

JAMES P. GLEASON

Montgomery County Archives Project

Interviewed June 18 & 25, 1987

**Interviewer: Jeannine Jeffs
History Associates Incorporated
Rockville, Maryland**

My name is Jeannine Jeffs. I will be talking with Mr. James P. Gleason, member of the Montgomery County Council from 1968 to 1970, and Montgomery County Executive from 1970 to 1978. We are meeting in the Rockville Public Library, Maryland Avenue, Rockville, Maryland. The date is June 18, 1987.

JJ: I think it would be helpful if we begin by talking a bit about your personal as well as your professional history, preceding your tenure as first County Executive. If you would tell us about your family and the influences that shaped your life and led you to public service.

JG: Well, like millions of others, I was a product of World War II, in which, because of the GI Bill, it was an opportunity to go to higher education which would have not happened, for me at least anyway, and for lots of others.... And I had a desire at that time, principally because of being away from home for four years, that kind of thing, to get into government and try to make things a little bit better. So that was, I guess, my primary motivation for trying to pursue, generally, a public service career.

When I got back from the war, I went to Georgetown University. I met my wife, who was _____ in Cleveland, which is my home town. And she went to George Washington [University]. And then a couple of years after we were both in school, we got married and started having the first of what turned out to be six children. I went through college and law school on a very accelerated pace, completing that in about four and a half years, which was possible in those

days, and which is certainly not possible now. And I'm not sure it's even highly desirable to go that fast, but anyway, we were all trying to make up some time.

And then I started work, first, with.... I started an eight and a half-year, an eight-year career up in the Senate, after I got out of law school, working for two Senators, Senator Nixon -- this was, of course, before he became vice president -- and I was with him until about his first year, first half year as vice president; then with Senator Knowland, who at that time was a Minority and Majority Leader of the Senate. And then I went from there to the space agency for three years. And then I started practicing law after that.

And in the meantime, during the next nine or ten years, I got involved in civic activities, principally, transportation areas. And was appointed to the County Council because a vacancy occurred. And that's what my background is.

[Interruption]

JJ: Do you want to talk at all about your experiences on the Hill at that period, when you were working as legislative assistant for Senator Nixon and then Knowland? Are there any particular...?

JG: Well, I don't really know, you know, what.... I think that the experience that I had, both in the.... I should have mentioned that I did run for a statewide office twice during that period, before coming to County Council. And in addition to that, I was unsuccessful ... it was for the United States Senate, although I came close in one election. I also was on the transportation planning board which laid out the Metro system here; and of course that's an interstate, bi-county or multi-county organization. And [I] was chairman the year that the hundred-mile system was laid out, was agreed to. I also was a member of the constitutional convention, which was held in Maryland during that period.

And I'm citing this just to indicate that when I came to the County Council, and then subsequently to the County Executive position, I had eight years of experience in the United States Senate with two very, very prominent individuals, which brought me in contact with a lot of fairly top level people. And then the new space agency ... I was an assistant administrator of that agency and had charge of Congressional relations.

And one of the things that occurred during that period, I introduced the original seven astronauts and took them up to the Hill when they testified, and kind of educated them or

trained them on how to testify in some sense, and introduced them to people like Lyndon Johnson and other people that they were meeting for the first time.

But the point that I'm making is that because of that experience, both in government -- both the legislative and executive branches -- and because of the other civic activities -- the constitutional convention, the transportation planning activities -- I came to the job as a fairly experienced individual. And there really wasn't anything that I was going to face that I hadn't had some contact with in some degree in a prior job. So I guess that is the meaning that I would produce or bring forward, and I think that was the real substance of that experience.

JJ: It was very broad experience. So in March 1968, you were appointed to the County Council. David Scull had passed away...

JG: He had died.

JJ: ... in January.

JG: He had died in office, and that left a council divided on a party basis: three Republicans and three Democrats. And they went for something like forty-some days trying to pick

a successor. And finally, my name was thrown into the hopper and one or two of the Democrats decided -- two of them decided, but one decided to remain silent during the vote, but -- decided to go along with it. And so I was appointed at that time, and broke that impasse which was getting a little embarrassing by that point. So it wasn't any line....

JJ: Because they were in violation of the law, weren't they?

JG: Well, I think there was some....

JJ: ... 30-day....

JG: There was some kind of a restriction, yes, that they're supposed to act and carry something out, appoint some successors within a period of 30 days. I'd forgotten that.

JJ: Have you ever -- well, I'm sure you have -- thought of how come they agreed on you?

JG: Well, you know, politics is such a crazy kind of an activity. There's really no rationale to a lot of things that happen. There were a lot of good people that had been proposed. What each side was trying to do, of course, was to get some kind of a partisan edge with four votes. And

the Democrats were fairly adamant about it because they had, in fact, enjoyed a majority because Mr. Scull, although he was elected as a Republican, had folded ranks as soon as the election was over, and had worked with them to have himself elected as the first chairman of the council. So for the next fourteen months, I guess, fifteen months, however long he was in office, they, in effect, had a majority, and they wanted to continue that.

Well, there wasn't any way that the three Republicans, having felt that they had a majority by the electorate, and having been deprived of it by Mr. Scull's vote, were going to let that happen again. So you could see they were pretty much at loggerheads. And I had been asked several times prior to that about the possibility of putting my name in. And I told them no, because I had no desire to get myself on the defeated end of a three-three vote myself.

And I think it was kind of they had reached the point of exhaustion, and something had to give, and they realized it ... a couple of them did on the Democratic side. And I had some good relations with a couple of them, so they thought I'd be fair in handling my duties. But it's just a coincidence the way some of these things occur.

JJ: You were, nevertheless though, put in a position of being the "swing" vote, weren't you?

JG: Yes, yes, I was.

JJ: And did that give you power? Or how did you fit into that situation?

JG: Well, it put me in a position where I felt that I had to kind of ... particularly on appointments, where some of the council members.... I remember Mr. Greenhalgh had been the one who had voted for me and broke the impasse. And he wanted to go down to represent the government on the Council of Governments; they had a representative from each county. And so Mr. Keeney also wanted it. Well, there you are, you see. What do you do? So I voted for Mr. Greenhalgh, to let him go; I didn't think it was that important.

So I kind of had to go back and forth a little bit. I didn't like the position I was in but in a sense, I was there because a Democrat had voted for me and I.... And it turned out a little bit ironic later because when the new office was created, of County Executive, why, it was Mr. Greenhalgh and I who wound up as opponents with each other for that job. And of course I defeated him by a very, very narrow margin, which I'm sure that he probably would have,

you know, looked and wondered whether he had done the right thing many, many times in getting me appointed.

JJ: Do you recall what some of the issues or concerns that the council was dealing with at that time, between '68 and '70?

JG: Well, let's see, first of all, well, one of them, which I've just alluded to, was the very change in the nature of the government. They had started, in effect, a study commission to take a look at whether they should adopt the County Executive form of government. That commission worked very, very hard and finally came up with a recommendation that they should, and the council approved it. And the voters subsequently approved it, not by a large vote but by a majority vote.

There was an issue of gun control in the county, which was a very passionately argued proposition. And I can recall very vividly going out to one of the local high schools, and it was just jam packed. So there was an issue that we finally settled by having a very hard working commission come up with some recommendations.

And the open housing issue was pretty germane, at that time; it was with respect to ... I forget what the issue was. They had already established a human relations commission, I

believe, but I guess it was to give them enforcement powers. But I forget the details of it, right now. But it was an issue involving segregation and integration on a racial principle. And that was a very, very hotly contested issue within the county. Those are two or three. You always had budget matters, of course.

And there were a great deal of planning issues; we had to get the mass transit going. That was one of the things I was able to do, that I didn't want to really give up my position on the transit commission because I had devoted a lot of time and attention and interest, and I was fairly knowledgeable about it. And we were at some very sensitive areas. And the council agreed that I would be able to maintain my position there and on the council. And so I was very gratified by that. So those are the big things that come to mind, right at the moment.

JJ: Those were hot and troubled times, weren't they, '68 to '70?
Yes.

JG: Yes, they were. Yes, right. Yes, because it was the time, of course, when you had all of the Vietnam uprisings, and we had some of those in the county. I remember some young people would gather at some places down in Bethesda, and the police would raid them periodically. And they'd raise some

hue and cry about police brutality and things of that nature ... and demands to have a police civilian review board. And, you know, those things were going around. We had a fairly severe drug issue then, as now. And that became a very controversial issue, particularly in dealing with the schools.

Because, you know, in Montgomery County, because the school board is elected, they consider that that is their sole domain and nobody else, even if they're government, should be looking over their shoulders, so to speak, even though the county government is the one that provides them with funds to operate. So we finally wound up by establishing the study commission which I co-chaired, in which the Board of Education appointed half the members and the council appointed the other half.

Another area that was of great interest and concern at that time was the one -- and it still is -- and it's inherited ... some of these things never get resolved, I guess, in Montgomery County, and it was the issue dealing with the volunteer firemen. And at that time, the council had proposed a matter that went to referendum, I believe, which was, in effect, an effort to bring the firemen under the direct control of the county government. And the firemen, most of whom, at that time, were volunteer firemen, felt

that this would destroy their independence and their ability to operate in the way they had had successfully, and would be costly.

And they went out and petitioned it to referendum, first of all, and then defeated it in the election. So then the council with Herzman[?], from the Volunteer Fire Department representatives, set up another study group to take a look ... well, alright, this wasn't so. What can be done to bring a closer working relationship? And I was asked to co-chair that. And we produced, in all of those things, I think, very meaningful legislation which was approved. And we did it in the drug area; we did it in the fire board area, and we did it in the gun control area. So it was a busy time; it was. As I think about it, it kind of exhausts me to think about it! [Both laugh]

JJ: We were all younger then, though, weren't we?

JG: Yes, right, that's right. Now they can't even get me to even read about some of these things, let alone do anything about it.

JJ: The new charter was approved by the voters in November '68. So undoubtedly the race for the executive started pretty

soon after that. Did you begin thinking about running for County Executive soon after the new charter was adopted?

JG: Well, I don't know when I first started thinking about it. I kind of felt I was uniquely qualified for it because I had had prior executive experience, and all of these other things had contributed to it. I certainly felt that I was more qualified than any of the other candidates at that time. But I also had gone through two statewide races, and you know, they're always very expensive and they leave you kind of gasping for breath, particularly if you lose, as far as finances is concerned. But I can't really dredge up now as to when I first started to think about it.

I know there was a political situation that was not too desirable. On the Democratic side, Mr. Greenhalgh seemed to have kind of a clear shot for it; no one really filed in the primary to challenge him in the primary. On the Republican side, Max Keeney, his fellow council member, was interested in it. But also the state Republican chairman, who was also a prior chairman of the Montgomery County Republican Party and a resident, of course, of Montgomery County, had not only expressed his interest but had filed very early. And he brought a great deal of political astuteness to the picture. So it presented a very difficult position; in other words, if the three of us would get in the race, why,

the odds were that the state chairman would have won, because he had much more contact with the party faithful and he had a lot of chips he could call in than either Mr. Keeney or myself.

So although I don't remember exactly when I got interested, I know what happened. And I guess that's about the substance. I realized that -- and I think Mr. Keeney did, too, that.... Mr. Keeney felt that he had been on the council, and he felt that he had kind of a priority or right to run for it, and had a priority attached to it, which, of course, I didn't share but.... Of course, I always feel that these jobs should go to the person who's most qualified. And I think Mr. Kendall kind of felt he had some kind of a vested right or right of priority because he had worked for many, many years in the Republican Party, and it was a partisan job.

So it was quite clear that, as I indicated before, if the three of us ran that Mr. Kendall would win. So I had no alternative except to just not do anything. Mr. Keeney had announced he was going to run. And Mr. Kendall had filed actually. Mr. Keeney had announced. So I just kind of bid my time, and just sat back a while. And Mr. Kendall had done a lot of very good homework; he had tied up a lot of precinct chairmen on his behalf. And Mr. Keeney went around

knocking on doors and he found out that he had a lot of the party tied up.

So at one particular time, then, Mr. Keeney finally called me, he says, "I'm not going to run." He says, "You can't beat Mr. Kendall." So I think the next day I filed. [Both laugh]. Because that's what I was waiting for because then at least I had a fighting chance with only.... He announced he was not going to run, so I stood a fighting chance. And I ultimately won, so it was the right decision. I suppose we ought to maybe really talk about what produced this new office, what was the background.

JJ: Yes, fine.

JG: Well, of course, the County Manager system of government, which the county had operated under prior to this change for County Executive ... position, called for and had an appointed person who had professional background, was supposed to have a professional background, and were running departments and things. But he was to serve at the beck and call and the whim of the appointed authority, which is the County Council. And the County Council had full executive as well as legislative authority, although the County Manager was to implement it and carry it out and really supervise the employees.

Well, although we had a number of good County Managers, it turned out to be that it was not as desirable as one would like, because it took a lot of time. Everything had to go to the council; everything had to be decided. If the County Manager showed any initiative, and each time, it got out a little bit too far, well, then he'd get his knuckles cracked and so on. And in the meantime, across the United States, a lot of the county governments where they had general governmental authority were, in the larger areas, California particularly and some areas in New York, were going to the County Executive form of government.

So that was the thing that people started looking at, and that was the kind of area that the study commission concentrated on. And the idea there, of course, was to have somebody elected in his own right to be the executive, just like ... it's a parallel to the federal system or to the state system. So although the council would still have the legislative authority, they would no longer have executive authority. And that would rest in an elected executive who would be responsible to the people himself. And under him, they provided for the appointment of the professional manager ... not a manager. I forget what they call it now.

JJ: You mean the CAO? Chief Administrative...?

JG: Yes, the Chief Administrative Officer, yes, that was it, the Chief Administrative Officer. And he was supposed to be the one that would help the County Executive run the county government. He would have the knowledge because of his background and so forth. So anyway, that was the background, and that was the thing that carried the day, but as I say, by not a large majority; but it did carry the day.

JJ: Was there much of an effort made to educate the citizenry as far as the advantages of this new form of government? Usually, people are slow at wanting change when it comes to their government.

JG: Yes, I know, I know that. I know that's true because having served in the state constitutional convention where we presented what most political scientists say was the most perfect state constitutional document ever devised, and everybody supported it: both political parties, labor, management, newspapers.... And it went down by a three-to-one vote, why, people are slow to change. They just don't like changes in government. I don't recall now. I'm sure there were groups on both sides, or I'm sure there was a bipartisan group organized to support the charter change. _____ activity where I'm just not sure because ... although I should have known that; I just don't recall.

JJ: Well, word must have gotten out somehow.

JG: Yes, it got out, yes, right. But one of the big arguments always is it's going to cost more money, you know. And it generally does, because the idea was, the other part of the idea was that not only did you have an elected executive who would then be responsible to the people, but you would also permit the council to be truly a part-time council. And they would no longer be expected to work, you know, because they wouldn't have the executive functions. They expected they could do their work in one day and that would be it -- one day a week at the most. Well, that hasn't turned out to be true, because they have spent just as many hours as they ever did. So that part of it never materialized successfully.

JJ: So you won the election in 1970?

JG: By a very narrow vote.

JJ: You had four hundred and twenty or so votes.

JG: Yes, right. In fact, I remember that because when the votes got finished, it was something like 1730 votes, something like that, _____ 1500. And Mr. Greenhalgh was very confident he was going to win because he says the absentee

votes haven't been counted, and Democrats always get a large share of that. And by golly, he was almost right because for every four votes, he's getting three out of the _____; the total ran out before he crossed over. And I think he was like behind 43 votes, _____ or _____ I guess, something like that. I forget what it was really; it was close, too close for comfort.

JJ: Well, that was the good news. But the bad news was that it was an all-Democratic council, wasn't it?

JG: Yes, yes, that was really surprising. Of course, Montgomery County generally is a fairly liberal ... I don't know what you want to call it, some people say "progressive," but they generally tend to favor liberal-minded candidates, both at national and state level, local level. And this time they _____. Of course, you know, it's very hard to distinguish among council candidates because there's seven of them. So if somebody is going to vote for one, they generally vote for the other six, too. So the party does have, and has had traditionally, a three and a half to two, three to two, and two to one advantage in registrations. So they should be elected every year. I guess I was an aberration of some kind, so _____ figure out that one.

JJ: What were your hopes for the position? This was a brand new _____.

JG: Well, my hopes were ... I knew enough about government to.... And of course, I had to face the reality that I couldn't do a lot of things that I might have wanted to do, simply because I was facing.... The council still had the ultimate power. They had the power of approving the budgets, approving my budgets, the power of taxes, and they could override a veto, obviously, very easily. I guess I was set to try to develop and, I guess, start a tradition of the office.

And that was the thing that motivated me the most: to get as smooth a transition of the prior government into the new government without raising a lot of commotion about it. Because I felt that every government has to kind of earn its way. And I felt that if I just came in with a lot of changes, big changes that _____.... In fact, I was criticized for not doing that by one of the Democratic members of the council who was very eager, and who later turned out to be my opponent in the second race. Why wasn't I sending down a lot more legislative proposals? [Laughs]

There were several reasons. Number one, if I had, she wouldn't have approved them anyway. But secondly, it just

wasn't the time for it. And you know, we had to consolidate what we had; we had to take a look.... I mean, government had gotten fairly stretched out, and we had to take a look about getting it under a different kind of format. And I think that we accomplished that.

We had some problems in sewage -- as they still do -- and waste management. And then we had some problems with revenues because, at that time, the revenues were not.... We hadn't reached a point where the increase in property values was producing more revenues, as they did subsequently. So we had a tight revenue picture. In fact, I think I had to increase the taxes the first year _____ think _____. I didn't want to do that. But that was my primary objective was to do a smooth transition, and to make people feel a little bit more a part of it, and not to get concerned about it. I realize there was an extra responsibility on the first County Executive because he could make or break it. And I didn't want anybody to say that I wasn't up to the challenges or duties _____.

JJ: One of the first tasks was to build a staff, wasn't it? I mean, to choose some people to help you do the job.

JG: Yes, well, this is where I decided that I would not -- in fact, I don't think I did it in any job I had, except one,

it was the result of a recommendation of somebody from the council, in fact the present County Executive -- I wasn't going to outside the government to find the heads of these various departments. I was going to bring up people who were capable from within. And so I did do it with respect to one job, and that was the Chief Administrative Officer, because there I did feel that, because it was the top job, in a sense, it would be a reflection of the political head of the government, that it might be better. And the other County Manager had not wanted to stay on; he went back to _____.

I did advertise that job and got the City Manager from the City of Hartford in. And I found out then, as I found out later: you can bring a lot of qualified people into jobs _____, but you can never substitute a knowledge of a county, a knowledge of people, a knowledge of the way things work. You can't buy that kind of thing. And so that Chief Administrative Officer quit, and, well, we came to a parting of ways, a mutual understanding, a year, less than about a year's time.

But every other department, I appointed from within. And I was always pleased about that. And it worked out generally pretty satisfactorily. There are times that you should go out, and I think probably it shouldn't be a universal thing.

But I think if you can stay within your own government and bring up people, or go to maybe some other close-by government, I think you're better off. That's what I was able to do.

JJ: And it kept you out of trouble with the Merit Board which was a hurdle for some of your...?

JG: Yes, which is another thing you always have a problem, because, now, you see, the department heads would be appointed people, and they wouldn't have any assurance of continuity. And that was another thing that I was concerned about, is you try to get somebody to take a department, and you can't guarantee that they're going to have the job past your next election.... But I was attempting, because we always had a fairly good merit system in the county, and I didn't really want to violate that. I think, by and large, with very few exceptions, we maintained the integrity of that system. Why don't we go to...?

[Interruption]

JJ: It very soon became evident that growth was proceeding at such a rate, and that some of the facilities weren't up to it. And we ran into a sewer moratorium in 1970. And that was an ongoing problem, wasn't it?

JG: That issue probably characterized, as far as the largest issue we had, probably characterized my first administration more than any other, because the moratorium just absolutely stopped building in the county. And what had happened was the Blue Plains facility in the District of Columbia, which we all contributed to, to build and which handled our sewage was above capacity. And the EPA put out a moratorium ... the federal Environmental Protection Agency.

And so it became a rather desperate planning effort to try to find additional areas for sewage and try to find additional treatment facilities and try to increase the capacity, and find out if the conclusions reached by the federal authorities and by the District of Columbia government were accurate. And of course, the state was very involved in this moratorium as well. And in fact, the state actually put on the moratorium, but it was because the state was the ultimate control of that, but it was at the urging of the federal government.

We had started a department ... well, there was the Department of Planning in the county. We went through a very intensive study of it to try to come up with a solution. And we finally came up with a ... which I thought then, and I still think now is a.... Well, it was a decision really to build a treatment plant ourselves. We

had two major problems. There was the sewage problem, and then there was handling the waste, the rubbish, and the garbage that you want to collect, problem. Because at that time, we had been taking all of our refuse to a landfill inside the city limits of Rockville, and building a mountain out there. What did they call it? Mount Rushmore, or something like that, trash mount or something like that.

And so we had to do some of that, and the state also put a lid on capacity there. And so we had twin problems, both of which related to the very basic necessities of people existing in the county. And we came up with a solution of building ... Montgomery County would build its own treatment facility, sewage plant. And also we would devise out at the PEPCO utility plant, out at Dickerson ... we came up with a very unique -- what we thought was a unique -- solution of burning trash in the burners at PEPCO in place of coal. Because coal presents certain environmental problems, as well ... the sulfur content of coal.

And those things, of course, required a great deal of time, a great deal of money. We had to look at all of the areas in the county that could handle a sewage treatment plant. We had to look at all the areas of the county where we could handle waste. And out of those things came recommendations to build those two facilities. And that took an awful lot

of time; we had a citizen's advisory committee on both. We spent a lot of money. In the meantime, there were various members of the council coming up with their own solutions, most of which were shipping our refuse outside of the county.

Of course, we had looked at that. And I can remember my mother calling me one time back, from Cleveland, because they had come up with a solution of sending it some place outside of Cleveland. She said, "Jim, what are you doing to us?" [Both laugh] I hadn't even known about it at that time. So anyway, it just is apparent that no other jurisdiction is going to take responsibility of taking on the rubbish and trash of another jurisdiction. And we knew that; we had talked about it. But the council kept insisting, and so they made us study all these alternatives and.... I know we had to get an agreement from them, and we got the agreement ultimately.

JJ: Is that the Dickerson plant that is still being deliberated today?

JG: Yes, that is the Dickerson plant that's still being deliberated today, right.

JJ: Seventeen years later.

JG: Yes, not seventeen but ... it's a long time. That's still how it is.

JJ: Of course, the sewer moratorium also affected the budget, didn't it?

JG: Right.

JJ: I mean, if you couldn't build, it would affect revenues and....

JG: Right, yes. It had a very devastating effect, because if you can't plan your growth, why, then you have unplanned growth. And unplanned growth means people are crowding in, and the density increases where you are. Houses deteriorate faster; people don't fix them up. And the character and the quality of the area that you live in just degenerates.

JJ: Well, shall we leave it at that for today?

JG: Yes, let's do that.

END OF JUNE 18, 1987 INTERVIEW

My name is Jeannine Jeffs. This is the second interview with Mr. James P. Gleason. We are meeting in the Rockville Public Library. And the date is June 25th, 1987.

JJ: In our last interview, we had just begun discussing one of the major problems you faced during your first term as County Executive, during the years 1970 to 1974, and that was the sewer moratorium. What do you recall were some of the other areas of special concern during that period?

JG: Well, of course, growth is always an issue in Montgomery County; and growth, of course, is very closely tied in with the sewer moratorium. But beyond that, there always is the overriding issue about the pace of growth. We had an issue then, which is still an issue with the government, as to who should be responsible for, at least, the regulations that affect growth; whether it should be the county government or whether it should be the planning board under the Planning Commission.

That's an institution that -- the planning board -- has gone on for ... I guess before, almost from the time of the Depression, back in the 1930s. And it's an issue that I think, really, has never been faced up to by the citizens here yet. Because when I had some experts look at it -- they were from outside the county -- they were a little shocked that, here we had a system that was, in their minds, outmoded and had gone out of existence years ago in most

other jurisdictions. And yet Montgomery County was considered to be a very progressive thinking county.

So what to do about the planning powers and the responsibilities of planning was a major issue which I was at loggerheads with the council on, and wanted to bring the planning responsibility more directly under the ... be a responsibility of the county government. This issue, of course, also took up a considerable amount of time of my successor, Mr. Gilchrist, who had the same point of view, or who learned to have the same point of view. And I'm sure it will with Mr. Kramer. If for no other reason than it continues a divided governmental structure in the county, and it's hard to assign responsibility if you have that situation.

To a lesser degree, the independence of the Washington Suburban Sanitary Commission was also involved in that, because, of course, where you put the sewer lines pretty much dictates the way the county will grow. At one point, we thought we had an agreement with Prince George's County to bring the powers to plan the water and sewer lines within our respective county governments, but that fell apart, too. So those two issues -- because they're bi-county agencies, they both affect planning -- took a lot of time. They never got successfully resolved.

And they're still, I think, a big problem for the county, simply because even though the council has the final power, the council, as being a legislative body, cannot give the time and attention that is necessary to plan these lines right. And they have to depend on the planning board, and the planning board is composed of appointed officials who have not been elected, and so they can't be held accountable in that sense.

JJ: There are times when, I know, your successor had to go back to Annapolis to get laws put into effect in order to achieve, for instance, more control over the planning board. Could we talk a little bit about the areas where you might have found it necessary to initiate legislation or to establish closer relations with the delegation in Annapolis, as distinct from the access that the council also had to the delegation? I don't know if I'm making myself clear.

JG: Well, I'm not sure that I'm responsive to the general query, but it does open up an area that really deserves some comment. Once again, it goes back to a prior comment that the whole new form of government was designed to put a single individual in charge of the executive branch of the government, and who would have full executive power. That branch would have full executive power, and leave the council to be a part-time council. And that never developed

because the council continued to practically meet five days a week and sometimes more than that.

And so when it came to who should represent the county government in Annapolis -- and there are all kinds of relationships that have to be looked over and worried over and state legislation which impacts the county, and whether it relates to where the roads are built or relates to construction funds for school purposes or health programs and so on -- the county has got a vital and direct interest. And it has to keep abreast of what is going on and has to express its voice. But the question is: whose voice should be expressed?

Well, the way it turned out, unfortunately, I think, is that the council selected somebody to represent it as a body in Annapolis, and I, of course, represented somebody to represent the executive branch of the government in Annapolis. Sometimes we could get agreement on where we stood; a lot of times, we could not. And those times when you could not, of course, then you had two voices speaking down there, and not much was accomplished. I think that still is a problem simply because the council still feels that they should have a voice in Annapolis over the legislation that affects this county, and the form of

government that's put in place really has a single individual representing the government as such.

So it's still a big problem and it hasn't been resolved. It continues to allow, I think, a lot of powers to be exerted at the Annapolis level that should be delegated to the county level. And I think one time we counted up, there was something like 120 different aid formulas or different formulas which had been worked out over the years where the state still has an interest. Well, you know, when the state allowed charter government to set up, it was designed to allow local government, and county government particularly, to be free of many of those restraints, but it still isn't.

And the delegation still has a great deal of say over what occurs in the county, which then presents another dimension of the problem, and that is: what really can the delegates who, after all are supposed to take care of the state government, what can they really know about the affairs of the county that are affected by local governmental operations? And why should they continue to maintain control and jurisdiction over some of those elements? So that really has never been cleared up. It still is a real problem, and it's costing our people money, as the planning board is.

We figured out one time that the citizens of this county were paying about 800 percent more than the most expensive planning operation of a comparable county in the United States. Well, you know, that's a lot of money. And so you can quickly understand that when you get to questions like, you know, if the county government has responsibility to build the schools or build the streets and the parks and the police stations and where to put them and locate them and the library system, it just doesn't make any sense to allow somebody else to have the planning responsibility to where the people should live.

So it's that simple, but there are some people that still believe -- I don't think it's a majority of the people, but nevertheless, still, some people that believe -- that divided government and a fractionated government is the best kind of government. I just don't happen to subscribe to that, and it really was a cause for a lot of friction.

JJ: Your first term spanned a time of growing inflation, and of having to deal with the energy crisis created by the oil embargo. Could you tell us how you worked out the budget, the whole budgetary process, and the problems you ran into, at that point?

JG: Well, the first thing that occurred is that we had to provide for additional funds just for fuel expenditures for the vehicles that are necessary to be operated, vehicles to pick up the trash and to do the road work, and really, to operate the buildings. A lot of buildings are heated by oil. So we had to find the funds for those increased expenditures, and that caused somewhat of a problem because, I think, in the first year we had to put in a small tax increase to take care of those things.

We set in motion, of course, conservation programs, and this went all the way across the board. And that was about the most effective thing that we could do. And we set out programs recommending conservation for the citizens, and particularly the people that operated and worked in public buildings. But it was a difficult period, in fact, because of the impact on people. And we had to make sure that supplies were available for facilities like nursing homes and things of that nature.

JJ: Did you have to defer items from the CIP budget?

JG: Capital items?

JJ: Yes, because of that?

JG: I don't recall, right now, whether we had to do that or not. I don't think so because I look back on that period as one where we had a very intensive capital improvement program. I think, in those eight years that I was here, we really expanded our library system, I remember, rather significantly, our roads and repair of our roads on an accelerated pace. I recall we unified our sanitary collection system which, at that time, we had about eight or nine different operators on, and we solidified that. No, I don't think that we stopped....

We got started on, at the least the plans were started for, our new county complex out here, with a new courthouse and a new county executive office building. We had new health facilities we established. So somehow we were able to get on with the necessary projects that we saw, at that time. And the council approved most of them.

JJ: In addition to the energy crisis, there was also a crisis in government during that period, with Watergate happening in 1973. Were there any aftershocks on the county level from that occurrence?

JG: Well, you never know about those things because the thing that Watergate did was to make it, I think, possible for news people or representatives of news agencies to write a

lot of stories, even though there may not have been some very solid foundations for those stories. And it allowed them to take some fairly flimsy kind of statements and not substantiate them before going out in the press with it.

And we found ourselves, at least during that period and at the end of the period, I guess, because of some disgruntled employee, having to come to grips with some charges that the government was under some element of corruption, which turned out not to be the case. But it gave us about a year and a half of constant concern about how to operate ... grand jury proceedings, which nothing ever came out of.

So the after effect of Watergate, I think, washed us as it did a lot of other areas. In the meantime, of course, there was in some other jurisdictions -- and in fact in the State of Maryland -- there were some rather significant corruption probes going on with some people going to jail. And I suppose we looked like fair game. And, you know, it was just one of those trying times that you had to live through, which I never would want to live through again. But it was that aspect of it, I think, that affected us; that it was easy for people to make charges that were unsubstantiated. It was very easy for newspapers to print charges that were unsubstantiated. And that produced a tremendous burden on

some people that were really trying to work the public will and provide for the public protection.

So I think that aspect of public service has not died away; I think it's still with us. And it's unfortunate ... not to say that everything that's done in government is done correctly, is done right. There are times and there are occasions when the activities of government public servants are suspect and should be reviewed rather rigorously. But there are other times that charges are rather baseless. And it's unfortunate that people make those kind of charges, because the result of that is, I think, it deters good people from serving in government.

JJ: What about the police force? Was it a task of yours to modernize it? When you first took office, what shape was it in, at that point?

JG: Well, I'd always felt that we, in Montgomery County, had had a very good police department. I think, of course, during the period of the uprisings in the '60s, in the late '60s, there were more frequent clashes between the police and particularly younger dissident elements, if you will; but younger people "feeling their oats" or expressing themselves particularly on the Vietnam thing, and that produced a lot

more hostility. And of course, you did have the emergence of the drug culture which produced some confrontations.

The way I handled it, of course, when we first started, was to try to continue it the way we did. I unfortunately found myself with a retirement of the police chief, who had been police chief for a number of years, and ran a very good police department. I was able, at least, to have him extend his retirement for six months so as to get kind of control a little bit of the government. And that was very helpful.

And then we really never went through.... I kind of felt that the police department ought to be run by -- which is one of my principal methods of operation, is that you get good people to run these departments and then you leave them alone. And you just don't ignore it completely, but you kind of give them an opportunity to do their job without looking over their shoulder every minute. And I think, by and large, that has worked out fairly well.

The difficulty, I think, that gets involved in the police department is the degree of professionalism that must be maintained all the time. We did do some modernization, like we instituted a take-home car program, where we allowed police officers, who had a number of years experience, to take home the cars. The idea here is that just the

visibility of a police car in a neighborhood where a policeman lives helps to control crime. And we did institute a four-day work week of longer work days because we found that experience teaches that, because of the harrowing and pressure-filled job that a policeman has, that the more free time he can collect in a single period of time just helps him to do his job better.

So we instituted that program. And we increased salaries, and we added to the number of police. But we did, I think the greatest thing that ... one of the great things that happened in that period of time was that we were able to bring into being and finalize construction of the police academy, which gave them a facility in the government services training building; gave them their own facility, which they had not had prior to that time, to train and develop and re-train their officers. Re-training is, of course, a very essential element of maintaining a police department.

There were problems -- as there will be in any large metropolitan area -- there were occasional problems [that] developed _____ a particular police officer. We did lose a couple of police officers, who were shot during my administration, which is always a very emotionally packed

period of time. But I think, by and large, we were able to maintain a fairly good police department.

I did run into a situation in my -- I just forget years, right now -- I think it was in my second term, where the second police chief also decided to retire; he was eligible to retire, Colonel Hopkins [?]. And at that time, I set up a board to look for the next police chief ... the board included the prior police chief. So they said the best person that they had come across didn't want the job; it was the police chief of the City of Boston.

But he was, by far, the best, and the others that came in, they had.... I asked them to give me three recommendations. So I did go up and I was able to talk the police chief from the City of Boston into coming down. Well, he was a fairly progressive individual, but he was maybe a little bit too advanced for his times. I'm not sure what it was. But in any event, he did not relate well with the bulk of the police personnel in the county.

JJ: This is DiGrazio we're talking about?

JG: It's DiGrazio, right. And I used to meet with him at times, and there were times that he spoke at the wrong occasion. I think he was well motivated; he did have a high standard of

professionalism that he wanted the policemen to meet. I just think perhaps he was trying to move a little bit too fast. And I had a lot of discussions with him; but in the end, he was replaced by my successor. So that was the one difficulty I did have.

JJ: In looking back at that first term, could we talk a little bit about the political realities of working with an all Democratic council, and what that involved ... what that meant?

JG: Well, of course, immediately, anyone that has any experience with politics knows that's not a very happy circumstance when you don't even have one person who can express, at times, the thoughts that you would like to have expressed and support your position among seven members of the council. As I indicated before, that was one of the reasons I didn't push very hard for a lot of things, until there was a settling down. But beyond that, I think that a lot of the circumstances of that depend on the particular individual who's in the job, regardless of his political affiliation. And I think that depends on the experience that person has.

When I look at the council that I worked with, I think one of them had prior experience in the City of Rockville. I think, beyond that, there wasn't any real experience in

government. I mean, I may forget one or two at the moment, but... So, I guess, it's more difficult for them to understand that the best government is one in which policy is outlined, and then let the person go and do the job. And instead of that, there was a lot of looking into everything that the executive branch did, which I think could have been avoided ... which, it really didn't bother us because we had good people. We had people that knew what they were doing, and they could explain their actions.

The thing that bothered me the most was that when it came down to difficult decisions, they constantly were putting it through a study grind, a study procedure. And finally, in my second campaign, I characterized that as "paralysis by analysis." And you're always going to have a number of people [who] are going to appear before council groups that are going to oppose something. But there's a temptation for inexperienced people to believe that that represents the voice of the 600,000 people that make up the county, and it doesn't.

So you've got to look beyond that. And you've got to look at things; and you've got to make decisions because, if you don't make decisions, well then, ultimately, you're going to have to make it. And by that time, things generally are worse because more people have moved into certain areas and

you may have to set some facilities in operation, like a road or a transit system, that's going to upset more people ... or even putting a fire rescue service into a particular area.

So anyway, it was trying time, particularly, I think from the fact that they were not willing to decide issues when they were presented to them. Now, of course, they would say that the thing had not been studied enough by the executive branch, and therefore they were required to re-study it. But you know, that's.... [Laughs]

JJ: In 1973 only four, apparently, of nineteen bills which you sponsored were even introduced to the council.

JG: Yes, yes, see, I think....

JJ: And that led you to characterize the council as "do nothing." And Mr. Sher, apparently, claimed that some of the bills were clearly "PR." Was this typically...?

JG: Well, I think that is a very good illustration of people without experience, you see, because any legislation, in my experience -- certainly in the federal level -- any legislation that is set up by the president gets introduced. It doesn't mean it gets passed, but at least it gets

introduced and it's put to some kind of a hearing. But here, they didn't even introduce the legislation. You know, well, that deprives the executive of getting a voice of the citizens to being able to comment on his proposal. And that isn't right, I mean, you know; but that's the way they viewed their responsibilities. And I would doubt whether they continued that practice when they had a Democratic executive in office, but they may have. Just as I say, I think inexperience sometimes kind of blunts your powers of reasoning.

JJ: And then earlier you had addressed the Maryland Association of Counties. And the talk was entitled, "Future Shock: Local Government in Jeopardy." You were feeling some real frustrations at that point. Do you remember what they were?

JG: Yes, I do, I remember that very well. I had come to grips, by this time, with the interconnections, if you will, or the complete infrastructure of government in total: the federal government, the state government, and regional government, and local government. And I had first-hand experience, then, by how these programs were working well or not so well. The overwhelming conclusion, the overriding conclusion I had come to was that it just took forever to get anything done.

You know, you make your appearances; you had to justify everything. The federal government starts out with programs, and they get local government involved. And then pretty soon they pull out, or they put new requirements on, and you find out that what comes out the other end of the pipe is very little. The same way with the state; the state, you know, here we are, we have the health problems of the citizens of the county, and yet the state has a health department which actually dictates some of the personnel -- and they do in the social services, too -- they dictate just how they can perform and what jobs they can maintain. In fact, most of social services are state employees.

So anyway I was coming to grips, for the first time, with the absolute realization that government was getting itself paralyzed. It just was at a point it couldn't move. And it was that condition that I was trying to express in that talk, "Future Shock." I don't think that condition has changed substantially since then, and I've given a lot of time and attention, even after I left government.... I taught some classes involving it. And it's the whole structure of government; we have something 88,000 units of local government in the United States. And then of course, you have your fifty states and then the federal government.

And when you put all of the inner workings of that together, and programs that are tied together, it just becomes so complex to a point that there isn't any way in God's world that any citizen can know whether government is acting right or not. And you see, if you take that away, well, then where's democracy? Where is representative government? And I think that is what's happened; I think government has not only grown big, but has been growing so complex that it is impossible for it really to handle a lot of the problems of people that have to be handled. And it gets involved in everything and accomplishes very, very little.

So it was that growth and that development that I was trying to express a warning to, and I think it's still there. And it's unfortunate because at some point, it's going to come to a point of really haunting us. And it's something that I don't know the real solution to it, but I know that somebody will have to start working on it. And nobody is.

JJ: Has it gotten worse, at all?

JG: Yes, it's gotten worse.

JJ: Maybe we could explore a little bit what prompted you, in June 1974, to seek a second term in spite of...?

[Both laugh]

JG: Oh, in spite of that, yes.

JJ: Yes, in spite of all this.

JG: Well, I think that the main reason is that you just cannot get accomplished in a four-year term what you'd like to get accomplished. So that if one left at that time, one is really leaving it up to a successor to finish what you've set in motion. And then he changes things, and then there's the complication I've just been talking about. So I really decided.... And I also had a hope that I could do something about this central problem that we just talked about. I had tried to raise it in some of the sessions of the Association of Counties in Montgomery County, in NACO, the National Association of Counties, that Montgomery County was a member of.

I had helped to organize the big political areas of Maryland, the City of Baltimore and the five big counties -- Anne Arundel, Prince George's, and Fauquier counties, Montgomery, and Baltimore County -- and organized their executives into a group. And so I thought, perhaps, I might be able to really start some thinking going, at least start some movement so we'd get people worrying about this problem. And that was the principal reason that I ran for re-election.

JJ: I wonder what your reasons for running without a slate were, since, if you could have brought in more Republicans on the council, it might have been easier for you to get some of the things done that you wanted to do. But you ran without a slate, is that right?

JG: Yes, and it was not an easy issue to resolve, because I knew all of the members who were running on the Republican council. In fact I had quite a bit to do with helping to encourage some of them to run. I think what it came down to was the fact that Montgomery County is just an area where they just don't yield to slates as much, I guess, as other areas. They hand-pick people. That was one consideration.

The other consideration is that, except for, I think, one member or perhaps two members -- I know at least one -- all of the other candidates were fairly inexperienced. Because I had the job, I had to run the government at the same I was campaigning, I couldn't spend, take a lot of time to educate them on the issues. They had to do this themselves. And I also didn't want to get myself caught into a real bind with them in arguing where I stood and where they should stand on the various issues, if there was dissension -- which later there turned out to be quite a bit of dissension in the group. So it was not an easy decision, and I'm not sure I made the right one because it certainly ... we wound up with

the same result: seven Democrats again. Although I won by a much larger majority, it would have been nicer to have a couple of members, at least.

On the other hand, I don't know whether it would have made any difference, see. Because my own feeling is that because of the registration in this county, unless there are some overriding issues that come along -- you know, a depression-type thing or a real land re-zoning thing going on -- I don't think that the people look at the individuals. There's just too many running ... seven, how are they going to select them in seven? It's just easier for them to pick one slate and just, you know, go down. So I think that's ... I'm not sure that even if I had worked or was able to work with them as a slate....

It wasn't a question of slate; it was just a question as to whether we would work a single campaign, or whether each of us would run a different campaign, or running, you know, not have a unified campaign. Because there wasn't any real contest, I don't think, in the Republican race. There may have been one or two, but that got decided by the primary. So....

JJ: So you did win by a greater margin. How did you view the next four years, given some of the changes that occurred on

the council? You had ... Esther Gelman came on, Jane Anne Moore came on, Mr. Menke came on ... Kristeller, I guess, was he on your first...? Yes, he was on your first council. Hovsepien was on your first council, and Neal Potter was on.

JG: Betty Scull.

JJ: Betty Scull stayed on, yes ... was on again. You took one look at this and ... [laughs] well, what did you think?

JG: Déjà vu!

[Both laugh]

JJ: Yes.

JG: Well, it really wasn't, I don't think, a heck of a lot of change, in a way. I think some of the council members settled down a lot more than they had initially. I actually felt that we really got a lot done in the second term. We really did complete a lot of the programs that we put into place. I'm just trying to recall because, as I say, these years kind of tend to be merged into each other ... some of the specific areas.

JJ: Well, the reorganization of the government went on, creating new departments and that kind of work. You had been faced,

during the election, with the Ficker amendment. So fiscal responsibility was, I guess, something that....

JG: Well, he's had so many amendments, which one was this?

JJ: Oh, like the TRIM amendment, I think it was. It was putting on....

JG: Right. This was going to put on a limitation on spending, was that?

JJ: Exactly.

JG: Yes.

JJ: But it was defeated.

JG: It was defeated. There was a unified effort, politically, between the Democrats and Republicans to work against that ... and that was the League of Women Voters and a few other organizations, so it was defeated, yes.

JJ: Let's talk a little bit about those new departments you created, and the work of reorganization that continued in that second term.

JG: Well, I think, you know, the Department of Transportation was certainly a major department that was established. It was built on the old Public Works Department. And out of that we developed the new mini-bus system, which has been very, very successful, which we put into effect, first, in Silver Spring and other areas, Gaithersburg and Rockville, I guess, and Bethesda, too, I think ... an independent bus system which was a quarter ride, which is not there anymore, which helped a lot of people get around the county that didn't have cars, particularly older people. It facilitated their getting to a store, shop, or some other stores. So that was something that came right out of the new Department of Transportation.

We expanded our ... we unified our fire and rescue services, and we were able to, by establishing a department, to give some overall direction; not that we took control away from the departments, but we unified the operations so they had to come in with budgets in a certain time, had to meet certain standards of equipment. We put the fire marshal's office in that department. And we were able to expand greatly -- to initiate and expand -- the emergency medical ambulance service. I think we had, at that time -- and probably still do -- the largest numbers of hospital-equipped ambulances that certainly any political subdivision

in the metropolitan area has, and certainly in Maryland, too. So we were able to get that done with that department.

Let's see, we established the Department of Environmental Protection to bring together and to focus our concern about the environment. And we put, within that department, all of the things that related to public health, that was affected by public services: the sanitation and things of that nature, and the building codes, electrical codes and so on. We had started some independent-type things, like a commission on women was started.

And we were able to establish a place here -- I forget what we call it now -- "A Woman's Place." Yes, A Woman's Place, which put some experienced people together who would counsel women who ran into difficult problems. We established a crisis center to handle abuse cases: child abuse and women abuse ... wife abuse. So....

JJ: Office of Consumer Affairs, you created it, too?

JG: Office of Consumer Affairs was created and that's been very successful; and we were able to get an excellent person to head that up, yes.

JJ: Now what about the Department of Community and Economic Development? Was that something new?

JG: Well, yes, that's something we started.

JJ: That was to attract....

JG: It was to help to keep business here and to help plan for facilities for businesses to locate. And they also had the responsibility of doing the planning for all of our public buildings: our libraries, our health facilities, police stations, and fire stations, and so on. And also they had the planning for sewage facilities and our trash collection and things like that. They were our planners, and they did a great job for us.

JJ: Who did you put in charge of that?

JG: Well, the first person was the person that became the Chief Administrative Officer, Bill Hussmann, and then he was succeeded by Bob Lanham, who had been here in the City of Rockville.

JJ: Could we talk a little bit about Bill Hussmann? You hired him?

JG: Well, no, he had been hired by the County Manager when I was on the council, prior to the establishment of the executive branch. And when I was not able to have my first choice of Chief Administrative Officer work out very well, because of coming from a different county.... See, that's what I indicated before. I think when you go outside and you bring somebody in, it's frequently very difficult for them because they don't know the people, they don't know the county. They don't know the interest groups, they don't know the issues and the history. That's another thing we established was a history project for Montgomery County.

END OF INTERVIEW