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### Interview with John Martin by Mike Hastings

John L. Martin

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

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**John L. Martin**  
(Interviewer: Michael Hastings)

**GMOH# 155**  
October 7, 2009

**Michael Hastings:** The following is a recorded interview for the Senator George J. Mitchell Oral History Project, an activity of Bowdoin College. The date is Wednesday, October 7, [2009]. I'm Michael Hastings, the interviewer. My subject this afternoon is John L. Martin, a [state] representative from Eagle Lake in the Maine House of Representatives. Good afternoon.

**John Martin:** Good afternoon to you.

**MH:** Could we begin by your stating your full name, and spelling your last name.

**JM:** John L. Martin, M-A-R-T-I-N.

**MH:** And just for the record, how do you spell your middle name?

**JM:** Lewis, L-E-W-I-S.

**MH:** Could you also give your date and place of birth?

**JM:** June 5, 1941, Eagle Lake, Maine.

**MH:** And lastly, again for identification purposes, what was your father's full name, and your mother's full name?

**JM:** My father was Frank Martin, and my mother was Edwidge Raymond Martin. E-D-W-I-D-G-E, because I figure you'd probably ask.

**MH:** All right, could you begin - You were interviewed by Don Nicoll for the Muskie Oral History Project, about eleven years ago. I'm going to try to avoid asking the same questions that they did.

**JM:** Right, right.

**MH:** There's no need to repeat that, but I would like to know a little bit about your mother and father. Could you tell me a little bit about your dad?

**JM:** My father worked in the woods all his life, and continued to work in the woods until he

was eighty years old, just because that's what he wanted to do, on the farm, on the land that he owned. My mother was a housewife all of her life, except that when my father had a cutting operation, she would be the cook.

**MH:** Okay, did he work for a company, or was he an independent logger?

**JM:** No, he, both.

**MH:** Both, okay.

**JM:** During that period.

**MH:** How far afield did it take him?

**JM:** Well of course, keep in mind that my father was retired by the time I was in high school. So my mother was forty-nine when I was born, my father was fifty-two, fifty-three, so by the time I got to be where I would remember some of these things, they had since retired. And still straight to the point, I had three brothers in the Second World War.

**MH:** You're the youngest in the group?

**JM:** Better hope so. I mean, they came back from the war and they wanted to know who the hell the baby was in the crib.

**MH:** Were your mother and father natives of Aroostook County as well?

**JM:** Yes, my mother was born in Frenchville, and my father was born in Eagle Lake. My father was born in 1888; my mother was born in 1892.

**MH:** Tell me what Eagle Lake was like when you were growing up, give me a description?

**JM:** Well, keep in mind that I was born in Eagle Lake, but then I was raised in Greenville.

**MH:** Right.

**JM:** So it actually had more population when I was born than it does now, was where the local hospital was for that part of Aroostook County, because that hospital remained the major hospital until Fort Kent built a hospital in the fifties. And then when I moved, I tell people that I left Eagle Lake, I could speak English, and came back to Eagle Lake in the third grade, couldn't speak French. So I basically then came back and finished grammar school in Eagle Lake and graduated from Fort Kent Community High School.

**MH:** Now you, you went your first two years to University of Maine in Fort Kent?

**JM:** What is now, yes, that's right, and wanted to major in political science, and transferred to Orono.

**MH:** You went back to Fort Kent to teach.

**JM:** I went back after I worked on my master's and basically decided that I wanted to stay in the area, and went back to teach at the high school, history and government.

**MH:** Can you talk a little bit about the importance of the university in Fort Kent to the community that surrounds it?

**JM:** Well there's no question that, especially when I look back, as you know, I taught, I subsequently left the high school, went to work for Muskie, and then went back to the University of Maine at Fort Kent part-time, and it was clear to me that the university, not only for the region was critical, but in those days it attracted an awful lot of students from Old Orchard, Biddeford, Lewiston. And it took me a while basically to figure out why. And after talking to many of them, they felt comfortable with people who spoke the language. And so many of them are very active all over the state today, who came at my beginning days of teaching at the university, or then the Normal School.

Obviously it's a major economic driver and has provided a tremendous opportunity for students, not only in the area but all of Aroostook and in particular at that time, probably more so than today. Because now I think the university at Fort Kent is more geared toward providing specific courses that attracts - But in those days it was primarily a teacher preparatory program and it attracted students from southern Maine, that I think never would have gone to college anywhere else.

**MH:** You still teach there?

**JM:** Yup.

**MH:** And what do you teach?

**JM:** Political science, surprise.

**MH:** On the language issue, I know that in the 1970s, the mid-70s, there were something like eighty thousand people in Maine who spoke French as their first language, and that number is I think down under like ten thousand today.

**JM:** Oh, it's higher than that.

**MH:** Is it higher than that?

**JM:** Oh yes, it's still in the Valley, primarily because of the influence of Quebec and New

Brunswick, and the intermarriages that take place between the two. There's not a single day that someone does not talk to me in French.

**MH:** Do you think that it will level out, or continue to decline?

**JM:** No, actually I think it's going to level off, I think it already has. I think it has leveled out, and that there's a greater emphasis now on providing opportunities for students who want to continue the language.

**MH:** Republican pollster/strategist Chris Potholm says that the Franco American electorate are the king-makers in Maine politics, do you think that's accurate?

**JM:** I think that's accurate. I think they've underestimated the strength. I think that it's always interesting to me, wherever I am in Maine, that someone will come up to me and start speaking French. And basically I'll figure it out that they want to test me, to see if I still know the language. And that'll happen in Biddeford, it'll happen in Lewiston, Old Town, even in Augusta. And it's always surprising to me how many, for example, I'm in Augusta a lot, and it's surprising to me the number of people that I meet that will talk to me in French.

**MH:** In the Muskie interview of eleven years ago, you stated that Louis Jalbert, Jalbert, pardon me, I'm one of the people that doesn't, doesn't pronounce the French correctly, but that he was somewhat threatened by your presence.

**JM:** I think that's true.

**MH:** Is there still a tension between the Valley and the Lewiston community?

**JM:** No, I don't believe so, I think Louis was one of a kind. And he frankly, I think, wanted to be the spokesperson for all the French in Maine. I think that there is a difference between the French of Lewiston, Biddeford, and the French of northern Maine. Obviously they come from different areas, most of the people who came through Lewiston, for example, and Biddeford are from the Saint Georges de Beauce area, along the Quebec border. The French who came from the Valley were a mixture of people from Quebec City, coming down the Saint Lawrence to the Montmagny and Kamourska, for example, and then the other group coming from the Acadians being kicked out of Nova Scotia.

**MH:** Were, were the folks that went to Lewiston, were they farming people?

**JM:** Yes, for the most part, yes.

**MH:** They were, okay, so it was farming people in both places, but they came from different areas.

**JM:** Right, right, oh yes, and the people in the Valley were farming and logging, more so than

I think the western, well the eastern part of Quebec.

**MH:** Right. You're associated now, and have been for most of your legislative career, with fish and wildlife issues, I think?

**JM:** Well, to some degree, those are only because I have an interest because of where I live, but education obviously has been, [and] health and human services.

**MH:** Right. Do you, were you, did you like the woods from a, I mean did you like to go out? I know you have a camp in Wallagrass, as I recall.

**JM:** Well I also own a sporting camp business that I bought in '91, which is what this is. Well actually, my love for the woods probably could be used in a different approach. I tell the story that when I graduated from high school, I to this day have, obviously both of my parents are deceased, but I had withdrawn my deposit for the University of Maine at Orono, where I was scheduled to go, and had decided that I'd spend the summer in Eagle Lake, and go with all my friends to Connecticut. And graduation was the 17th of June in 1959, and at five o'clock in the morning my father, who was then seventy-plus, woke me up and said, "Take one of the horses in the barn, hook it up, take the buck saw and go to the farm, to the woodland, and start cutting pulp and peel it, because you're not going to spend the summer here doing nothing." And which led me, at that point, to a great desire to go to college, and since I couldn't get into Orono at that late date, I went to Fort Kent.

**MH:** You worked, kind of like you worked several times for, for Muskie in D.C.?

**JM:** I did, in between sessions. Keep in mind, we were meeting just every other year. I went to work for Muskie after the campaign in [1966], when I worked for Elmer Violette. I was his campaign manager, driver, and whatever else when he ran against Margaret Chase Smith. And right after the elections, I went to work in Muskie's office. I'm sorry, I meant '66 rather, and continued to work all the way through. And then of course worked on the Hill, and then when he ran in '68 for vice president, I went downtown at 17 and L, Northwest, and staffed the office, and I was the contact person with the Secret Service, with the plane, I took care of the two planes, and did the advance payments, payroll for the advance people.

**MH:** How old were you then, roughly?

**JM:** Twenty-six maybe.

**MH:** Did you enjoy that?

**JM:** Oh yes, it was great. I think about it now, I'd never be able to do it now because, keep in mind that I had to be in the office in the morning before the plane, before they left the hotel to get to the plane, and I couldn't go to bed until they went to bed. So when they were on the west coast, I didn't sleep much because I had to be available for the staff on the east coast at seven

o'clock, and then if they went across the country, I didn't get to bed before two o'clock in the morning. Of course, my car was broken into, I had a radio that was stolen, I had a CB that was stolen in another incident.

**MH:** You pretty much lived in the office then, right?

**JM:** Yes, it was a great experience. And then of course then, after that, worked in Waterville and, and then decided to run for minority floor leader.

**MH:** What was the Dubord decision, and how did that -?

**JM:** The Dubord decision -

**MH:** About allowing you, I read that somebody was raising an issue that you shouldn't be working on the Senate staff and in the legislature and that -

**JM:** Oh, right, right, basically he was, well the question was whether or not as a state legislator you could be employed by the federal government. And of course that decision, basically Muskie wanted to make sure that there was no problem. And Dubord rendered the decision that there was no problem. Of course the irony since that time, there are many who have worked, and still do, work for Snowe and Collins and whoever, as a result of using that decision as the basis, so yes.

**MH:** So, but you were the first then, apparently then.

**JM:** Apparently I must have been, because I became the poster child, yes. But it wouldn't be the first time, or probably the last time that I'm the poster child for something.

**MH:** What were you doing in the Waterville office, what was your role?

**JM:** Remember, at that point there was only one office in Maine. And I did, I basically would staff the Senator when he came on weekends, for example, and worked with Marge [Marjorie Hitchinson] and the other staff doing casework. Yes.

**MH:** Did you enjoy doing that?

**JM:** Oh yes, and that's probably why I do casework today. Here I did about everything, but in Washington I was doing primarily Social Security and VA, military, yes.

**MH:** Do you recall when you first met George Mitchell? Was it, was it -?

**JM:** Actually, we crossed paths, I would suspect about the same time he was working for Muskie in D.C. under Don Nicoll. And I almost think that we spent some time together there, but I'd have to go back and check the records, but I'm almost sure a couple months that we were

probably there at the same time. And of course then, obviously in '66, would that have been right? In '68, no '66, I'll go back and rethink this now. No, I'm sorry, in '70, he was chair of the Muskie re-election committee and I was treasurer.

**MH:** Okay.

**JM:** And then I moved across the street from the Senate office in Waterville to -

**MH:** The campaign office.

**JM:** The campaign office, and so I was staffing that, I was in charge of the office when George wasn't there, which was most of the time, he was on the road and doing whatever. Yes, so obviously we worked together quite a bit at that time, yes.

**MH:** Did, in, were you handling finances or -?

**JM:** The budget, well yes, I was responsible for writing all the checks for the campaign and taking in the money and, yes.

**MH:** You had a finance committee, I assume?

**JM:** You know, I don't remember who they were; I'd have to go back and pull it out. Yes, George is the one who really was the fund raiser. And there [were] fund-raising dinners and stuff, and then I would deal with the finances.

**MH:** Who was Muskie running against in that election?

**JM:** He ran, that would have been Dolloff [*sic*: Neil Bishop].

[ ]

**MH:** From Hancock County, yes?

**JM:** Yes.

**MH:** Okay. Now, Mitchell was on the plane in '68 too, right?

**JM:** Yes, that's right. And that was my contact obviously all the time, because my responsibility was to make sure that when they landed that the twix machine was on in the office and plugged into the plane, and the speeches went out and schedules went out, for example. And so that communication, I don't have any record of it, but I'm sure that we talked every day, yes.

**MH:** Now between, were you also involved in the '72 campaign?

**JM:** Very limited, at that point, yes, I worked in New Hampshire.

**MH:** Yes, okay.

**JM:** But I was not, at that point I was teaching, back full time.

**MH:** What were you doing in New Hampshire for him?

**JM:** Basically just grunt work.

**MH:** Organizing (*unintelligible*)?

**JM:** Yes, I remember the Sunday before the election, as the day is long, coming out of church in Manchester, and two ladies are coming out, and that's when Muskie had been accused of calling Franco Americans 'Canucks,' and these two ladies are talking about it in French. So I went over to them and started talking to them, and we had a fairly long conversation. And of course they both, and as a result of my conversation, they indicated they'd vote for Muskie, but there was no way that you could talk to every single person of Franco descent in Manchester.

**MH:** And that was found out later to be a -

**JM:** It's one of the Segretti [dirty tricks], the one with the pizzas coming in, the one with the Mrs. [Muskie]. I was at the Hotel Carpenter when all these women dressed to kill came out of the hotel, Mrs. Muskie was supposed to have a tea with them, and they all had these written, engraved invitations. And I said, "Mrs. Muskie is taking care of Ted in D.C.," I mean, never scheduled to be here. "Well we got this invitation from the campaign." Well it wasn't from the campaign, of course, it was discovered two years after the fact, that it was part of the CREEP proposal, Committee to Reelect the President. He was operating out of Florida. And of course Muskie carried New Hampshire, but by fifty-one percent as I recall, and not by what they thought it should have been, therefore he lost New Hampshire. And that was tough to recover.

**MH:** Now, moving on to the '74 gubernatorial campaign.

**JM:** I supported George.

**MH:** What happened?

**JM:** I think that it was a perfect storm. And it was the editorials basically, as Erwin and Mitchell were debating and, quote, attacking one another, Jim Erwin was basically saying, Maine shouldn't be politics as usual, and I don't like that kind of politics, and the newspapers picked it up, first with the endorsement to the *Lewiston Sun*. And when they called me on Sunday before the election, asking whether or not I was seeing a shift in Aroostook, and I said, "No, we're not." It never hit us, and so clearly I think that, that it was what made that happen. And Jim Longley was Jim Longley, basically [saying], "I'm not a politician, I'm not running, blame both parties,

and attack both parties,” and it resonated with the voter. So, a lot of independence, and in particular a lot of Republicans went over and voted for Jim Longley. Not in my area, and of course in Lewiston it was the Democrats who crossed over. And so that’s what happened.

**MH:** Were you speaker by that time?

**JM:** Yes. No, I was elected that year.

**MH:** You were elected speaker.

**JM:** Yes. I was still minority floor leader and then became speaker, yes. And it didn’t affect, it’s ironic because we went from seventy, roughly seventy-one, seventy-two seats in the House to about ‘94, in that election, so it didn’t impact the Democratic Party statewide. But it was clearly, the Erwin, and I think that all shifted in one week in my opinion. And I don’t think that, a week before, and I don’t remember to this day who I talked to in the Mitchell campaign, just saying, something’s wrong and just stay away from Erwin. Just don’t attack him anymore, because I think it’s causing some problems.

**MH:** It must have been difficult to be the newly elected speaker and to have this independent kind of newcomer without a record, without any kind of idea.

**JM:** It was very difficult. I think that the day when, actually my papers, I’m turning over my papers probably in a couple days to the University of Maine at Fort Kent, in the archives, the Acadian Archives. I have probably the best amount, or volume I probably should say, of letters that [ ] that Jim [Longley] wrote to me.

**MH:** You mean Jim Longley?

**JM:** Jim Longley, rather. Jim Longley wrote to me. And it’s pretty, pretty amazing.

**MH:** What were your biggest battles with him?

**JM:** Well -.

**MH:** He was there for four years, right?

**JM:** That’s correct. It was on anything. If he disagreed with it, there was a battle. I will say that on some things, all of a sudden he would jump on, like for example, abolishing the Executive Council. We were able to accomplish that, and I remember when he agreed to it. We wanted to save money and streamline government. And I said to him, I said, “We support it, but the Republicans won’t.” And he called the Republicans in and he just lambasted them and they caved. And once they caved, we passed it that night, because we knew that if they thought about it any length of time that we probably wouldn’t be able to pass a constitutional amendment, because that’s what we had to do to amend the constitution.

I'll tell you one quick story which is really [ ]. I came back home one night, and he was very upset with me and he said (when he would call he wanted you there, then). And so I got home on a Friday night, and my mother said the Indian governor called. So I called the two Indian governors and neither one had called, so that was the end of it. So when I came in on Monday morning, the governor had called and he's pissed. I said, "What happened?" He said, "Well I called you to talk about the Indians." And then it dawned on me, I said, "Okay, did you try to speak French with my mother?" "Well, of course." It didn't, my mother's French, okay, not used to this. And I just looked at him, I just started laughing, I said, "You better know that I called both Indian governors on Friday night and neither one had called me." So then he smiled and he said, "All right," he says, "I forgive you." but he was not a forgiving kind.

But yes, it was difficult, but I was always honest with him, and he didn't like sometimes my answers, but I think we had a working relationship that could have been a lot worse. And when I disagreed with him I'd tell him, and as long as I told him privately and not publicly, it was okay. But if I ended up attacking him [publicly], then, and I learned very quickly that that's the one thing that he would clearly react to.

**MH:** Attacking him publicly, yes.

**JM:** Yes. And the Republicans basically ended up with a greater confrontation with him than I did.

**MH:** Now, when you were speaker, you were, I think, applauded by everyone as being very knowledgeable about the rules of the House. Was that something that you studied from a book, or did you just learn it as you went along?

**JM:** Well, a combination. No, I think that I have to credit Dave Kennedy, who was a Republican speaker. And I was very young and I would look at the rules, he'd make rulings. And so one day I went in to him and he said, "Look, if you have any questions about the rules, as long as you don't try to make me look stupid on the rostrum, I will tell you how it works." So if something would happen that day I'd say, "Why this? Why that? Why?" you know. And I think that was what started me in being able to, because he knew the rules. Of course Bertha Johnston and the secretary, the clerk of the House, was very knowledgeable, very good at it and we became pretty good friends, even though we were a different political party. And so I think that that's basically how I got to that stage.

**MH:** Are today, are you considered the parliamentarian around here?

**JM:** Well they're still calling me.

**MH:** Fast forward a bit, when Joe Brennan gets called by Ed Muskie, told that Ed Muskie is going to take Cy Vance's spot as secretary of state, did you think that you might be in contention for that appointment?

**JM:** Well actually, I was. But I think it was far, you know, my name was offered. I was not the one soliciting. But I felt that George would be immediately recognized, I think with his background.

**MH:** Do you think that that was a hard decision for Brennan to make, or do you think that he -?

**JM:** Oh, I think it was very difficult. It was difficult in the sense that he and George had had some rough times. I mean I think it's fair to say, and of course that's something you could ask Joe Brennan, but I was probably friendlier with Joe Brennan than George Mitchell was. And so I think that for him to have gone that way, I think clearly speaks a lot for Joe Brennan.

**MH:** When did you first find out that he picked -? With everybody else?

**JM:** No, no, I think, no, no, Joe had told me.

**MH:** Joe had told you.

**JM:** Yes, yes. He had told me who had been suggested and whatever. And there was a whole list of [people], everyone was hoping they'd get picked, but I think George was the obvious person.

**MH:** Based on the way the '74 gubernatorial campaign had gone, based on what you had seen as George Mitchell's operating style, did his ascent to leadership in the U.S. Senate surprise you?

**JM:** No. Well of course, obviously people were surprised by the election, because he had to win; that was the first key [thing]. And I remember George talking to me about it, and I said, "You're running against a guy that you're going to walk away with it." Basically because his opponent had been a member of the House and under me as speaker, and you know. But no, I was not surprised, because I think George has that ability of working with people, without insulting them, getting what he wants without insulting. I'm not sure that George would agree with me, but I think Tom Daschle has some of the same characteristics of being able to attract people.

**MH:** Did you go down to Washington often to see him?

**JM:** We were, yes actually, because at that time I also became president of the National Conference of State Legislatures and I was chair of the Federal Assembly Committee, I then became a second vice president, and vice president and president elect, and then president of NCSL. So I was down there, I don't know, once a month.

**MH:** Oh really, that often?

**JM:** Yes, especially when I was president and vice president, literally all over the country. So

I was, yes, I was in George's office, I don't know, maybe six, seven times a year.

**MH:** With whom in the office did you deal with most frequently?

**JM:** Charlie probably.

**MH:** Charlie Jacobs?

**JM:** Yes. Anne Lavoie, not Anne Lavoie -

**MH:** Estelle?

**JM:** Yes, Estelle Lavoie, probably be the ones that I would be constantly harassing or whatever. And of course, Gayle.

**MH:** Gayle Cory?

**JM:** Who obviously had been with Muskie and we were close friends.

**MH:** Did you have any projects that you, special projects that you worked, projects that were important to you up here in Maine, that you needed his help on, that you recall during those years?

**JM:** I guess I would have to think about that a little bit. I was always asking for something. So, if I went in the office, I was not there just to say hi.

**MH:** I bet he'd ask you for a few things as well.

**JM:** Yes, absolutely, absolutely.

**MH:** I'm going to cycle back; I've got a couple of questions that go back a bit. I want to go back to Orono, back when you were at the university.

**JM:** Right.

**MH:** In the Muskie interview, you cited Gene Mawhinney and Bud Schoenberger as having an influence on you at Orono.

**JM:** Right.

**MH:** The former was a, I think a Republican from Washington County, and the latter was a lifelong liberal Democrat.

**JM:** Correct.

**MH:** Well what, what can you say about them that -?

**JM:** Well I think Bud was political issues. There's no question that whenever we went to an event Bud was there, he and Marilyn, we were always talking. With Gene, he was one of those people that actually I feel gave me the background to be a decent government instructor. The toughest course I ever took in my college career, graduate, undergraduate, is constitutional law with Gene Mawhinney. Partisanship was never an issue with him, never was raised. I had no idea that, after I left there I knew that he was a Republican, but I certainly had no clue with his teaching. His ability to get us to understand the Supreme Court decisions and the ones that were the most important, and why they were. And to the day he died a year ago, he was actually quite sick for years before that, but I had some contact with him, but I would think he certainly has to go down in my mind as one of the best I've ever had.

**MH:** A great teacher. I've got another couple of questions about Orono. You graduated in June of '63.

**JM:** Yes.

**MH:** But you stayed on for a year of graduate study?

**JM:** Year, a little more than a year, yes.

**MH:** Were you there when John Kennedy came to speak?

**JM:** I was undergraduate, November of '63, November 23, '63, '62 rather. Yes, that's right.

**MH:** No, he came in October of '63.

**JM:** October '63, so I was in graduate school, yes, I was in graduate school.

**MH:** But you were there for the event.

**JM:** Yes, I was there.

**MH:** You remember it?

**JM:** Yes, oh yes, I was actually involved in doing some of the legwork that people do in those things.

**MH:** Last Orono question. I recall a story that I think you told me many years ago, about trying to get the attention of the president of the University of Maine, and not being satisfied with his response. Do you recall what that story was?

**JM:** Well, there are a number of them, but probably the one you're referring to -

**MH:** Something about a strike or something, or a sit-down or something?

**JM:** Actually, well that too, but probably the one you're referring to is a disagreement I had with a psychology professor, and which led me all the way to the president's office, and pretty much ignored me. And my uncle had been in the legislature with Bob Haskell, who was then chair of the board of trustees at the University of Maine, and so I went one weekend and complained to my uncle and he said, "Well, why don't you talk to the board?" "How do I do that?" He picked up the phone and called Bob Haskell at Bangor Hydro and told them that I'd like to make an appearance for the board.

So I showed up at the board meeting and I introduced myself to him before the meeting, sat throughout the meeting, and Haskell said something to the effect, "Well we have a young man here who'd like to talk to the board." And Dr. Elliott said, "No, we've taken care of the problem." He [Haskell] said, "No, I think we ought to hear about this." And so I proceeded to [speak]. And the irony is Doctor Elliot, subsequently, of course I became in the following year a member of the State Government Committee as a freshman legislator, and Dr. Elliott appeared before the committee, and I thought that was kind of interesting. And then a number of years later, I was walking down Pennsylvania Avenue in D.C., when I was working for Muskie, and I see this man coming my way, walking, and I looked at him, and so I said, "Doctor," because he went to George Washington University as president after he left Orono.

**MH:** He's still alive.

**JM:** Yes, yes, yes that's right. So I said, "Doctor Elliot, how are you?" And he says, "I remember you Mr. Martin." So I thought that was nice.

**MH:** In the Muskie interview, there's some discussion about Dickey-Lincoln and you state that you thought that ultimately it was the utility interests, not the environmentalists, that were responsible for its defeat.

**JM:** Absolutely. Right.

**MH:** Could you talk a little bit about that project, and what you thought was the importance of that project to northern Maine?

**JM:** Well, I was convinced that the ability of northern Maine to survive economically was in jeopardy, and I firmly believe that to this day because [of] the power rates, we couldn't compete with the South. And looking at what other places had, most of the land that we had in our possession was controlled by a few landowners, mostly corporations. And if we had a facility where we had cheap power, that we could attract businesses, and it was clear to me that Dickey-Lincoln provided that opportunity, and the local people believed that as well.

When the first defeat of Dickey-Lincoln occurred in the House of Representatives in Washington, the bulk of the opposition came from Connecticut and Massachusetts Democrats who voted against the project. And clearly, they were led by the utilities. There was no environmental issue that had been raised at that point. And the environmental issues came only when, four or five years later that they're still trying to get the money for it, that the environmental issues were raised. And then, of course, that became the cry for everyone to use that as a basis. You may remember that the Allagash Waterway was created in such a way that, and it stops to the point where the Allagash would have been flooded, up to Twin Brook. And so the Allagash was protected up to that point and would not have been impacted by the dam.

So one night I get a phone call from a group of business people in Fort Kent, after the first defeat, they were going back for a second vote and they brought me in and they said, "We're going to raise some money. We want you to go to Connecticut, and we want you to run a campaign, people to support Dickey-Lincoln, and see if we can turn the votes of the Connecticut delegation." And so I agreed, I was young, and a group of us rented places in Wethersfield Motel and started running a campaign, had all kinds of money. And I remember somebody asked, "What changed you Congressman Gr -?" What was his name? I've forgotten now. I'd have to go back and look, but a congressman.

**MH:** Gwadosky?

**JM:** It wasn't Gwadosky, it was, I've forgotten the -

**MH:** Right.

**JM:** And full page ads in the *Hartford Courant*, not inexpensive, the Bristol paper, I mean we were hammering him. And just to the point, one day I found out that he was invited to speak to the Knights of Columbus in New Britain, and the Grand Knight happened to be a native of Frenchville, Maine.

**MH:** A lot of Aroostook County people in Connecticut?

**JM:** Oh yes, a lot more, so I called him and I went and spoke before the congressman did, and just proceeded to talk about how some people change their minds because of influence of whatever. I go back, I would never do it that way again but I was twenty-five years old, twenty-six years old, whatever it was. It was a great, we had volunteers, and I can't remember how many, we must have sent to their offices probably a hundred thousand signatures on petitions that local people, people in Connecticut, we had an ad, if you are from northern Maine and you support northern Maine, and you want to help us, please come to this motel room and pick up whatever.

And we ran those rooms day and night, twenty-four hours, because people were coming off of shifts. And we had local people from northern Maine there, petitions ready to go, and they would take them and bring them to the factories. And then on one occasion, the press took it up, it

became, and one of the congressmen was that congressman from the New Britain-Bristol area, basically said he had never been hammered this much on any issue as they had with this one. When he ran for Congress the following year, again, reelection, and we went down and campaigned against him, and ended up electing a Republican. Didn't help us, but what the hell, you know? And that guy became governor eventually.

**MH:** Meskill.

**JM:** Yes.

**MH:** Tom Meskill.

**JM:** Yes, Tom Meskill. And so I guess I'm partially responsible for electing a Republican governor in Connecticut. But you go back and I've got all that stuff and I haven't looked at it for a while but it is just amazing.

**MH:** What do you think about Aroostook County's future, economically, now?

**JM:** I think that our only hope, because remember, we have one lumber mill left, all the lumber mills are now in Canada. We can't compete with the Canadian government because if you're in business in Maine you have to pay, you have to have health insurance, Canadian businesses don't have to do that. For example, Irving saved a million dollars in health insurance benefits alone by closing the Pinkham Mill in Nashville [Plantation], just outside of Ashland and Portage. Electrical rates are about a third of what they are in New Brunswick. The government gives at least fifty percent for construction of a new facility. We get nothing.

So I understand, not that I like it, but I understand why corporations in Canada are not going to come to Maine. And so in Maine, if you're, and I don't know how a company can compete by building at this point. And now keeping in mind that Irving owns about a million-and-a-half acres, about probably, pretty close to, a little more than a third of Aroostook, well more, probably close to half of Aroostook County, land mass. And so the only thing we have are our natural resources.

**MH:** Were those all Great Northern lands, or?

**JM:** No, the initial purchase, what we referred to as the Big Twenty, which would have been flooded by Dickey-Lincoln. That was bought by the oldest, now deceased Irving, Casey. But in 1980 when the market went to hell, IP decided to sell their land, which went all the way from Allagash to Van Buren. They had owned that whole tier, and Irving was able to pick that up, not because he went and raised the price, actually, because the first time IP put it out to bid, Irving was the high bidder but IP wanted more money. And then as the market went to hell, and I'm sure it was to pay their stockholders, they went back to Irving and Irving said, no, I offered you that then, I'm not going to offer you that now. And IP took it. So that was really, at that point, that probably was three hundred thousand acres there, in that purchase. And then of course the

Great Northern purchase was made, actually the GP purchase. Or Bowater, I lost track of. So that's how they acquired the land and it's not because they didn't go out, paying high prices for it. It's just that there was no one else that wanted it.

But I think, in the long run, potatoes are another issue, obviously. I think that people from Maine don't look north for possibilities, they look south. And the Canadians are the reverse, they look south for opportunity, and so we need another processing plant in Aroostook County. Hubert is doing a great job, but they've maintained the price that they want to maintain. Now Irving owns, as you may know, Irving is split three ways, and the potato end of it, they own about seven thousand acres of potato land in Maine, in Aroostook County, that they've bought over the years. And I don't see them not doing something with it eventually. That's my guess. And since there's no love between the Irvings and the McCains, there is hope.

**MH:** Where is that seven thousand acres?

**JM:** In the central, primarily central Aroostook. Yes, Westmanland.

**MH:** Right.

**JM:** All the way to Presque Isle.

**MH:** So your hope is that eventually they would establish a processing facility.

**JM:** Yes, yes.

**MH:** In that area.

**JM:** Yes, because the Valley farmers are at the mercy of selling on the market, and that market is flooded, unless someone has a flood somewhere, literally. So the money is simply not there.

**MH:** I'm going to cycle again back to your legislative days. I've had several people say to me that we got term limits because people wanted to get John Martin out. Is that your view?

**JM:** Well, I was used as a poster child, but keep in mind that it was going on in thirty-some odd states so I don't think I had much influence in the thirty-odd states across the country.

**MH:** It didn't work very well, if that was the case, because you were back in, in two years, weren't you?

**JM:** Exactly.

**MH:** And have been here since?

**JM:** Right. I think that term limits was something, you know, a lot of things begin in [ ] California and they spread. And some states have repealed it. Idaho, for example, legislative repeal. And I think that if there's anything that's really hurt the state, it has been that. There's no continuity, people looking forward to the next step as to where they're going to go. The staff and departments and bureaucrats in state government, along with lobbyists, have more knowledge of what's going on in the legislature than legislators. You're not going to learn this process in two, four, or six years. And you just watch the legislature in session and I'm always amazed, I guess, by legislators who have no idea of how something works. And it's not their fault, they're very bright people, but you can't learn it all in the short time they're here. And of course the way it works is that, that is why so much work is being done by the Appropriations Committee. And if it wouldn't be for the Senate, who has the continuity to a greater degree because they'll leave the House and go to Senate, where you have more longevity because they probably have sixteen years anyway, I think we'd be in far worse shape than we are now.

**MH:** So, but you can go, you can do your eight years in the Senate and you can go back to the House, right?

**JM:** Which is what I've done.

**MH:** What you've done, yes.

**JM:** Right, yes. And a lot of people won't do that. I don't know if they think that it's beneath them to run for the House again or whatever it is, but I'm on the Appropriations Committee, my first term as a houseman. And actually two of us are, the former senator from Lewiston and I, we were both on Appropriations, and we both ran for the House and now on Appropriations. So as a result, so much more of the work literally gets done, has to be done, by the Appropriations Committee because that's where the knowledge is.

**MH:** Did, do you think that the legislature is the right size?

**JM:** Well, for the first time this year, I had never supported a reduction, but this year I did. And I supported a reduction, basically cutting it down to 131, or 141, in the House. At one time it made sense to have the – but this is typical New England, this is, remember, these legislatures were structured when it took a horse to get to the State House. And so we all have large legislatures on the East Coast. And you don't when you move out of here, but that's the history, there's no question.

And also keep in mind that the assumption was that the senate would always represent territory. And of course when the Supreme Court decision came down in '66, that the Senate also had to be 'one man-one vote,' quote/unquote, there's really no need for two bodies anymore, because you're representing the same people. You're not representing anyone any different.

**MH:** So would you go so far as to supporting a unicameral legislature?

**JM:** I'd go for, and I do support a unicameral legislature, absolutely, yes. But not getting that, and I'm never, I suspect the Senate would never vote to get rid of itself. I'm convinced that if the legislature would let it go to referendum, the voters would vote for it. And last time what I suggested we do was to cut the size of the House to 131, put in the repeal of term limits in it, cut the size of the senate to thirty-three, and then send it to the voters. And I'm convinced that the voters would accept it.

**MH:** Last question about the way the legislature is set up. You worked in Washington, D.C., you worked for the Senate, they have a process there whereby only those bills that the chairmen want to be considered in committee get considered, and many, many are just introduced and go into the ether. In the state of Maine, every bill gets considered, every bill gets a committee recommendation of to pass, not to pass, doesn't that, doesn't that restrict the ability of legislators to become expert on the bills that are most important?

**JM:** To some degree, but I think also we pride ourselves in Maine as being democratic, with a small d, and I think that's part of the reason. Now this year I was chair of the Rules Committee and able to, we have a lot of bills that are put in because someone requested it, and so every bill goes to committee. We provided a rule this year, change, that if you want your bill killed before a public hearing, send a letter to the chairs and the bill is withdrawn, and that happened a number of times. Because people, they're elected for the first time, seventy percent of the legislators, for example, elected for the first time, and they have all these great ideas, and they get here and they realize how stupid it is. And so that would still get a hearing.

Now at least we've gotten to a point where, when they realize that it's not a good idea and someone says, "that's the dumbest idea I've ever heard my life," they have a mechanism so that they don't have to go to public hearing. And actually that has helped. We played around, and there was also, if a bill is killed unanimously, you don't have a debate on the floor most of the time. I did that rule back when I was speaker. We've played around with some other things, like for example you need two people to sign a bill to get it out of committee, if you have less than two it doesn't get out. But that doesn't work because a legislator can always find two friends.

**MH:** Trade, trade bad bills.

**JM:** Yes, yes.

**MH:** Do you and George Mitchell ever get the opportunity to sit down and reflect on how you herd these cats in these legislative bodies?

**JM:** Oh yes, oh, we've talked about it, yes, absolutely. Someone asked me today, they were talking about it, they said, "Would you run for speaker again now that you're there?" And I said, "Remember, I hate to use the word babysitting, but I did it for twenty years and I'm not sure I want to do it again at my age." You know?

**MH:** What do you think of George Mitchell's newest assignment?

**JM:** I think that if anyone can do it, he may be the person. And I think that he provides credibility because of his ethnicity, with the Palestinians. And [his] mother being from Lebanon I think gives some weight to some people who, you know - And of course on the other side, the Jewish community certainly knows that he supported them while he was in Congress. And so I think that there is a possibility, but it's a near impossible task.

**MH:** I want to be respectful of your time, but I always ask, toward the end of these interviews, if there's any story that you particularly like to tell about George Mitchell that I didn't give you through questions an opportunity to tell.

**JM:** Well I could tell you campaign stuff, but I won't do that. I campaigned obviously with him when he ran for governor, and obviously when he ran for the U.S. Senate reelection, and whatever else, so hauled him around Aroostook County. And then of course we certainly worked a lot together in Muskie's reelection campaign. That's probably more contact on a daily basis than any other time. And every now and then I give him a call just to harass him.

**MH:** Thank you, John Martin.

**JM:** Thank you.

End of Interview