

Interviewer: Nicole Morin-Scribner (NMS)

Interviewee: Jim Murphy (JM)

Date: Saturday, October 28, 2023

Location: Murphy residence, Biddeford, Maine

Transcriber: Nicole Morin-Scribner (NMS)

NMS: Just to get started so that I can check the audio levels, I'm going to ask you, you said you went to a show in Portland recently. What did you go see?

JM: The Sound of Soul. It was basically soul music. It entailed music from the late 50s and 60s, from a lot of the black groups we knew growing up. It was really interesting.

NMS: You are interested in that kind of music. That's a little different?

JM: I did not know about that music until I joined the service. Believe it or not, I happened to be up on the fore part of the ship, below deck. I walked in and that was my first experience with Redd Foxx. Somebody had a Redd Foxx [note: American stand-up comedian who starred on shows such as Sanford and Son] 33 and a 1/3 [note: vinyl record]. I had never basically, coming from Maine, we were never really...unless you came from the Boston area, we were never exposed to that. It was interesting because it opened up a whole new world to me. Then, of course, I always liked music anyways.

NMS: We'll talk a little more about that in a little bit.

Today is Saturday, October 28th, 2023. My name is Nicole Morin-Scribner. I'm the interviewer. I'm a volunteer with the Biddeford Cultural and Heritage Center. Today I have the honor of interviewing James Murphy Jr. Do you people call you Jim?

JM: Jim. Depending on how you grew up with me, some people know me as Jim, Jimmy or Murph. (laughter)

NMS: It's OK if I call you Jim?

JM: Yes. No problem at all.

NMS: OK. I usually start these interviews at the beginning by asking you what year and where were you born?

JM: I was born on October 3rd, 1946, believe it or not, in Portland Maine at the Maine Eye and Ear Hospital.

NMS: Why Portland? Was your family living in Portland at the time?

JM: My dad worked in the shoe industry. Back then, people didn't commute like they do today. So, they were living in Portland. In fact, the first house they were living in, where I was born, a few years later, the gentleman who lived across the street ended up being Father Coleman O'Toole who was stationed here at St. Mary's Parish. Life has a funny twist to it.

Then my parents moved from there, we lived on Pleasant Street in Portland, which is basically it used to be you could almost see Sears and Roebucks on Congress Street in Portland. We lived in what they called Gorham's Corner, which was actually the Irish section of Portland. I was baptized at St. Dominic's Church in Portland, Maine.

NMS: How long did you live in Portland?

JM: My parents moved back to Biddeford with a short stop in Old Orchard. By the time we moved back to Biddeford, I was about 5 years old.

NMS: Tell me about how your family, we'll start with your father, how did your father and his family end up being in Portland? In Biddeford?

JM: Biddeford. My father was born in Biddeford. My grandmother and a sister migrated from Ireland. I found out through somebody else that there was another family of Murphys that are probably related down the tree. They would bring girls from Ireland to Biddeford. They would get them situated, get them working in the mills. As things progressed, my grandmother was working in the mill. Basically, that's where she met my grandfather who had come from Manchester, New Hampshire. He had been working in the mills there and came to work in the mills here in Biddeford.

My father grew up on St. Mary's Street. He actually had (found through research on Ancestry.com) a total of 9 members in his family but growing up there only were 6 of them. His dad died in 1921. My grandmother was raising young children. After I was born, of the remaining family members, there were only 4 at that time. My father and his brother, who was older than him, and his 2 older sisters. All of the children in between were no longer around.

NMS: When you said that the Irish were sending women over to work in the mills, which would have been your grandmother's story, that wasn't during the time that we hear about, of the Potato Famine?

JM: The Potato Famine? It was after that. Even though they had the potato famine, the Irish were still hurting. They were financially hurting. In fact, tracing my grandfather Murphy's family, they left Ireland around 1861. They went to England. When they left, they had one child. They went to England and had 2 more children. Then, they came to the United States. That's the one that I can't track where they came in from. Evidently, wherever they came in from, they came to Maine. If you figure it out and study the history of Maine, my grandfather was following the mills. I'm sorry, my great grandfather was following the mills. He had 2 more children in the Bath area. Then, he ended up working at the mill in Manchester, where 3 more children were born. My grandfather was one of them. Then he came to Biddeford to work in the mill here. It's really interesting. My wife, Elaine, got me into this. They come alive. When they really come alive is when you go and start tracing. I went back because the uniqueness of the Murphys coming to the United States, is one of them was actually born at sea. I literally have seen his grave in Bedford, New Hampshire.

NMS: That is fascinating.

JM: I've seen my grandparents' grave in Manchester, New Hampshire. I'm sorry, my great-grandparents. Both of my grandparents are buried here at St. Mary's.

NMS: Before we leave the Murphys, there are other Murphys in the Biddeford area.

JM: It's really an ironic situation. My father did have an uncle that came to Maine, and he had one son whose name was Francis Murphy. I had met that gentleman. He would have been a

second cousin. Basically, this uncle died but he was buried back in Massachusetts. He had remarried and his second wife went back to Massachusetts to be buried. It's interesting because I have the ones that did stay in this area who are buried here at Laurel Hill in Saco. I've seen their graves. It's like OK, these people did exist. I know I have met them because my father always introduced me to his relatives. Whenever we were around town, when I was growing up, we were always walking around in the city of Biddeford. We weren't driving around in cars.

NMS: Tell me about your mother's side of the family. What was her name for starters.

JM: My mother was Gilberte Aline Labbe. My mother was born here in Biddeford, one of 10 children. She was the third oldest. My mom and dad, that's an interesting story in itself. My mom and dad met through working.

My grandmother came from Canada. She migrated here, believe it or not, she had one other brother that came and lived here in Biddeford. The rest of the family stayed in Canada.

NMS: Do you know where?

JM: Sainte-Sophie, in that area. I should say some of them actually lived in Montreal. We went to visit when I was young. I knew that he was a milkman, her brother.

My grandparents were not young when they married. My grandmother was a spinster. She was 30 years old when she married. I was amazed. Tracking Ancestry, I found out they were married at St. Andre's Church at 5 o'clock in the morning and they went to work after.

(laughter) That's what it was back then. My grandmother was 30 and I think my grandfather was 31 at the time when they got married. My grandmother had 10 children.

NMS: Wow

JM: She had, if you break it down, it was even: five and five. Five girls and five boys. One of them was a set of twins.

NMS: Now you said your parents met at work. That would have been...

JM: That would have been Bruce Shoe, which was on State Street in Biddeford. My dad worked in the shoe industry. My mother quit school after 8th grade and went to work to help support the family. There were 10 children. The older ones would go out and it's the story we all hear, they would go out to help the family. My mother was working in the shoe shop when my parents met at Bruce Shoe in Biddeford.

NMS: When you were growing up, there's an Irish influence and there's the French-Canadian influence. How did all that work out?

JM: All I know of my grandmother Murphy is that basically she died in 1954. By that time, she was suffering from what we would call dementia today. They called it back then, senility. She was living with us. The one thing I remember about her and the Irish culture is my grandmother was a snuffer. I would go across the street at a little mom and pop store on St. Mary's Street, and I would go and get Checkberry snuff for her.

Of course, I went to St. Mary's School, so the Irish part was the concerts every year. It was when we would learn the Irish songs. It was very interesting because when you look at the program, there were probably more French people in the concert than Irish people because of the intermixing of the families. In my generation, I think it would be difficult to say if you could really find a full-blooded Irishman in Biddeford. Right? They are there, but they are few and far between.

It was interesting because my father spoke French. He liked the French, the pork pies and things that came with the French-Canadians. It wasn't really a problem in our house because they were working. They were raising 2 children. I had a younger sister. We just melded. We spent more time with my mother's side of the family. On my father's side of the family, his sisters were older and by the time I was ready to leave 8th grade, one of his older sisters died. His other brother had died when I was only 6 years old. I can remember that. It was probably one of the first funerals I ever went to was at 6 years old, his brother Thomas.

Then my father did check in on the children that my uncle Tom had. The older sisters, one had no children and the other one had two. The only one I knew of was the son. Evidently, her

daughter died before I was born. Basically, on my father's side of the family, the only cousins I actually knew were his brother Thomas' family. Sadly to say, none of them are alive anymore.

NMS: In the home, what language did you speak?

JM: My parents could/would speak French, but they stopped speaking French because my sister and I understood. I wish they hadn't done that. Probably, I would be able to speak better French today. I get by on what I do know from my French, but I wish they had.

Both my sister and I understood it because our grandmother, Labbe, never spoke English. She only spoke French. If you walked into the house to visit with her, you'd be sitting there and she would be talking to you in French. You understood her. We'd be talking to her in English. That's the way it was growing up. Of course in my situation, living in Portland, the working situation for my parents was that I lived with my grandparents during the week here in Biddeford. By the time I was speaking, I wasn't speaking English. At the Labbe household, it was French. Then take me into Portland to where the little children running around at my age group. I understood them but my mother would have to tell them what I was saying. (laughter) It was interesting.

NMS: So, you were French during the week and English on the weekends?

JM: I spoke French. My parents understood it, right? It was no problem.

In fact, the joke my father used to tell, actually it wasn't a joke, it was a real story. He said one day it was him, his brother and sisters. They were sitting at the table eating with their mother. One of them asked for the pepper in French by accident. My grandmother said, "Stop. It's pretty darn good (I'm keeping it clean). You can speak French, but you can't speak Gaelic." (laughter)

NMS: Aha. Now, did your father speak Gaelic?

JM: No. My grandmother did. The thing is both of my grandfathers were born in the United States. Both of my grandmothers died with their green card. They never became American citizens. [note: "green card" is an identity document certifying that the person is a lawful permanent resident of the United States]

NMS: That's interesting.

JM: I laugh about it because I talk to people and some of them say, "My Grandfather Murphy came from Manchester New Hampshire and Grandfather Joseph Labbe came from Somersworth New Hampshire. They were both from New Hampshire and came to Maine." Some of the other family members on the Labbe side came to Maine. I have a few relatives on the Labbe side in Biddeford. There were more than were actually on the Murphy side.

NMS: Did you get to spend with holidays with the Labbe side?

JM: A lot of times, we'd go with my grandmother. My mother was the oldest of 10. My mother was 19 years old when I was born. Her baby sister was only 8 years older than me. Living there during the week, I was growing up with my aunts and uncles. I was fortunate, I got to know them. It was interesting. Two of them were my godparents. My Uncle Roger and my Aunt Rolande were my godparents. They were a year apart. They were 16 and 15 as my godparents. My Aunt Rolande was the last one of my aunts and uncles to die. It was interesting.

NMS: So, you had a chance to be close to that side of the family.

JM: Oh yes. On the baby's side, the baby of the family was my Aunt Madeline. I was an usher at her wedding. I was in 8th grade at the time. I would go on the weekends, after I graduated from high school, her and her friends would take me with them to the football games. They'd give me the money so they could get in at the student rates. I got to know a lot of my Aunt Madeline's friends. I eventually ended up working with her friends after retirement.

NMS: In terms of going to school, there would have been a number of options for elementary school in Biddeford. You ended up going to St. Mary's.

JM: St. Mary's because, that I can't understand. My parents got married at St. Joseph's. When we came back to Biddeford, they started going to St. Mary's because we were living on Washington Street. Basically, there is no big difference between the two churches. I started at St. Mary's on Washington Street. There was a gentleman who was in 8th grade and lived on Washington Street, that would take me to school. We started on Washington Street. By the

time I left St. Mary's I had lived on Washington, St. Mary's then 456 Main Street in Biddeford. That's where I was when I graduated from St. Mary's in 1961.

NMS: What do you have for memories of going to school at St. Mary's? What was that like?

JM: The first-grade teacher was the same age as my mother. Sister Mary Regina. My second-grade teacher, who eventually got promoted with us to third grade, was somebody who had lived in Biddeford and knew my dad. Catherine Lee. She was a Biddeford girl. Fourth grade was a nun we had by the name of Sister Sebastian. Fifth grade was Sister Anita. Sixth grade was Sister Philomene. The one that I never can remember is my seventh-grade teacher, for some reason. I can not remember her name. The eighth grade was Sister Gabrielle.

NMS: I think it's pretty amazing that you remember any of them.

JM: It was fun. I started at 6 years old. I had never gone to kindergarten. I ended up staying back in the first grade. I had Sister Regina for two years in a row. My classmates that started with me in 1952 are the ones who graduated from high school in 1964. A lot of us stayed friends. When you went to St. Mary's, you became friends with everybody. Some of us were altar boys together. I became an altar boy at St. Mary's. It was kind of a family. Some of our parents worked in the mills. I had a classmate whose father worked at the Navy Yard, who happened to go down on the Thresher. Some of them left before we left eighth grade. It was fun. It was fun. The concerts were great, the St. Patrick's Day concerts. We joke about the nuns, but I think they were women who had a vocation and they had a love for children. They tried to give us a formative foundation.

NMS: Were classes in English?

JM: There was no other language in the whole time I was there, other than learning Latin to be an altar boy.

NMS: Was that a difficult transition for you because you were speaking French at home?

JM: No because I was speaking English fluently. I was actually speaking English. My French was long gone. By the time I was five years old... our parents would try to hide. Christmas is coming

up so they could talk in between. All of a sudden, they noticed we were understanding what they were saying so they couldn't do it anymore. If they wanted to talk about us, they had to make sure we weren't around. That's where I feel sorry. My mother even apologized to me for that one day. She said, "I wish we would have kept it going."

My dad did know how to speak French. That's how he met my mother. She said something about him in French.

NMS: Oh?

JM: She called him an "Irlandais". [Translation: Irishman]

NMS: Un Irlandais.

JM: He said, "If you are going to talk about in French, talk about me in English." (laughter) Oops.

NMS: You mentioned something about the Thresher. What are your recollections of that because people around today may not be aware of that.

JM: The Thresher went down in 1963, something like that. I saw that interview you had [Note: Voices of Biddeford interview with Mike Remillard] and why I'm saying that is I was not going to school here in the area at the time. I was in Massachusetts. My mom wrote to me about it. We also heard it on the national news. Where I was going to school, we were not unaware of what was going on. How I knew that one of my classmates was involved was that my mother wrote that my classmate, Mike Dineen's father had gone down on the Thresher. [Note: the USS Thresher was a submarine out of the Portsmouth Naval Shipyard that went down in April of 1963 during a deep-diving test. All 129 crew and shipyard personnel were killed]

An interesting sidebar to this is that my wife's father almost went on the Thresher but didn't go. He stayed back. But, he knew a lot of the gentlemen that went down in the Thresher. He worked with them at the Navy Yard.

NMS: St. Mary's went up til what grade?

JM: Eighth grade.

NMS: Now, what did you do after the eighth grade?

JM: I left the city of Biddeford at the age of 14, going on 15 with my parents and my sister. We took a ride to Lenox Massachusetts. My parents dropped me off at Immaculate Heart of Mary Seminary in Lenox Mass. It was a preparatory high school for the priests of the Sacred Heart. I was ready to get rid of my parents. I told them they could go home. (laughter)

It was interesting. It was a very cultural shock, coming from Maine. We weren't just guys from Maine. We were guys from Pennsylvania, Indiana, New York State, Maryland, South Carolina. The freshman class, a lot of us were from the northeast. The sophomore class were gentlemen who had been at the seminary in Donaldson, Indiana who volunteered to come live in Lenox Massachusetts to kind of be our guardian angels. We did. When we got there, everyone of us had an upper classman to help us get through the initial part. It was interesting. In my class, there were 35 of us. A lot of them were from the New York state area. Some were from Massachusetts, Connecticut, Rhode Island.

I just happened to think of Emile, his name was Emile St. Andre. We had a gentleman from Maryland and his parents moved when he was in Maryland, to Georgia. (laughter) We joked with him. "Did your parents move to get away from you?" I mean, it was fun.

A lot of my classmates believe it or not, that was my freshman year, this was not a school where you just went in and everybody was doing everything for you. We literally were our own janitors, everything. The only thing we did not do was the cooking. We had these nuns that would cook. Other than that, we were responsible for taking care of all the cleaning of the building. We worked in the laundry. I became the school barber. I learned to become a barber in my freshman year in high school.

NMS: I'm kind of curious as to how did you, is it you who made the decision that instead of going to high school...

JM: Let's get this right. Most people think that our parents kind of influenced this, right? My father was proud. An Irishman, right? He was walking around with his chest out, "My son's going to be a priest," The "Going My Way" type thing. [Note: popular 1944 movie about a young

priest, starring Bing Crosby, who won an Oscar for Best Actor]. Something was just telling that maybe you ought to try this.

I had interviewed with the priests of the Sacred Heart. I had also interviewed with the Marist priests. They had recruiters just like the military. They had recruiters who went out and talked to the different... You fill out paperwork. It was a toss-up. The Marist had a cape and on the inside of the cape was this beautiful shade of blue. It kind of made you want to do it, but Father Richard was the recruiter for the priests of the Sacred Heart. Something about him struck me so (that's what) I decided. The priests of the Sacred Heart was a missionary order. That means they walked around with the cinch cord around them with the three knots for poverty, chastity and obedience. A lot of their work was done in Africa. The order was actually founded in France. Then, they came to the United States like all of the other orders who came here to take care of the Catholics in the United States.

We were responsible for our own. By the time my junior year rolled around, I was cleaning bathrooms in the new wing of our building before going to class. We went to school six days a week. We were in the classroom six days a week. Wednesdays and Saturdays were half days. Wednesday afternoons were our physical ed type thing. We played intramural sports. On Saturday was cleaning. We'd clean the building. But I would be in the barber shop cutting hair. During the three years there we had religion, Latin, French.

NMS: Did you get to come home?

JM: At Christmas and the end of the school year. My freshman year, we were there around Labor Day weekend, came home for Christmas and I was usually home by Memorial Day. In other words, I was out of school before anybody in the Biddeford area was out of school. Then that was the first summer I went to work.

My sophomore year, because I had worked at a restaurant during the summer, the nuns would leave for a week. During that time when they were gone, I ended up cooking at the school besides doing haircuts. Then, my junior year, we got to come home for Easter. That year, they decided they were going to send us home for Easter. That's when the nuns had left. They said it was just as easy to send us home. That's why I came home my junior year for Easter.

NMS: You said through your junior year so at some point you made the decision to...

JM: No. My dad had been operated on in my freshman year of high school for cancer of the lungs. He had one of his lungs removed. When I came home at Easter, I knew there was something going on. My mother told me that he had been to the doctor but didn't know exactly. Finally, she decided (they hemmed and hawed I think) and she told me, "The cancer came back." I went back to the seminary in Lenox. It was Memorial Day weekend, I can't remember the dates. I think on the Thursday night before Memorial Day weekend, I got called in to Father Paul Casper. He had been there since my freshman year. He called me in. He was our guidance director. He said, "Jim. We got a phone call from your mom. Your dad wants you home." This year we weren't going home for Memorial Day yet. It would have been the following weekend. I said, "Yeah. What does that mean?" He said, "You have to take all of your finals before you leave." I go, "OK. How are we going to do this?" He said, "We will let you know tomorrow." Before I left, I took all of my finals. None of them were written. They were all verbal. That's tough. Then I came home on Memorial Day.

NMS: I'm guessing you didn't have a car on campus. How did you get home?

JM: I had to learn the bus routes. I was fortunate some years. One of my classmates lived in Methuen Mass. One year, his father gave me a ride to Methuen, and I took a train from Lawrence to Biddeford. It was my first ride on a passenger train that I can remember.

Basically, what it would be was the buses would come through. It would be Peter Pan from Lenox to Boston. Then, most of the time, it would be Greyhound back to Biddeford. That's how I came home. I don't think my parents ever picked me up. I always took the bus back and forth. It was interesting because one day I went by a factory that supplied the material my father used to work on in the shoe shop.

NMS: So, your father was not doing well?

JM: When I came home, no. My mother had to learn to give my dad morphine shots. She wanted to prepare me for it but she said, "No. I have it in control." My mother was working the first shift in the mill. My mother was a weaver. What she would do is give my dad his shot

before going to work. She would rush home because she knew the time window. She'd always get home around 3:15, 3:20 so he'd get that shot. I got a job but I didn't have to start... I would be with my dad. He was still mobile and stuff, but it would drain him. We'd walk around the neighborhood. We were living on Summer Street in Biddeford. We would walk around the neighborhood a little bit and go back. We'd talk.

My mother finally couldn't do it anymore. One day, my dad decided he was not going to get out of bed. My mother said, "We have to do something about this." She contacted our family physician, Dr. O'Sullivan [Note: Dr. William B. O'Sullivan, 1910-1986] whose probably everybody in Biddeford's family physician. They made arrangements to have him go to Webber Hospital. My dad ended up being transferred from our house on Summer Street to Webber Hospital in Biddeford on June 14, 1964. That's where he was until he died.

NMS: Did you have to get done at the seminary so that you could take care of your father? Is that why you left?

JM: I will fast forward. My dad died September 13th. We notified the seminary. They sent up Father Richard. My father had a high mass for his funeral. The funeral was done and we are sitting at home. Father Richard is with us. We are in the kitchen, like the old French thing. You are always in the kitchen. We are sitting there, and my mom said, "OK. Go pack your stuff to go back to school." Father Richard turned around, looked at my mother and said, "No." She said, "What do you mean, no?" He said, "This is where he belongs now. To help you."

I did go back around Thanksgiving to visit my classmates for the last time.

NMS: How did you feel about that?

JM: I was surprised. I was shocked. The first thing, my dad wanted me home, right? The first thing that was said to me when I walked in the door was, "Have you got \$3 on you?" I said, "Why?" He said, "Paperwork for your driver's license is already filled out." That was my dad. You are bringing back some stuff here, Nicole, because basically my dad... (my godfather actually taught me how to drive by the way) my dad had the knowledge to say, "I'm going to make sure he is ready." Because my mother didn't have a driver's license.

So, I got my permit before he ended up going into the hospital. He had a cousin die. We went to the cousin's wake. I drove the car with the licensed driver being my father. It was interesting. He kind of knew that I had to have him ready. He's got to be ready to help his mother and his sister. The priest knew that. They knew it and they figured if he has the vocation, he'll come back. It was an interesting thing. One of the other things I tell people, believe it or not, I gave my father one of his last haircuts, in the hospital. I had gone to ask our family barber and he said, "What. You can do it. Do it." I go, "What?" He said, "Didn't you learn?" I go, "Yeah." He said, "You can do it."

NMS: Then you find yourself your senior year...

JM: Going to Biddeford, which was... Remember, I told you there were 35 in my freshman class. When I left in my junior year, there was only 15 of us. None of us, to this day, have made it. None of us made it to the priesthood. There's one that I know of, because I connected with him on Facebook, is a missionary in Indonesia with his wife. Another one is a retired Air Force officer who still does work for the government.

NMS: It must have been a little of a transition from the seminary to Biddeford High School?

JM: Going from 15 people in a classroom to... step 1, it was all males, to co-ed. Granted, at St. Mary's it was co-ed. Going co-ed again.

But by the time I got to Biddeford, I had the majority of my credits. To graduate from Biddeford all I needed was a Phys Ed Class, a science class and English. I didn't need to take many as I had all of my maths, Latin, French. If I had stayed my junior [Note correction: should be senior] year, it would have been Greek too. I had everything. You could say that I coasted through my senior year in high school at Biddeford.

I re-connected with a lot of the people that had gone to St. Mary's with. Those were not a real big transition. We still had a dress code but basically when I was in the seminary, we always had ties on too.

NMS: What about integrating into the social life at Biddeford High?

JM: Believe it or not, I may have been in the seminary but you when you came home in the summer, what you did here didn't go... It's like what happens in Vegas, stays in Vegas. I had girlfriends when I was here in the summer. They did not say, "You don't do that." They still want you to be human or be normal. It works. It works. Basically, you are socializing. So, when I got to Biddeford there was no problem.

The only different thing was that I could tell the cliques when I went to Biddeford. There was no such thing as cliques in the seminary. If they saw that, they would break it up. You had to be one social group, not individual social groups. That was probably one of the differences, the clique situation. Other than that, I had no problem. I had been with guys from different parts of the country. When I left Biddeford and went to Lenox, by the time I came back to Biddeford, I didn't have what they would call our local little twangy thing because what I had was a mixture. In fact, I'll never forget, I had a school nurse that told me, "I can tell you've been home." I said, "What do you mean?" She said, "You've got your DownEast." I said, "I don't have a DownEast accent." She said, "Oh yeah. You've got a little bit of a supposedly Maine or Boston accent."

NMS: When you were in high school, I'm guessing the activities that were taking place at Biddeford High...

JM: I was in the school play. I helped out with Homecoming. I belonged to the French Club. Because a lot of the people I was going to school with were classmates from St. Mary's. It was nice. Then some of the other people, I got to make friends with other people. It was fun. In fact, I see some of the people even today. We reminisce about being in high school and I was only there one year. It was like I had been there all four years the way they make me feel.

NMS: So even though there were some cliques, you were able to integrate yourself into the student body.

JM: Yeah, right. Because basically that was the way I was taught. The first three years, that's the way I was taught, to do that.

I graduated in June of 1965. I was working a week later. I went to work at Herman Shoe in Scarborough, Maine. That's where my dad had worked before he died. It was a given that I had

a job when I graduated from high school. I didn't know what I wanted to do. I wasn't ready to go to college. I tried to go to the ROTC Program, but I didn't make it because I had some stuff missing from high school that was required. So, I went to work again. Now, that's a whole different ballgame we are talking about. Now you are going into a factory. You grow up fast in a factory.

NMS: Why so?

JM: Because people are so... People were working piecework. I eventually had to work piecework. Of course, the guy I was working with, we got to be pretty good friends. So, it wasn't cutthroat. When you are working in a factory and you are doing piecework, it can be cutthroat.

NMS: I know what piecework is. You know what piece work is, but can you explain what piecework is?

JM: I was a last puller. To explain it is, it's a form that goes inside the shoe that creates the exterior of the shoe. So, that little thing has to come out before it goes to the shoe store. That's called a last. It looks like a foot. It has a little hole where the heel area is. What you would do is I had a post that had a pin on the top. I'd have to break the last and then take the shoe off and put it aside. You would do a case, which is 12 pairs of shoes. You are talking 24 shoes. There were 24 shoes with a little coupon attached. There was a list of coupons, actually, for the different phases of the job. You put these little coupons in a book and at the end of the day, that's what you would get paid for how many cases you pulled. I was 19 at the time. I was probably pulling in about, before taxes, \$60 a week, which was good money. Pulling 24 shoes or a case and we were averaging 100 cases a day between the 2 of us.

NMS: So, with piecework, the more you do ...

JM: The more you do, the more you make.

NMS: I've heard stories of when people started getting good at the piece rate, all of a sudden the amount per item would decrease. Is that something you experienced?

JM: No. At Herman Shoe, they would make us raise the quota. In other words, instead of needing to pull 100 cases today, we now want you to pull 110. You can do it. It can be done. There were times when we would trade off. If I had pulled more than the guy I was working with, the guy had a family. I was single. So, I'd give him some of mine [Note: coupons]. I'd say, "Here." Then, he'd do me a favor. He always kicked me afterwards. He used to go to the track. He said, "You want me to take a bet for you?" I said, "Ah...I was thinking of, and I just threw out a number." He came in the next day and said, "You should have given me the money." I said, "Why?" He said, "You would have won 100 bucks." It was cutthroat but if you got along with your co-worker, it was fun.

Of course, a lot of the people in the room I was working in was called the Finishing Room. That was the end. My dad was an inner sole cutter. The inner soles would come from him and they would meet after. There was the Stitching Room where all the leather was stitched together. Then it would all meet and come down the line. By the time it got to me, it was the Finishing Room. A lot of the people had worked with my dad at Herman Shoe. Some of them were his childhood friends.

NMS: I do want to talk about how you decided to go from that to whatever the next step in your career was, but I want to take a step back to some of the summer jobs that you had. What were those like?

JM: The first summer, I worked at Ocean House in Old Orchard. It was a restaurant. I was a dishwasher at the restaurant. When the restaurant was closed, the Ocean House was down by the water. Then they had some cabins at the bottom of Union Street. Then they had a motel across the street called the Driftwood, all on East Grand. Then on West Grand, where the Biarritz is today, they had a cottage. It was Mr. and Mrs. Paul. Mr. Paul worked for CMP. Mrs. Paul stayed home. They had one daughter, Maxine. Maxine was only a year older than me. The year I went to work there she had just graduated from St. Joseph's High School.

NMS: What was the experience like, working in Old Orchard?

JM: It was fun. We are talking 1962. There were restaurants. We had the Palace down the street [Note: Palace Ballroom was located at 45 West Grand Avenue. It was open from

1926-1967]. Whenever a group would come in, they'd bring in the placard the cards and put it in the window. They would give you free passes. So, I would get some free passes to go to the Palace. I got to see a lot of the groups that came to town.

NMS: Do you remember what any of those groups were?

JM: Believe it or not, one of them was Jerry Lee Lewis. That was my junior year, Jerry Lee Lewis. Probably Frankie Valli and the Four Seasons. I saw them, but not there. In 1962, I can't remember. It was fun. We'd get the free passes.

My sophomore year, was at the Hotel Thacher in Biddeford. They had a little restaurant in the Thacher. That was also the Trailways bus depot, just up from the Journal. That summer, the Rotary used to meet in the Hotel Thacher. Whenever the Rotary met, on a Wednesday, that was a hectic day. You were taking care of them plus all of the people who came in to eat. Contrary to what people see today...

NMS: That's what I was going to ask. You hear about the Thacher Hotel. Of course, it's right there in the heart of downtown Biddeford on Main Street across from the City Hall. At one point that was a big deal.

JM: In fact, one of the cooks there was a gentleman, whose nickname was Speed Soulard. I got to be friends with one of his sons when I went to Biddeford High. It was a regular little restaurant. People would come in and have meals. Like I said, the Rotary met there. They had a big dining area in the back where they would meet and have their luncheon. I have to laugh when I think about it. Sometimes I say, "I worked there." and they look at me like...It's not like it is today. It was a nice restaurant. People would pick the bus up there to go to Portland north. It was the heart of Biddeford.

NMS: It was a hotel too?

JM: It was a hotel. It was the center of Biddeford like you were just saying. It's a shame because basically, the food was good. It wasn't going to a high class restaurant but it was good fare. What you paid for, it was decent money. It was decent.

Then I went back to work at the Beach the following summer. Because my dad was ill and stuff, we kind of parted ways. My first three years of working, I worked in the food industry.

NMS: Now I'm going to go back to when you were at Herman Shoe, when you decide to make a move from Herman Shoe.

JM: I graduated from high school in 1965. That was not a good year to graduate from high school. Vietnam War was on. Basically, what happened is within two weeks of graduating from high school, I got my notice to go to register for the draft. So, we all drove our vehicles to Kennebunk. We took a bus to Portland just to go to the physical. Nobody was inducted at the time. It was to see your rating. My mother said, "You are going to be rated 4F". I go, "Why?" She said, "You've been a sick kid all of your life." No. There was a little story to it, but no. She just said that. It came back 1A. [Note: 1A=qualified and available]

I came home one afternoon from work in July and there was this gentleman at the door. He was a Navy Reserve Recruiter. I call them used car salesman. He said, "You know, you are going to be drafted in October." October was when my 19th birthday was coming up. I said, "OK." He said, "I'll give you the opportunity. If you join the Navy Reserves, you'll stay for one year and then you will go on two years of active duty." I said, "I'll think about it." Saturday, I talked to my mother. My mother still didn't have her driver's license. I was weighing the fact that I was going to get drafted, Vietnam. I said to my mother, "I'll join the Reserves." My mother was in agreement. So, I joined the Navy Reserves.

I took the oath on August 5th, 1965. Our first reserve meeting, they put us in a room, and they said, "OK guys. Now you have to decide when you are going to go to Boot Camp." I was never a hunter. For some strange reason, the majority of the guys who had joined the Reserves were deer hunters. The dates they gave us, some of them were too early, like September. A lot of us were working and you have to give your employer a little notice. Nobody wanted to go in November because of deer hunting season. The dates that we took were the 3rd of October, for 2 weeks. We reported the 3rd of October to be there until the 17th of October. That was the training, 2 weeks of basic. I'm going, "You guys are really nice to me. My birthday present for that year in 1965 was to go to Portland, get on a bus. Go to Boston. Get on a plane and fly to

Great Lakes Illinois on my 19th birthday.” Whereas another gentleman who joined with me celebrated his 19th birthday the 10th of October at Great Lakes. So, we spent that birthday in Boot Camp. We came back for the St. Louis Homecoming that year (laughter) I was dating somebody at the time.

NMS: What was Boot Camp like?

JM: It was like going to the seminary, believe it or not. (laughter). I had to laugh. Most people who go to Boot Camp go through PT, physical training. We ended up, the majority of our Boot Camp was classwork, to learn about the military. We learned about ships. The only thing is they had to make sure we knew how to swim.

We also got put in a building with a gas mask on. They told us to take the gas masks and then they threw the gas in and you had to walk out of the building. Small arms training, firing weapons. I neglected to tell you this, when I was in the seminary, we started a Boy Scout Explorer Troop my junior year. My mother never knew this. It took a few years for her to find this out. I qualified at the Marine Corps Reserve Center in Pittsfield Massachusetts with a 22. I was modified M1 to 22 rifle in the seminary. So, I knew how to use a weapon (laughter) Of course we got the lovely haircut.

Then I came home with Reserve training for every month for two days. It was on a weekend. In May, we had to go do what they called two week “Sea Duty”. We went to Boston. I got a ride down with another member from my Reserve Unit. His father took us down and dropped us off at the Boston Naval Shipyard. We picked up a ship called the USS Compton. Hull # 305. We left there and went to Bermuda. Tough training! The two weeks I was on this ship, they asked me what I wanted to do. I said, “I’d like to work with the Pay Master.” In the Navy, that’s called the Dispersing Clerk. So, I worked with the guy who was the Dispersing Clerk. The Dispersing Clerk is part of what is called the Supply Division. We’ll get back to that. So, that’s what I did for two weeks. I worked doing accounting, paying people and other bookwork.

I came back and went back to work. At the end of August, I stopped working because I was going on active duty. I reported to Newport Rhode Island on August 16, 1966. Now this is really when I asked myself, “Did I really do the right thing?” Again, you go through some training and

processing. Then they try to see where they are going to put you. Well, birthdays are weird things with me for some reason. I get orders for a ship called the USS Lester, Hull #1022. It's a Destroyer Escort with a drone helicopter on it. So, drones are not new (laughter). I report to the ship on 9 September. Now, 9 September happened be my sister's birthday. I report to the Lester and they put me in with the boatswain mate. Now, the boatswain mates are the guys that scrub and paint the ship. Plus, they are also responsible for other duties when we are out to sea. I'm going, "There's got to be a better way to make a living."

I found out that they were looking for cooks, referred to as commissary men. I said, "Where do I sign up?" They told me where to go. I went in. The gentleman I talked to was Petty Officer Munson. He said, "What are your qualifications?" I said, "Well, I cooked off and on for 3 summers." He said, "Sign here." So, I went from the front of the ship the focsle, to the bow of the ship. I went from sleeping below deck this way to below deck in the back. That's the Supply Division. So, basically, what I did on my two-week active-duty training on the ship I ended up being in the same division. I became a commissary man.

The Petty Officer who was in charge happened to be in the hospital for surgery. He came back and the ship was leaving Newport to go to Boston Naval Shipyard for overhaul. He came in and said, "Nice to meet you. Where are you from?" I said, "Maine." He said, "Well, we are going to be in the Boston Naval Shipyard. When we are in the Yard, instead of being on one day on and one day off and every other weekend, we are going to be two days on, two days off and every other weekend. So, you can go home." "OK. Whatever you say." I did come home a few times and on the weekend, but I would stay in Boston. You are in Boston, why not take advantage of it?

They put us in drydock and after a while, we had to go help out on base because we were no longer cooking as they were repairing the galley. I went in again working and my job was to cook bacon for breakfast. It was a rotary oven. That was it. I was done for the day after that. It was not tough.

We left the Boston Naval Shipyard and went to Guantanamo Bay, Cuba. Down in Cuba, it was again, training. Now, you stop and realize, you leave Boston and Newport. It was like 30

degrees. We stopped at Key West on the way. We get to Cuba and it's like 110 in the shade. It wiped us out for a couple of days. We went through the training there and then came back.

Now, I'm cooking through all of this, but we still had to do other things. We would train. We'd go out to sea when we were in Cuba on what we call the overhaul. They want to see how the stuff they repaired works. You also learn about warfare. Now, I was a cook, but when we went into General _____, I went from being a cook to an Aft Lookout. This means I'm standing on the deck where the drone helicopter is, looking for the enemy (laughter). I'm going, "This is fun. I'm never going to experience anything exciting."

We come back. We are home for about a month. We leave for a North Atlantic Med Cruise. We go from Newport Rhode Island to Trondheim Norway. We crossed the Artic Circle. I became a Bluenose because of that. Technically, you are supposed to go through a ceremony but because the bulk of the ship had not crossed the Artic Circle, the junior officer on the ship had to do the entire thing for us. They put him on the bow of the ship with cover off. All you could see was the ribbing of his hat and his dress whites. He stood there with his sword like this, pointing to the sky. He's the one doing the whole thing for 175 guys. He's doing the initiation. There was nobody else who could do it.

We crossed the Artic Circle and go to Trondheim Norway. Now we are experiencing 24 hours of solid daylight. So, 12 midnight and 12 noon is the same. We left Trondheim and went to Bergen. From Bergen we went to Aarhus Denmark, which is across the bay from Copenhagen. From Aarhus, we went to Southend-on-Sea, England, which was fun (laughter). It was almost like going to Old Orchard Beach. They had a mile long pier. They had a train on it. That was an adaption. The British close down for the Queen's Tea. I don't know if you ever heard of that, or the King's Tea. All bars and everything for like three hours because of the Queen's Tea. You can't work during the Queen's Tea. That was an adaption for sailors because you are used to and nobody knew. I got to make friends with a family. We were there about a week and I ended up spending time with a family during the time when we were there. They ended up taking me to a military base to a bar at a party. It was fun. I ate at their house. We made this

one pub like a meeting point for everybody on the ship. We got to know the family. We'd walk in a lot of times and they'd have a beer, they called them bitters, waiting for us. It was fun.

From there we went to the Med. Naples, Italy. I had to go through training because I was a cook. We had to go through training about it being in the Mediterranean, in a warm climate. I went to the NATO base for that. I never left the ship. It didn't impress me when I took the tour to go up to the NATO base.

Then we went to the French Riviera. We ported at Gulf Juan de Pin. We had a ship that the captain was a friend of Grace Kelly and Prince Ranier. So, they got to dock outside of Monaco. The rest of us were ported in Gulf Juan de Pin, which is actually between Cannes and Nice. So, we took the train to Nice. We stood there in front of one of the casinos. We were wondering if we can go in. Well, we found out we could have, but we didn't. We didn't try. It was nice.

Then, the Island of Malta. Then, for some strange reason, we ended up off the Gulf of Israel.

NMS: Hmm

JM: Three Day War [Note: Six-Day War, that took place June 5-10, 1967] We came back to Newport. It's 1967 and I turned 21 but because I'm like 2 weeks short, I couldn't buy or get alcohol. They wouldn't hold it for me. Malta was the liquor run. (laughter) I came back. I didn't know this but my mother and step-dad (my mother had remarried while I was in the service.), had driven down to Newport to meet us. I had left with somebody and came home before my mom and step-dad did (laughter).

I came back to Newport. I ended up going to Norfolk, Virginia. That's a running joke. I turned 21 in Norfolk Virginia. From Norfolk we ended up going to Halifax, Nova Scotia. Then I worked out a deal with a Canadian sailor and switched ships. He was on a Canadian tender and they were coming to Boston on Thanksgiving weekend, so we switched. I stayed on the Canadian tender and he drove my ship back to Newport. He got cheated whereas I had fun. Basically at that time, the Canadian service was giving out a pack of cigarettes and a shot of grog a day. He wasn't get that on my ship (laughter). What the guys were doing and I was working with the

cooks, some of the Canadian sailors were doing is they were giving me their grog. They were trying to get me drunk. It was fun.

We came back, spent the holidays. After the holidays, we leave. Now we go back on the Med North Atlantic cruise. What I neglected to tell you is while we are doing this in the Med, the ship I'm on is chasing Russian submarines to make them surface. We were all doing this. We are chasing them to make them surface. One time we were having a barbeque out in the middle of the Med, we see a Russian trawler following us. It was cat and mouse. Again, we'd go into the Med (Malta? Naples?) No. We were supposed to go to Gibraltar and that was cancelled. We were supposed to go to Greece and that got cancelled.

We leave the Mediterranean and we go to Belfast, Ireland. My ship, the USS Lester docks in the area where the Titanic was built. When you walked out, you saw the row houses that they would show. Before we leave the ship, they bring up a British police officer because Belfast is under England. They have their bobbies. They bring this gentleman in and we are all on the mezz deck. He had to do it in shifts because the mezz deck would not hold all of us at once. He tells us, "All of you guys who went to Catholic school, do not sing the songs you learned." OK. All well and good. Now, here's the kicker, we went to Belfast Ireland. The ship is 99 percent Roman Catholic, from the captain on down, with a Presbyterian minister. We understood. We knew what he was saying. Any of us who knew our Irish history... So, my dad always told me growing up that there was the Black and Tan and the Orangemen. That's the Protestant Irish. If you wear the shamrock, if you have a tattoo and it's a shamrock, you are a Mick. You are an Irish Catholic. Well, one night me and this fellow petty officer by the name of Boyer, no matter where went when we are overseas, it's what is called Cinderella Liberty. You had to be back by 12, midnight. We are walking back to the ship and we come up and see this metal archway. There are all of these flags on it. We are going, "Wow". Now I'm being a tourist. Then I look over at the building, Orange Hall. I said, "Damn, my father wasn't lying to me." (laughter)

I got to see Ian Paisley [Note: militant Protestant leader who played a critical role in the conflict that divided Northern Ireland] who was big at the time in Ireland. I got to see him speak on a street corner on Sunday night. That was common over there.

The big religion over there that was interesting for me was the Latter-Day Saints. We learned a lot. We learned about the people. It was really interesting. Then, I ended up in Copenhagen, Denmark. I got to see the Little Mermaid [Note: Built in 1913, this bronze statue has become an iconic tourist attraction]

NMS: It sounds like you are feeling that you made the right decision to join the Navy?

JM: Oh yeah. You know the term "Join the Navy, see the world"? We did. We also saw a lot through the portholes. (laughter)

The Vietnam War was on. This is where, in a way, I've thought it was the right move. But I got separated earlier than I should have. My ship, the Lester, was leaving again. They sent me to be separated and somehow while I was going through separation, somebody told me... Believe it or not, when I reported to Newport I volunteered for Vietnam. They never told me when I first volunteered but when I was separated, this is when they told me, "Do you know why you never got the orders to go to Vietnam?" I go, "Why?" They go, "You were the sole surviving son." It was just me and my sister, bloodline. The military still thinks... In the war, there was ship where there were five Sullivan brothers. That will never happen again. [Note: In November of 1942 during World War II, five Sullivan brothers were killed in action when their ship sank, the USS Juneau]. That almost wiped out a bloodline. That's it. If I had been married and would have had a child, it would have been a different story. But because I was single, no. You are exempt.

NMS: That's interesting. I don't know that I knew that.

JM: I didn't know until I was being separated. If you think about it, it makes sense. You don't want to wipe out a bloodline. Even though maybe, if I had been in the seminary and stayed or went back, the bloodline would have ceased. But the theory is you are wiping out a bloodline.

NMS: Did you lose any of your friends in the Vietnam War?

JM: Don't even ask that question.

NMS: OK

JM: No, no. I think we were going on the cruise, because it was in May. I used to hang around with Bobby Bergeron. People listening to this would know that Bobby Bergeron was a base player for a group called Dickie and the Ebb Tides, which was a local band. Dickie Waite, Bobby and I all worked at Herman Shoe. Bobby had a cousin who joined the Marines. I got to know him. I got to be friends with him. I ran into him one day on Alfred Street, down by the police station. I said, "How are you doing?" He said, "Fine. I got my orders." I said, "To where?" He said, "Vietnam." I don't know what possessed me to say it. I said, "You've got a one-way ticket." He did.

NMS: Was that Bobby Bergeron or his cousin?

JM: His cousin. It's somebody that I knew.

NMS: It's a story that sticks with you, obviously.

JM: Yeah. You don't want to predict. Plus, I had my brother-in-law served in Vietnam. A good friend of mine that died, who was in the Army but then I convinced him to join the Navy, served in Vietnam. I've got a lot of people I know who served in Vietnam.

It was a tough time. Even myself, I was in the Boston Naval Shipyard and we went to the movies. For the umpteenth time, I saw Dr. Zhivago. That was a big movie at the time. We got invited to this gentleman's house after. One of the guys I was with, there was a gentleman at the theater who was blind. This gentleman who was at the theater was blind. He had somebody sitting with him, helping him out, describing what was going on. He happened to be a pianist. He invited us to his apartment. We were in uniform. He invited some people over and we got slurred at from the people he invited.

We were in Norway. No. We were overseas. We were notified that we were going to be demonstrated against. We were told, "This is what we are going to do. We are going to lock all of the hatches above deck. Nobody is to go out on the deck. Everybody will be notified when everything is clear." We did it. All of a sudden, we hear rocks being thrown at the ship. We go "ok." Soon, somebody said, "It's clear." We open up the door and look. I think it was in Denmark. The police are there, locked arms, just walking these people away. You've done what

you wanted to do, now you can leave. Vietnam was not popular no matter where you went. But the American dollar was good (laughter). It was a rough time but we all grew up.

NMS: Then you came home?

JM: I went to SMVTI. [Note: Southern Maine Vocational Technical Institute]. Believe it or not, I went to work for a month. I was bored. (laughter) I went to work in the mill. I went to SMVTI. It was boring. I have to admit it. It was boring. It was fun but it was boring because I was learning the fundamentals of cooking and I had just got done cooking for 175 guys. One of the instructors even said, "You know. Learning how to crack an egg for you is nothing. You can crack eggs with two hands. You can do whatever you want. You can cook for us, for as many people as you want. There's got to be a better way to treat people like you." Eventually they did. They came up with a program where people with prior cooking experience didn't have to go through the basics.

I left there and was managing Dunkin Donuts in Biddeford. I was going to school and managing Dunkin Donuts here in Biddeford. That was a demanding job. You could go out on a date and get a phone call. They'd have to track you down, but they'd say they need you back. I left that and went to work in the mill again. I went to work in the Velux Department of the mill.

NMS: But it was still the Pepperell at that point?

JM: The Pepperell, making the Velux blankets. I left there...

NMS: Did you leave the mill on your own or were you there when it was closing down?

JM: I left the mill on my own because I went to work, believe it or not...I do not know how to repair a car. But put me in the Parts Department and I'll get you the parts. I ended up working in the Parts Department at what is now the Honda Dealership for Ira. It was Atlantic Motors at the time. I worked in the Parts Department. I didn't know how to put the brake shoes on or how to put the spark plugs in the engine. But, if you came up and told me what you wanted or you had something in your hand, I could go get that part, grab it and give it to you before you reached the counter. The gentleman I worked with said, "I wish I had your memory." A lot of the stuff, I didn't have to look up. I remembered it by what they were working on.

NMS: Well, if you can remember at this point in your life who your first, second, third, fourth, fifth and sixth grade (missing the seventh), eighth grade teacher was, I guess you've got a pretty good memory. It's around that time that brings me to St. Mary's Church itself closed around 2009. Do you remember how you felt when that happened?

JM: Let's go back to 1992. My dad only went to St. Mary's for seven years. The Murphy boys were trouble (laughter) My dad went to St. Mary's for seven years. I went to St. Mary's for nine years. My sister only went for eight. I have a son that was just starting kindergarten when they closed St. Mary's School in 1992. They called all of the parents. I think they were still in the process of coming up with St. James. We met at St. Joseph's (former St. Louis) School. Somebody said, "Where did you go to school?" We were entering the building. I said, "I went to St. Mary's". "Will it bother you?" Now in 1992, I'd been out of grammar school for 31 years. I said, "Nah. It's not going to bother me." Big mistake. I walked in, the convent was still here. I walked into the entrance, it was across from the convent. I walked up the steps and I go, "Oh gosh. First grade, second grade, third grade, fourth grade, fifth grade, sixth grade, seventh and eighth grade." I was standing on that landing and pointing to all of my classrooms. Oh my God, it did. It bothered me. I didn't think it would. But it's there. So, we closed that.

Now. Closing St. Mary's, Elaine and I were dating at the time. We are at St. Mary's Church and there was a missed connection with a priest who was substituting for Father Arnett, who was from Australia. They missed the connection picking up this priest who was going to fill in. So, we have no priest for the 4 o'clock mass. Joe, who happened to be the head Eucharistic Minister at the church said, "What we'll do is we'll look to see how many hosts we have." There were enough hosts for the people were in the church. He said, "We are going to have a small service and serve communion." That does cover. People left. I looked at Elaine and she looked at me. We go, "This is it. This is the future." We don't have enough priests.

Closing the church, yes, it hurt. I was not baptized there but I went to school there. I was an altar boy there. I was an altar boy when my mother got married at 5 o'clock on a Saturday night to my step-dad. The altar boy didn't show up, so I gave the bride away and ended up being the altar boy. I'm 21 years old.

It hurt, yes, but I knew it was coming. It was there. So I have to go to St. Joseph's now. It's the same God, no matter what church you go to. It's the same God. If I want to see St. Mary's all I have to do is go to St. Joseph's and go into St. Ann's Chapel [Note: located in the basement of St. Joseph's Church] and there's the altar that I served under as an altar boy. It's in St. Ann's Chapel.

NMS: I didn't know that.

JM: I didn't know until John Conroy told me. We do funeral services there because I work part-time for Hope Memorial. I'm sitting there saying to John, "Gee, that altar looks familiar." He goes, "It ought to be. It was at St. Mary's."

NMS: You've seen a lot of changes through time.

JM: The best one is going to St. Mary's, when I first went there, I can't remember who the pastor was but then we got Father Enright. Now, Father Enright was there for many years. I think he showed up when I was in second or third grade. He was there when I left. He was there when my mother re-married in 1967. He was there, I think, until 1970 or 71? He was St. Mary's. What can I say? He's the man I didn't know until one day I was serving with him. I was in high school. Even though I was at Biddeford, I was still doing my altar serving duties. He told me one day, "You know Murph, I was against you going to that seminary." I said, "You were father?" He said, "Yeah. But you've done us proud."

NMS: I'm sure that made you feel good.

JM: Oh. He was one of these individuals that I think would make anybody feel good. There are a lot of stories about the man. Anybody who knew him would tell you there are a lot of stories. If you had a pack of cigarettes, make sure you didn't let him have one because he'd keep the pack. It was stuff like that. That was Father Enright.

To go back, closing the church, that was inevitable. I know there are people because they'd close the church... well hey, we all serve the same God.

NMS: You've had a number of other positions in your life. Which one would you say was your favorite or the most fulfilling?

JM: I worked at Pease Air Force base and had a few positions. I started as a KP, doing the dishes at the dining hall at the base. I left there. I went to work in the commissary in the Meat Department. I was a meat attendant during the beef shortage. That was fun because you were working with the general public. It was fun because the people were great. Sometimes you'd have a person you'd want to shoot but most of the time, you were dealing with the wives. They were nice people. They treated us well.

I would say the best job I ever had, I was doing setting up military moves. In other words, they'd come in and have orders to go somewhere. I got to see how the rules and regulations for different places were, especially going overseas. I had an officer come in who was going to Russia. He had to bring a year's supply of toilet paper. That was one the things. If you are going to the Middle East, depending on what country you went to, you couldn't bring anything that was made by a Jewish company. I got an education. There were also rules and regulations on what to do with certain things. Firearms had to be done a certain way. Jewelry had to be done a certain way so you wouldn't lose this stuff. Claims did come in. People would lose jewelry and stuff.

Then, I ran into people I knew, classmates. I had a classmate who had been in the Army, came back and went to college and went back into the Army. He was an officer. He came in. This gentleman came in. He was a nurse recruiter. We were talking. He stood about six feet. He calls me up the next day and says, "Hey Murph. You know we went to school together?" I go, "What?" He said, "Oh yeah. Think back to your freshman year at the seminary. That little side room we were in? I was the guy at the other end of your bed. I'm John O'Hare from Pittsfield, Mass." Unreal.

NMS: I know in addition to working you volunteered for a number of organizations. One that surprised me was l'Union St Jean Baptiste.

JM: That is a John Maxim deal. Now, John Maxim's father was the President. John was the President. John Maxim was Father Labarre's nephew. Father Labarre said I was the token Irishman (laughter). That's what he would call me.

I had friends who would belong to St. Jean's. They are both now no longer with us. One is Robert Descoteaux and the other one is Henry Vallee. There was Winterfest that John used to do. They had something at City Theater. I happened to go with Bob and his wife. Bob's wife and my wife graduated from high school together. John was there. I had met John before that. We started talking and somehow or other John knew that he wanted me to join. I said to Bob, "Give me an application." I filled it out and joined St. Jean's. At the time, John was the President who was being treated for pancreatic cancer. When I first joined, I was just a regular member. All of a sudden, the gentleman who was the Vice President, decided he wanted to step aside. John looked at me and said, "Would you do it?" I go, "Sure." I was in the service, I should have learned to never volunteer. I said, "Sure. No problem."

I did but of course, I also belonged to the Knights of Columbus. They are charitable organizations. We try to help our fellow man. The St. Jean's premises was fantastic because at one time, they had an insurance plan. But because membership has dwindled, there is no insurance plan. You had some kind of financial backing. No matter which way you look at it, no matter who you are whether you are Irish, French, Greek, German or whatever, you need some kind of social group. The Irish have the Hibernians which shared the same hall as St. Jean's on the corner of Main and Elm Street. The premise is great. I like it because what we do now with St. Jean's is we help out at St. James. We've donated money there a few times. We give out scholarships to children and grandchildren on the members. It's not big money but it's some money, maybe buy a couple of textbooks or whatever because nothing is cheap.

NMS: What is the mission of l'Union St. Jean Baptiste?

JM: The original, which we don't do because come on you've got an Irish-Frenchman that doesn't speak French anymore. They used to speak French. The meeting was in French. My wife's got an uncle that belonged to the organization. Two of the members, their fathers were members, their uncles were members of this organization. I mean, this was an organization that when the gentlemen went in, the whole meeting would be in French. The minutes would be in French. Everything was French which was great. One night we there, we are now at the Community Center, and there is a lot of the memorabilia there. There's a picture of the hall on

the corner of Elm and Main where they had a banquet and there were so many people there in the picture that they literally cut part of the frame so that you see the rest of the people. That's how big this organization was. It was over a thousand members. I mean that's not just one St. Jean's. We had the other St. Jean's that was on Jefferson Street. These were organizations like the Richelieu Club, they spoke French. If you really think about it, it's one way to keep your native language, your heritage language alive. But it's dying.

We did something at St. James. A bunch of us were there. We had all of the students in from of us in the schoolyard because we donated some money for repair of the building. Just for the curiosity one of the members, Roch Angers asked, "How many of you speak French?" We were amazed. There were quite a few who could speak French. Which means, maybe we are going to have a revival here within the parish.

We have La Kermesse but that has kind of dwindled down because the people who were the heart of that have died. I mean my mother spoke French and my mother is no longer with us. My wife, Elaine, speaks French. It's there. Friends of ours speak French. But it's a shame. It would be fun to say, "We can do this meeting in French." I can understand you but I'm not going to speak to you because I can't do it.

NMS: You've mentioned your wife, Elaine, a few times. Can you tell us a little bit about how you met and a little bit about her?

JM: God rest his soul. I've got a cousin who said, "Hey, you want to go to a singles' dance?" I said, "Ah, no." I was divorced. Finally, I gave in one night. The singles' dance happened to be at the Cascades. [Note: The Cascade Inn was located on the corner of Route 1 and Cascade Road in Saco.] It was June 5th, 1999. So, we go. Elaine is there with a friend. Now, June 5th is Elaine's birthday. She was celebrating her birthday. My cousin introduced me. This is the God's honest truth. I'm sitting there like a bump on a log with my arms crossed. Elaine is talking to me, and she says, "Can you smile?" I said, "Yeah." We started talking. Come to find out, Elaine's dad belonged to Council 260 of the Knights of Columbus. I knew about that. She asked me if I knew how to dance. I said, "Yeah." She said, "No. Not do you know how to dance but do you dance?" I go, "Yeah." So, we got up and started dancing. We started talking some more. Come to find

out, we are both friends of ALW. Do you know who ALW is? Andrew Lloyd Webber. Andrew Lloyd Webber gives us Cats, Jesus Christ Superstar, Phantom of the Opera. She's a Phantom fan. I'm a Cats fan. One thing led to another. We exchanged emails. I took Elaine home. Her friend left her there with two guys she really didn't know. She's riding with us. We stopped at Rapid Rays and bought something to eat. We brought her home. Here's the kicker. We are sitting here at 236 Alfred Street. Elaine grew up one building over from here, 216. When I brought Elaine home, I didn't bring her up the driveway. I dropped her off at the foot of the driveway on Alfred Street itself and she has to walk up the hill to get to her house (laughter). We're not going to get into the rest of the discussion of how she describes it. (laughter). That was our first meeting.

Elaine whispering in the background, "I could have been raped. I could have been murdered. He didn't give a shit!"

Our first date, believe it or not, was Nunsense, the all-male cast at the Arundel Playhouse. Then our next date was Carmen, the Opera. I got introduced to the opera when I was in the Navy, in Italy, the second time around. That's how we met. Even now and we've been together over 20 years.

NMS: You've seen some changes in Biddeford through the years. How would you characterize what it's like now compared to...

JM: This is what has surprised even Elaine and I. I have to say that growing up I remember Saturdays were Dad Day. One Saturday, I'd go with Dad, the other Saturday, my sister would go with Dad. We'd walk from 456 Main Street into Biddeford, the downtown. One of his stops would be Peter Victor's which was a bar across from City Theater. When we got into Peter Victor's there would be cousins of my dad. He'd have a beer and buy me a milkshake. Then, we'd leave. He would then go and do whatever business he had to do. Then we would go back home. Now, I'm telling you about a bar that no longer exists on Main Street.

Growing up was great. I can remember my senior year in high school on Friday nights, you'd go downtown. You would meet your friends. If there was a dance going on, you'd go to the dance. St. Andre's would have a dance on Friday nights. Biddeford would have a dance on Friday

nights. Saturday nights was either St. Joseph's/St. Louis and St. Jean's Hall. The stores were also open on Friday nights. Of course, cars created another revolution and the next thing, we have malls which devastated the downtown. They tried to transition.

I have to say that I am amazed, amazed at what I have seen going on. Elaine and I were watching 207 [Note: a nightly news magazine show on WCSH tv featuring in-depth stories of Maine] one night and they are telling us about these places like a bakery that's in Biddeford that neither one of us have ever heard of. Portland Pie is now where my mother was a weaver. [Note: it was once part of the Pepperell mill]. Even in the building that goes along Main Street, there are businesses in there where it used to be shipping and receiving for the manufacturing company. The revitalization of City Theater. I've done a few plays there. It's like, "Oh wow." It's different. I haven't been to the Lincoln yet. I have to check that one out.

NMS: You've done a few plays at City Theater?

JM: Oh yes.

NMS: Tell me about that.

JM: We used to do plays in the seminary. Figure that one out. Most of the plays we did in the seminary, like George Washington Slept Here, you have to have females. Well, guys had to play those roles. Where I was going to school in Lenox, there were a lot of private schools. There was a Jesuit novitiate there. We got invited to go and watch them do MacBeth. It was an all-male cast. We had to look three times at who was playing Lady MacBeth. (laughter) The guy was good. The actor was great.

I came back. I got involved when they used to do capers. I don't know if you remember that, growing up. The Webber Hospital Auxiliary every year would put on a show. I did a couple of those. I was doing one with this other guy who was also involved with City Theater. How they revitalized is they actually started out over City Hall in Saco. Then they cleaned up the Theater and started using City Theater. The first show I did at City Theater was The Odd Couple. I was one of the poker players. I played Roy, the accountant. Then I was behind the scenes for a few of them like Guys and Dolls. The one that was exhausting, I was both the Tech Director and one

of the cast members was Arsenic and Old Lace. That is a classic. I played one of the cops that got to eat through the whole show.

Of course, I knew Mike Reilly from Reilly's Bakery. They wanted me to have a cake. I didn't go myself. I didn't approach Mike myself. I told this young lady who was responsible. I said, "You go see Mike and tell him Jim Murphy needs a cake for every one of the shows." They had no problem.

NMS: It helps to have connections.

JM: Oh yes. It does. Mike has come through a few times for me. We had a fundraiser. I belong to the Old Orchard Beach Knights of Columbus. We had a supper one night for somebody. I went in and asked for Italian bread from Mike. He donated it.

There is a lot of connection because my father grew up with his father and uncle. When my dad died, the day of the funeral, most of the time we would go in the back way of the house, through the shed into the kitchen. Somebody rang the doorbell in the front part of the house on Summer Street. We entered on the Mount Vernon side of the apartment. Somebody rang the doorbell. I opened up the door but there was nobody standing there. I looked down and there were pastries from Reilly's Bakery. That connection is there. The St. Mary's connection.

NMS: Is there anything about Biddeford like some behind the scenes story that you think people might be surprised to hear?

JM: Believe it or not, I was on the City Council for two years. I ran during the time when there was a fear, they didn't want a certain individual on the Council. At the time, I belonged to the Biddeford Council of Knights before I transferred to Old Orchard. Father Labarre said, "Who lives in Ward 5?" They said, "Well, Jim Murphy is one of them." There was somebody else. He said, "See if Jim will run for the Council." I don't know if you ever heard of Rory Holland [Note: According to the 2/7/2011 issue of the Portland Press Herald, Rory Holland was a lightning rod for controversy and was sentenced to life in prison for a double murder]. Rory was very notorious. Well, he wasn't notorious. He was just a little instigator. They were worried. He would always pull papers to run for office. They didn't want him. So, I ran. My claim to fame is

I won the election by 76 votes. By somebody who had a standoff across the street from St. James School with the police. 2003 was a great year in Biddeford.

When you are on the Council, there is a lot that goes on that people don't realize. That's why you have to trust the individual that you vote into that position. There are decisions that have to be made that go on behind the scenes that don't come out unless they really have to come out. There was a situation that has been rectified but we went into Executive Session for it. It's just because of a piece of land. And you go, "Wow. I'm making a decision for this?" Then it goes to the public. It's totally mind boggling, some of the stuff you have to do. People do not realize that there are people out there who are in need or need exceptions. Sometimes, that is decided through the Council. They have to go in and have everything explained to them. Then they have to make the decision, and this is how we are going to do it.

The committees, it's the same thing. Now, Susan Deschambault is running for the Mayor of Biddeford. We were on the Policy Committee together. Who would think? Policy is policy. You are deciding how things are going to run. You have to weigh those decisions. Those are in committees. Then, the committee decides what they are going to do then they present it to the Council. Again, it was a learning experience.

NMS: You are doing part-time work for Hope Memorial now?

JM: Oh, my God. John Conroy. That's another experience. Somebody one day asked me why I do it. Granted I get paid. Let's put that on the table. I get paid. But It's respect for the deceased and the family. I've done a lot of people that I know. I did somebody that I remember when she was dating her husband. I've done friends. One of the first funerals I ever worked was a classmate, that graduated from Biddeford High in 1965. But it's respect.

The seminary has never really left me. You can tell me things but I'm going to sit there and I'm going to think this out. I'm going to rationalize it. The one thing that was always instilled in us was respect. You respect the people. You respect them during their time of loss. You respect them during their time of joy. That has never left.

Basically, I have issues with different things sometimes and (Elaine in the background “Careful Jim”) its... somehow there’s no respect there. That’s the way I feel.

NMS: We’ve covered a lot of territory. Is there anything that you had thought about that you wanted to make sure that you shared with people that maybe didn’t come up?

JM: Not really. You covered it well.

Basically, the one thing I’ll tell you. One time I was helping out at Biddeford High School. They were doing the play Streetcar Named Desire. I had a stepdaughter who was involved with the play. I’m there working, and this young man came up to me and said, “What do you know. You’ve only lived in Biddeford.” I said, “Wait a minute. Wo. I didn’t go to school here in Biddeford all of my life. I went to school elsewhere. Then, I’ve been, here, here and here.” He said, “Well, what are you doing here?” I said, “THIS IS HOME. This is where I grew up. This is where my parents are both buried. My sister is deceased. The Murphy side of my family all the relatives that I knew are deceased. My mother’s side of the family, all of her brothers and sisters are deceased. All I have is my cousins and we are spread far and wide. This is still home. Even if I was living in Florida, this would still be home.” That’s how I feel.

NMS: If there is anything that you would want people to take away from hearing your story, what would that be? What is the message?

JM: I joke a lot about Biddeford, but this is home, and I would like it to stay the way it is. With the revitalization, I think it has potential. I know I’m on the upper scale of life and I hope that the people coming up behind respect what they have. That’s about it.

NMS: Ok. Well, thank you so much for taking the time to share your story.