections with the Democratic Party; you had a Democrat in power at that time. This is a very general question, but did you, as a lobbyist, do you develop strategies on a case by case basis, or is there a ‘Beliveau approach’ to



something like the effort for Loring, or any of the things you do here in Augusta?

**SB:** Well, I don't know whether I have a specific approach that can be labeled, you know, a Beliveau approach. I approach lobbying, whether it's Augusta or Washington, as I do any other case: it's a couple of factors. One is, you become an advocate, which means you have to become intimately familiar with every aspect of your client's case. And frequently there are a number of legal issues involved, that's why I think the most effective lobbyists are those with a legal background, legal training. Because invariably you're dealing with laws, you're dealing with amendments to statutes, you're dealing with legislative history, and that's very, very effective.

The irony is that we have been as successful when the Republicans have controlled the legislature, or we've had a Republican governor or an Independent governor, because we present our cases in a bright, persuasive, convincing way. We understand the process, understand the personalities and the process, who the key people are, who are the ones who can be very helpful to you, who are the ones who can relate to your clients.

For instance, Loring Air Force Base, we could not have succeeded – at the time, it was a Republican controlled legislature with a Democratic governor, yet they appropriated the money to hire us and their expert witnesses. I think that we presented a credible, although I'm a partisan person, my favorite story is that all my clients are Republicans, and that's how I can afford to be a Democrat. If I had to depend upon Democratic clients, you and I wouldn't be chatting today probably.

**MH:** I want to cycle back to your meeting with Hamilton Jordan, when you were, with the strong challenge by Ted Kennedy to the president. How did that end up?

**SB:** That ended up – it's a good point. While Brennan was in Ireland we went to Washington, and the five or six of us made a pact that we would all run as delegates for the '72 convention in New York City. At the time, I've forgotten what we had, eighteen to twenty delegates, and that we would make every effort to make certain that the majority of the delegates were Carter delegates. When Joe came back, he and Kennedy thought that once Brennan endorsed him that other Democratic governors would follow suit. Joe was the only Democratic governor to endorse Kennedy.

And one of the great stories of the, and as a consequence, we secured a majority of the delegates, arrived in New York. At the time Muskie's name was being considered, and a group of delegates were supporting him as Maine's favorite son. And we did that just, I didn't do it, I was overtly for Carter and made it clear that was the case, but Carter and Bob Strauss, and who was Carter's lawyer at the time? McPherson, McPherson, was it? One of those guys, he was one of Mitchell's partners later on. But in any event, we were there at the convention hall in New York City, and Strauss called for me. We went into his trailer, which was in Madison Square Garden, Sam Shapiro and me, and he said, "We cannot permit Maine to advance Muskie as a favorite son, it's embarrassing." I said, "Well then tell Muskie to release us, make it" – Muskie was not

at the convention at the time, he was at his home in China Lake. I said, "Jesus, why don't you call Muskie, have the president call him, he's the secretary of state, after all." "We want you to call him," he said, which was really bizarre. The president of the United States, most powerful people in the free world, were in the trailer at the time. I said, "So I'll call him," so I called him.

I got through to him, and, "Yeah, yeah, right, Severin." And I said, "Senator, you have to do something," I said, "we've been told that this is embarrassing and that Carter clearly has a majority and it would be particularly embarrassing since you're the secretary of state, for our delegation to continue to endorse you as a favorite son." "All right, all right, all right," he says, "all right, I'm going to release them all." So I said, "So I'm authorized to convey that to the rest of the delegates?" So we hung up – and Sam talked to him as well – so Strauss is (*unintelligible*), we walked in the next room and, "How did it go?" I said, "He didn't say what you thought he was going to say." Jesus, you should see, ashen white. "What do you mean?" I said, "I don't think he's going to release them." Just to get him going, you know, just to get something going. "Oh." And I said, "No, you're all set, don't worry about it."

But the point was, he's secretary of state, right, probably the most important Cabinet position. Yet for some reason the president was unwilling or reluctant to, and the staff was unwilling or reluctant to – you know why? Because I think they were, they feared Ed Muskie, because he had an awful temper, I mean he was – so that was that. So we were asked to intervene.

**MH:** My remaining questions are a little different now. I'm interested in you reflecting on how you saw George Mitchell evolve as a political leader, from your earliest connections with him, which I take it was when he returned to Maine after being Muskie's executive assistant in 1965.

**SB:** Yeah. That's true.

**MH:** Through the present day. I mean you worked together for many, many years. I recall when, from 1980 to 1984, when I worked for Senator Mitchell, you were one of the few people who could walk in and get a meeting with the Senator any time you wanted. And so you must have some thoughts about how he developed.

**SB:** When George returned, he worked for a law firm in Portland, and that's when I first got to know him. He was party chairman at the time and I was in the legislature, I think, at that time. So there were just a handful of people who were active at that point, it was Peter Kyros, Bill Hathaway, Muskie obviously was in the Senate, George had returned from Washington, he had started developing a reputation as a very effective trial lawyer. And then I recall vividly that I had a one-person office in Augusta, across from the courthouse, and I had worked with George on a jury trial once, we worked out of our little office. So he developed a reputation very quickly as a very effective lawyer. And then he ran for party chair, and we broke when he ran for governor, I supported Joe Brennan.

**MH:** Did you ever run against each other for anything?

**SB:** No, no, no. I supported Joe Brennan, and obviously he won [Note: Brennan won elections for governor in both 1978 and 1982. The election being referenced here is the 1974 Maine gubernatorial race, where both Brennan and Mitchell ran in the Democratic primary. Mitchell prevailed in the primary race, but ultimately lost the general election to Independent James Longley, who served as Maine's governor from 1974-1978.] And then he was appointed to the bench, and I worked, as a matter of fact, one of the first hearings that he had in Bangor involved a case which I was involved in. We walked in, he said, "Severin, I don't know whether I should be presiding over this." I said, "Why not?" He says, "I'll be fair with you," he said, "But what if I rule against you? You may get upset at me." I said, "All right, I'll send someone else up," so I sent the most junior lawyer we had in our office up there for this trial. And it worked out well; it turned out [well] because we had a strong case.

So I've worked with George as a lawyer, on the state committee when he was chair, and then as I said, I succeeded him as party chair, I served as chairman, I think for five years, and we worked together on the National Committee, I traveled with him fairly often, we'd go to Washington together. And so it was obvious that he was respected at the National Committee level, so in many ways he was a model in the sense that obviously he set the bar at a very high level and the rest of us aspired to, in many ways, to replicate what he was doing.

And so he built the party. The important thing is he developed the party as an effective political operation in Maine, elevated [it from] just being a part time position to an operation that was really relevant and contributed significantly to control the legislature and help the congressional candidates at every level. He's the one who introduced a professional approach to politics in Maine.

**MH:** When he was appointed to the federal bench, did you ever think that he was going to reappear again in Maine politics?

**SB:** No. When Muskie called Brennan to tell him that he was going to be selected, that Carter had asked him to serve as secretary of state, I was in the Bahamas with my wife. Brennan called me to, he had to tell me this and, which I thought was obviously a good thing. Joe was very close to George, very cautious. At the time there were four or five people that he had in mind.

**MH:** Were you one of them?

**SB:** Yeah, but I knew not for a minute would he ever appoint me, for all kinds of reasons, but I wasn't expecting to. But Gerry Conley was one -

**MH:** The state senator from Portland.

**SB:** Cumberland County, yeah, he became Senate president. There was a lawyer from Portland, and [ ] Ken Curtis. Ken Curtis's friends actively intervened on his behalf with

Brennan. But you recall that Curtis had endorsed Brennan's primary opponent, [ ] Phil Merrill. And so, I know they all came up, a group of them, high profile professional business people in Maine, visited with Brennan at the Blaine House. They had talked to me about it and they said, "What do you think?" I said, "It's not going to happen. Joe would be nice, he'll be accommodating, he'll be civil, respectful. He'll never appoint Ken Curtis." They said, "Why?" "You know why." That's exactly what happened. George was a very safe appointment.

**MH:** Hmm-hmm, hmm-hmm. From your vantage point, why do you think that George Mitchell has been successful, as a political leader and now as a business leader? That's a bit of a softball question, but I ask it to you sincerely.

**SB:** I think the qualities that have contributed to his success as a politician, as a lawyer and businessperson are the same; he has a desire to succeed, to be successful in whatever he does. And in order to do so, I think there are a number of factors. One is a tremendous work ethic, I mean he's prodigious, he's just unrelenting, he works as hard today as he did twenty-five years ago. He was the senior counsel in our firm for eight years, and even though he was in Washington he'd come to Portland, meet with clients, well prepared. The fellow was a quick [study] in the sense he could absorb, understand issues, and more importantly, communicate it in a very succinct way. Also, I think he was both intellectually and morally honest. No scandals, nothing inappropriate, by the book.

But also I think that he never forgot from whence he came. His family [ ], his Waterville roots, which we've heard about so often, about his father and mother and family, how they struggled to succeed, his experience at Bowdoin. And little things, for instance, when he graduated from Georgetown [and] came to Maine looking for work. There a very prestigious, high profile law firm that you may be familiar with [where] he interviewed, and when they learned that he was Lebanese Catholic that ended the discussion. I don't think those things, I don't think he's ever forgotten that. That internal drive to succeed, I think it's as much genetic as anything else. And he's developed a tremendous amount of respect, and he's in many ways bipartisan; bipartisan in a way that didn't compromise his Democratic values.

**MH:** He's always been very fair. I remind people that he hired Jim Longley's daughter to work for him, he hired me, and I'd worked for a Republican senator, didn't have any problem with that at all, because he didn't expect people to work on the Senate staff to be directly –

**SB:** Partisan.

**MH:** - partisan, I mean when they were working on the Senate staff. I think that that's a factor. I'd like to ask you, were you, were the two of you on issues ever at loggerheads, and how did that work?

**SB:** Well, not really loggerheads. I had a matter once that involved some federal legislation, and it involved a bill that he as majority leader had the sole authority to call bills up to be considered. And it's a different process than what we're accustomed to here in Augusta, and so I

called him one day, I said, "Why isn't this bill up? Why aren't you people voting on it?" "Because I don't want to do it," he said. I said, "Well who the hell are you to make that decision?" He says, "I'm the majority leader, Severin," he says, "I'm in charge." I says, "Yeah, but it's unfair." He says, "I decide what's fair and unfair." He and I had a real, I mean it was a polite exchange, but he knew his territory and he protected and defended it. I don't think that we've ever had any serious disagreements. He was a Clinton supporter, he won't admit it but he was a Clinton supporter this time around, and obviously we're deeply involved in the Obama campaign.

**MH:** You said that your son Emmett is working for the campaign?

**SB:** Oh, Emmett, since he went to Georgetown Law School, he worked for a law firm in D.C. and he's been there for nineteen months; he's director of advance and deputy director of operations [ ].

**MH:** Did you attend the Democratic convention?

**SB:** No, no, no, we were -

**MH:** But he did.

**SB:** No, he didn't.

**MH:** He did not?

**SB:** No, no, he did not, he went, he made the arrangements, came back, he worked, he called me two weeks ago, he said, "I'm in a UL, Dad." I said, "What's that?" "Undisclosed Location." He was with Biden on his way to Springfield, [Illinois]. He made all the arrangements for [Obama's announcement] [ ]. He has a staff of about 125 that work for him; he's responsible for the logistics all over the country. He's in Chicago, [his] wife's in Washington, she's pregnant, so that's creating some logistical problems, but I think she'll fly to Chicago [and] have the baby there [ ].

**MH:** Both of my sons, well my wife was pregnant with both of my sons during the two Senate campaigns. I think that being pregnant during a campaign is a great expression of optimism.

**SB:** It is that, but it also provides you with a reason, I suppose, not to spend too much time with a pregnant wife in a sense, which is great. Well, I don't know about that, but in any event, that's off the record.

**MH:** I want to close this but I'm going to throw two subjects at you, and you can just take them where you want to take them. I'm interested in knowing, I'm aware that you celebrated your Franco-American roots, and you've been very active in forging connections between the state of Maine and areas, other parts of the world that are largely French speaking. Can you talk

about that a little bit, and why it's so important to you?

**SB:** Yeah, again, that's a function of my upbringing, having been raised in a community of French Canadians and a father who spoke French and was very proud of his heritage, [which] he impressed [ ] upon us as children. And I think as time passed and I observed what was happening in Maine, where we have [ ] between thirty and forty percent of the Maine population, one side of the family is of French Canadian ancestry, and recognized that we really didn't have a presence in Maine that reflected, or influence in Maine that reflected our presence. And in reviewing my father's experience and how hard he struggled and his family struggled and Francos struggled to achieve recognition and acceptance, when you think about it, in the mid-30s he was the first Franco to be appointed to the bench, the first one to be appointed to the law court, and that was in the '50s. I was determined that, because of the opportunities that were provided to my brother and me and my sister that, my sister went to the Sorbonne in France to get a masters degree, and we spoke French at home until I left, even though my mother, who is Irish, understood French, but she encouraged and supported that approach.

So I think just being immersed in it, watching how proud he was and how quickly he corrected people and reprimanded them for denying their French heritage, that frequent comment you hear, 'Don't blame me, I'm French,' and so forth. I've related this hundreds of times, but I remember being with him when I was a kid. He was in court in Auburn, Androscoggin County Superior Court, I was sitting there with him and all these lawyers came in [to consult with him. Later at lunch my father] said, "You know, those two guys that were here this morning," he said, "they both [have] Franco surnames and," he said, "but they're Republicans, and they think that by becoming Republicans it will advance their professional career somehow, make them more acceptable and attract business clients." He says, "They're denying their roots; it'll never happen," he says. "I'll predict that twenty years from now they won't be any better off than they are today," and that's exactly what happened. Frequently Francos would Anglicize their names, Boulanger to Baker, Roi to King, all those things, and he was forever reprimanding people who were doing that.

But in any event, he impressed upon me the importance of recognizing our heritage. And I viewed it a different way, I said to myself, "If you're going to be a force in this state, you've got to be successful, professionally successful, economically successful. If you're economically successful, that brings with it recognition and respect." And the Francos had never achieved that in Maine, and I think that I recognized that, so I've spent a lot of my time at the local level, and even internationally [ ]. We had a very successful trade mission to France [in 2008; there had never been a trade mission to France]. We went to France, [which was] the most successful trade mission of the Baldacci administration for sure. As a matter of fact, we're going to return in 2010. We're putting together a big event for 2010.

I was honored to receive [ ] the [French] Legion of Honor's Award a few months ago. [I believe] I have empowered [many Franco Americans]. For instance, today I'm meeting with two, [two men] from the Franco American Center [ ]. I was instrumental, I must admit, in persuading the University of Maine to fund [the center]. At one point they were going to abolish

it and I intervened – and little things, like French at the university was always taught by professors who were graduates of the Sorbonne. It's 'Paris,' you know, Parisian frame of reference, when in fact we speak North American French. So we persuaded the administration that French teachers, professors, should be graduates of LaValle or McGill. And so now we have like Susan Pinnette, who [received her] Ph.D. from LaValle, and we've now made it comfortable for young men and women of French Canadian decent to participate in these programs, become more aware of who their families are, what they contributed. I'm studying – we're Acadians – I'm deeply involved with that whole Acadian expulsion in 1755, when the English threw the French out of Acadia in Nova Scotia and we were all distributed around the northeast and down to, and [Louisiana].

So I think it was, I see this as, I'm not saying it's an injustice that's being corrected, but I see this as an opportunity for me to capitalize on my family's success and expand it to include others. I'm trying to impress this upon my children, two of whom have studied in France, and I think they're getting into it a little bit.

**MH:** In the last twenty years it seems that Franco American influence on politics has been recognized as being very strong. Both in the political sphere and economic and social, what remains to be done? In other words, what's the -?

**SB:** Well, I think –

**MH:** If you had to actually say you had an action plan, what would it be?

**SB:** Well, you just continue what we're doing. I think the point is, is that we still don't have a -

*(Outside interruption)*

**SB:** I think we just continue what we're doing. Our ultimate objective is to have someone at the state House down the street here with a Franco surname; I think that's our ultimate objective. I tried, failed, but there'll be others. Mike Michaud is a good example. A lot of young men and women here who – one point is that the Francos, at the turn of the century, when they arrived here back in the late 1800s and early 1900s to work in the various mills, they came from Canada where they experienced economic hardship, I mean serious economic hardship. So their objective was to achieve economic security. With the consequence, rather than encouraging their children to go to school, to seek higher education, it was back in the mills, work-work-work, because they had suffered so much and they desperately wanted to become more secure economically.

It was really my generation where they, where the parents started encouraging [their children] to go on to school. My class in Rumford, I think had I stayed there, and I know all these guys, these people there, I think less than ten percent went on to school, college, and of the ten percent probably two percent went out of state.

**MH:** You know, right now, statewide, less than I think it's eighteen percent, seventeen or eighteen percent of our young people get baccalaureate degrees.

**SB:** Is that, it's still that low, huh?

**MH:** Yeah. One last question, and that is, ten years, nine years ago when you did the Muskie interview, you were bemoaning the lack of leadership, political leadership in the state. Do you think that that's improved any, or have we still got leadership problems?

**SB:** I think the difficulty we have is, and that applies to all parties, that we're so obsessed with being, like the two [ ] rules of politics which [ ] applies to politics today. I'm talking at every level, the federal level, state level, local level. Rule one is, do whatever's required to get elected or reelected; and rule two is, don't forget rule one. It drives all these people. I've been in this business for a long time, and there are more surveys and polls being taken in Maine today, and in any campaign, I mean I've been involved in a lot of congressional and gubernatorial campaigns and I can see that generally, particularly in a governor's first term, they wait 'til the issue galvanizes and then they lead. Second-term governors are prepared to be a little more courageous and ambitious, as Governor Baldacci has attempted to do with his reform measures.

But the days when Mitchell and Muskie and even Bill Hathaway – and Bill Hathaway lost because he was honest in many of the issues that he took on, and Bill Cohen outflanked him in many ways, but I think that we have to create a professional group of politicians in Maine right now. Go to the legislature. Salaries aren't that big, but the benefits are huge, I mean these people have, between their health care and pension benefits. And we've created a huge bureaucracy, you have staff there now. When I was in the legislature we did all our own work. Population was about a million, we're a million-three right now but we've got a huge bureaucracy over there. And the cardinal rule is: do whatever is required to get reelected. That applies to members of Congress as much as it does to the members of the legislature.

**MH:** Is there any question that I have failed to ask that you'd like to answer?

**SB:** No, I think, no, this has been a great deal of fun, Mike, thank you for doing it.

**MH:** I've enjoyed it very much. Thank you very much, Severin.

**SB:** My pleasure.

End of Interview