

Jim Gordon

Box 05-82

Jim George as interviewed by Jim Gordon  
for American Beliefs and Cultural Values  
taught by Hanna Griff.

I: Can you please state your full name?

JG: Uh, yes. This is Jim George, I'm a resident of Grinnell. I live on 1003 East Street and have lived in Grinnell since 1951.

I: Can you please state your birthplace, your time of birth and your age.

JG: I'm an Iowan all the way. I was born in Iowa in Burlington. I'm now 75. At the age of 5 I moved to Cedar Rapids, lived there until I graduated from Coe College in 1938, and then subsequently lived in Tama, and Eldora, and moved to Grinnell, as I've said before in 1951.

I: And, uh, let's see...when were you born?

JG: In 1917. During World War I.

I: In 1917... What was your parents' background?

JG: My dad was in the, uh, manufacturing business, manufacturing livestock remedies, that was in the early days of, um, in this field, producing...oh things to nourish and to worm different kinds of livestock and that type of thing, and he moved that business from Burlington to Cedar Rapids. It was known as the Western Remedy Company.

I: The Western Remedy Company...and your mother?

JG: And my mother was a mother homemaker.

I: And uh, where was she from?

JG: She was from also...they were both Iowans...um, and both came from the neighborhood of, oh North English, Millersburg, Keswick, that area which is not far from Grinnell, it's, um, south and east of here about 50 miles.

I: Roundabouts of Cedar Rapids?

JG: Well it's a little bit south of that and also east.

I: Ok, uh, can you please describe what strikes you most when you

think of your childhood?

JG: Well, uh, I think of my childhood as, uh, basically a good experience. I'm not one of those with a razor sharp memory of uh, all the little details, you know of going to school, what happened in school. But I remember, remember vividly my grade school and high school education, all 12 years, was in a parochial school, so I remember the uh rather rigid and uh strict discipline that was in effect in schools compared to now and even more so perhaps because it was run by the Sisters of Mercy, who didn't mess around.

I: I think I've heard of them, in a movie, the Blues Brothers.

JG: Yeah...(laughs), right!

I: So there was, it was pretty strict.

JG: Yeah it was strict, but not, not to the point where it was uh persecution or anything like that.

I: This was uh...

JG: It was Immaculate Conception High School, that was the name of it, in Cedar Rapids.

I: Was it all male or was it co-ed?

JG: No, it was co-ed. It was a parish school.

I:Um...so you went, you went there for high school and what about, like, grade school?

JG: It was all in one, yeah.

I: All in one.

JG: The entire 12 years, I didn't go to kindergarten, and I skipped one, one grade, which I think was a mistake now. You know, socially.

I: Yeah I'm sure it can be traumatizing, when all your friends are, like behind you.

JG: Yeah.

I: And you're the new kid.

JG: Well, I think that getting out of school too young was not conducive to generating the maturity that, that a person should have when, uh, getting out of public school, well not public but high school.

I: Any particular instances you can recall of like problems that came about because of that?

JG: Um, not, well I can't put my finger on it, but I, as far as specific instances are concerned, but I had a feeling that I would have been more confident and more assertive than perhaps, a few characteristics like that, had I more maturity.

I: Do you, do you remember the depression at all? Were there any particular memories that struck you about the depression?

JG: Well, anybody that was beyond their infancy in the 30s had vivid memories of that, of course, I was no exception. My dad lost his livestock remedy business, it went under, and my folks had to move back the farm which was located in Iowa(?) county, and that location that I mentioned...not too far from Grinnell. I uh, roomed with a family in Cedar Rapids when I finished my last year of high school. And then, uh, I stayed with a brother, and attended Coe, because, well in the Depression there was no way to get out of town anyway.

I: Yeah.

JG: Even if you wanted to, because money was so tight. And I recall that tuition at that time was, uh well under 100 dollars a year.

I: Hmm. That's quite a difference.

JG: I didn't have the board and room, staying with my brother, but I can remember paying tuition, 10 dollars over time, or whatever a person could scrape up, and the college wasn't a bit fussy because they were glad to have students there, and uh whatever income they could uh generate from them.

I: I'm sure that the Depression didn't exactly help, uh, help attendance there.

JG: No, uh everything was uh, was stressed. But I, I don't feel I'm all warped out of shape because I was, uh was in my formative years during the Depression. The older people were a lot, who lost businesses and homes and jobs and things like that were a lot more stressed than somebody in their teens. But, uh, I mentioned that my folks had to go back to the farm that they owned, or partially owned, because it was mortgaged. And I can recall that, how low prices were, you know, for the produce and crops that were raised and so forth. I can remember, uh, what my older brother gave me a sow and a litter of pigs as a graduation present in uh high school.

And we nursed them along, feeding them oats and so forth and, because grain was very hard to come by. And uh, I think I guess, something like a dollar a hundredweight or so by means of comparison that hogs are well over fifty dollars a hundredweight now. I could be wrong. So that gives you an idea of how it was a different ballgame, and we don't need a litany of prices then compared to now. That's been, that's been overworked I think.

I: Yeah. Um, your education experience. Were you interested in anything in particular while you were going through high school, and then later in college?

JG: Well, I was always interested in writing and photography and I majored in journalism. We had an excellent woman teacher who was very demanding about living up to the principles of good writing and that type of thing. And I was editor of the college paper which was good experience. And all of that I think was good preparation. The only problems were there weren't people out there begging students to take jobs, you know. The job market was, uh, near zilch. And uh, so I was without a job for 6 months. I went back to the farm and just helped out till I got a job with the Tama News Herald, which you know well cause it's close by here, on a weekly paper, and uh mainly news writing, but doing anything that had to be done, you know, helping run the press on press day, and so forth. And that was for the handsome sum, I think, of 15 bucks a week.

I: The press's salaries really have changed since then. World War II. What was your, during that period of time, what was your general experience you had?

JG: Well, I was one, I was one of those who uh who had it easy. I stayed at Tama only 6 months because it was not a, a uh a very good situation with a family-owned newspaper and several of them working there so I got an offer from another Coe grad, a fellow a little bit older, to go to Eldora, and I was the editor of the paper there until World War II broke out and uh I was drafted. I, I was one of those who uh had it easy, you know as far as being endangered. During the service, I went to an officer's candidate school and uh served with the Air Force in an administrative capacity and uh,

went to England, and eventually to Europe.

I: What did you do basically?

JG: Well, uh, I would have liked to have been able to ,uh, pursue you know journalism in the service, but I wasn't able to do that until the very end. This was with a service group attached to a troop carrier organization. And we uh had vari-, we had officers in charge of the various functions, the various sections, and I was personnel officer for a while, and I was supply officer for and for another time. Things were like that. And there was the matter of administering the staff of those different uh organizations. And after, after things were secure in Europe on the continent, they moved the troop carrier service group to the continent so I was able to uh learn something about France and Germany and that way. I was um one of the highlights memorywise was being in Paris soon after the liberation and uh the great mass of humanity that just kind of carried you from one spot to another. With my stature and uh being(?) that time they just moved you around, I hardly touched the ground, there were so many people packed in Parisian thoroughfares.

I: So they were glad to see Americans.

JG: Oh yeah. Big celebration. Well, it was a great relief to all of us, you know. Americans didn't want to be there. We'd just as soon get it over with and get home. But I was overseas about 4 years, which is...no, not, less than 4 years, it was about 3, 3 out of the 4 years I was there. And that's long enough.

I: Yeah. Would you say it was generally a broadening experience?

JG: Oh, yeah, I...like I said, I had it pretty easy, and didn't see a lot of the horror that, that a lot of people, wasn't endangered much physically except during bombing raids. So I can have, uh, probably better memories of um, certain respects than the people who...

I: Coach Pfitsch.

JG: Yeah, yeah.

I: He told us all about his, uh, little experience with the barn.

JG: Yeah, it, yeah the people like, the people like John and others who were in the trenches, uh, you know they were under a lot more

stress, but uh...I was in London during the buzz bomb episode you know, and it, it was frightening to the civilian uh...they, Germans would launch these what they called buzz bombs, missiles...

I: Yeah.

JG: They were very destructive, and uh the citizenry was naturally quite frightened, most of them had built shelters that they could...

I: Did you ever have to go down to one of the shelters?

JG: Yeah, I uh, I was visiting a time or two in London and uh took to the shelters you know with them, and...

I: Must have been very frightening.

JG: Well, uh, yeah, it, it was. You don't go into a shelter unless there's some concern.

I: Um, so then you got back, right?

JG: Yep.

I: That was uh, in between 1945 and uh the early '50s. It was uh, it was, you were back in Tama, or was it?

JG: Uh, well Eldora.

I: Eldora.

JG: I returned to Eldora first uh, the first year I was back, I uh at North English, Iowa, which is down in Iowa county here, in the next county, I studied printing and the business a year under what they called the G.I. Bill. I don't know if you've heard about that or not, but it was a program to uh assimilate G.I.s back into the work force and uh the uh government would pay a portion of your salary and the employer would pay a portion, so that you could train, you know. So I learned the uh printing end of the business for a year and then went back to Eldora and uh was there from um '47 to '51 till I came to um Grinnell to uh serve as uh editor of the Herald Register.

I: During that time there was uh, oh what people call the Red Scare. Um, do you have any vivid memories of that?

JG: Well, I guess, no. Uh, I don't have vivid memories of how this developed, but, except that it was to me it seemed like a gradual, uh, thing, you know, and, and naturally we had been allies after, in World War II so, I think maybe, we were a little naive in uh,



giving the Russians, you known, more than we should have.

I: Yeah.

JG: Uh, hindsight is pretty handy on something like that, you know. But I kind of think that it crept up, you know, all of a sudden they were building, building their uh manpower and uh, material, uh reasources, and then all of a sudden you know you get into the sixties, and you got a real problem.

I: Yeah. Um, where...um, during the sixties, um you were in Grinnell right?

JG: Right.

I: Um, I guess one of the questions that I, I probably was going to save it for later, but might as well talk about it now, um, during the, the sixties, you were, where did you work? (unintelligible)

JG: Well, I was at the Herald Register for 3 years, then uh..I was at Grinnell College here, in what they call the uh, the uh Information Office, Information Service. And I did uh Sports Information from uh...I forgot what chapter. I went from the Herald Register at Grinnell to the Montezuma Republican. I, I continued to live in Grinnell, and commuted and did their news for a couple years. Then I got an offer from the College and came here in '56, and was uh Sports Information director and, uh, edited the alumni newspaper at that time, called the Alumni Scarlet and Black for 4 years until 1960. And then I got an offer to go with Grinnell Mutual Reinsurance Company out south of town here, and uh it was a much, what'll I say, more rewarding offer as far as uh, financially, and uh also to, chance to head up an operation or department, cause they were just then creating uh, a public relations advertising position, that type of work having been handled by officers in the company as additional duties. So there I edited the company newspaper at first and did their advertising work and then gradually that department grew as the company grew and we hire additional staff. And I was there for 23 years and uh saw it grow and multiply and all that sort of thing, and then I uh, I wrote the company history as, in the last year of my, uh, fulltime tenure there. Then I stayed on another 8 years as the company historian and, uh, a consultant, and uh, helped people with

their writing, and uh things of this type. So I didn't leave there at the company until uh, 19, end of 1991. And uh so at the end of uh my fulltime retirement out there, Coach Pfitsch uh convinced me and the administration out here at the college that I should come back cause their Sports Information operation was in limbo at that time, and they needed somebody to organize it, and uh get it going again. And uh, I've been here now for, uh, well this is my eighth year.

I: Your what year?

JG: My eighth.

I: Um, during your, during the time you were uh, um into journalism, did you have any, like, notable interviews you could recall, anything interesting?

JG: Oh, yes, uh, could remember the visit of uh Eisenhower when he was uh campaigning here after World War II, and uh I have pictures of, that I took of him on the back of his campaign train, yeah that was, candidates travelled by train in those days. Um, down on Main Street, wait no, I think they stopped at Broad Street and the crowd gathered and Ike uh, came out on the platform and talked and uh, we uh, there was a pretty decent crowd gathered and that was wshat they called campaigning by whistestop, in those days. And while I was at the, while I was at the college uh, I had a chance to interview a lot of people in the entertainment business. I can remember Duke Ellington and uh, Satchmo, and uh some people...

I: Did they perform, did they perform at the school?

JG: Yes they did, in Darby Gym. And I can remember uh, it's uh, Satchmo, and he was very gracious. He was talking with uh, with me and the student newspaper in the dressing room which was a locker room, and uh people were taking his picture and uh I got ready to uh take it, and I said something about cheese, you know, say cheese. And I remember Satchmo said, "It ain't cheese", he says, "it's spaghetti!" And he opened up his mouth and shows his array of white teeth he was famous for, that was one of the little incidents I remember, and I remember photographing Edward R. Murrow who was, uh one of the commencement speakers during that period, and uh, it, it makes good memories.



I: Yeah. Sounds like it was uh, very interesting. During uh, speaking of interesting, during the Sixties, during the whole series of, like protests, and uh demonstrations and whatnot that was happening on college campuses across the country, uh, do you remember anything very vividly about what was happening in Grinnell at the time.

JG: Well, by that time, I had uh, I had left the college scene, but of course I was very aware of what happened and uh, it shows you how, uh, looking back on how people of my generation fail to understand what a lot of it was all about. I felt sorry for the uh, the uh president of the college at the time, Glen Leggett, and the uh president of our company was chairman of the trustees here at the college at the time, so they, they worked closely together to try and, try and maintain some equilibrium. You're uh, you're probably aware of the fact that uh, one of those protest years, I can't remember which one now, but uh, they uh weren't able to complete the school, the school year, but...

I: 1968, I think?

JG: Yeah, that, that could be it, I'm not certain. Um, I think that um, I, well I guess that people of my generation didn't fully understand, and uh maybe the students could've been somewhat more moderate in, in their demonstrations, uh, but I don't know, I, looking back, I am a lot less prone to condemn than I might have been at the time. Yeah.

I: A turbulent time. In town, uh what were the attitudes towards uh the college students during all these protests?

JG: Well, I'm sure that uh, I wouldn't want to do them injustice, but I'm sure that, that people who were not, what'll I say, college-oriented, or uh, sympathetic, uh to the college reacted, uh rather drastically, and uh couldn't understand why, why students had to, have to uh, act what'll I say, so extreme, in such extreme ways, and, and so violently in some places, so many of them were a lot worse than Grinnell's. That, I think that the uh, town-gown uh relationships have improved a lot since those days, at least it seems to me like that.

I: I better flip the tape over before I (unintelligible) (pause)

...before I came.

JG: If you don't have to submit the tape...

I: Well actually I do. Onward with the interview. Um, we talked about, about uh violence during the sixties. Were there any, like, any like violent protests that got out of control? Um, any memories?

JG: Here in Grinnell?

I: Here in Grinnell.

JG: No, I uh, as, as I recall, we had, the college had a, a very good relationship with the chief of police, at that time uh, Bill Peters. Um, as I recall, he reacted with a rather cool hand, you know, tried, tried to be moderate in his reaction or was careful not to overreact, and uh, and I think that was very helpful, that plus the leadership of uh, Glenn Leggett, and uh the trustees chair, Larry King, who as I mentioned before was in town here and gave his uh, gave his support. So I, I think that something that could've turned ugly was, was contained and handled very well.

I: Yeah. Um, let's see, um in general, um, speaking about uh town-gown relations uh, um would you say generally they've improved or has, I mean, over, not just since the sixties, but generally since you've been in Grinnell, have they improved or gotten worse?

JG: Well it seems to, definitely I don't think they're worse. I, I think that you'll never completely, uh, well it'll never be, what'll I say, hunky-dory and uh, real, what'll I say, harmonious, uh, to the extent that we'd like to see it. But, it seems to me that their relationship has, has improved markedly in the last 42 years. Uh, I think you hear, you hear less bad-mouthing of the college by those who feel that um, we have a bunch of people up here who don't understand, and uh, that the college doesn't pay taxes, you know, and uh things that, that used to gripe. And uh, and I think that there's more understanding, uh, definitely yes. And I'll admit that maybe my uh, opinion on that is somewhat colored because of, of my age plus being involved, you know, with the college more than, than I have been in the past. I think the Grinnell Town-Gown campaign fund drive and the scholarships that have uh, been generated by that, I think have been a positive

force.

I: Yeah. Um, um, would you say that, uh, um that the fact that uh, college, that the college kind of plays a, has a large economic influence over the town, that plays a role in any, any resentment, that uh anyone might have, or does it play the opposite way, do they, do they tend make people a little more, well um, lenient towards, what like any opinions they might have on college students.

JG: Well, I think that uh, the uh, I think it's a, I think it's improved a lot, the uh, and I'm trying to think of all the uh, of all the reasons that uh, but I think that economic impact by, has made, has made an impact on the thinking people of town. It couldn't help but uh, have an impact on the retail business people, you, because that's an obvious thing. But for the, the person who isn't in business, and might be thinking of it selfishly, you know, like "I'm paying plenty of taxes, and the college isn't paying any", and doesn't, doesn't look at the overall picture of what the college contributes to the community. Uh, you know, there's, there's always going to be some hardshell folks who are probably going to resent the college. I don't, there's no point in uh, ducking that uh, fact. But by and large, I think there's more understanding, especially in these days of economic development, you know, everybody's on that bandwagon, you know. "Bring business to this town and that town" and so forth. Well, my view is, uh, how about treating the ones you already have well, and giving them the recognition that, that they deserve, because five, six hundred jobs, whatever, plus all the uh, money students spend and this sort of thing. It's a, a tremendous impact. Grinnell, to be Grinnell, has to have a college.

I: Um, speaking of businesses, I just (unintelligible) this question. Um, there's been, lately, kind of a big controversy about uh, um what Wal-Marts and other such, uh, discount stores, the kind of uh, impact they have on "Main Street" businesses. Um, do you see any, like, anger towards uh, Wal-Mart for having had, perhaps, a negative impact on, on businesses, on like the town businesses? Or would you say that it's mixed, cause people get jobs from Wal-Mart?

JG: Well, yes I uh, I hear it, and uh, and I sympathize with the, with the downtown merchants, and, and I guess I would, if I had my druthers, I would, I would lean toward, uh, toward their cause. I'll admit that there are, it's convenient sometimes to get things at Wal-Mart that you can't get downtown, but I guess the ideal, in my view, would be to go back to the old days, when we had more businesses downtown, they were better stocked, and rather than have the Wal-Mart here, I wanted to get something, and then to go to some other town, but uh, but uh, the aggressive stance of Wal-Mart and K-Mart and all the other discounters, naturally it's a whole new ballgame, and I think that even though we might resent it, it's something that we're going to have to accept and try to work around in some fashion, and uh I guess I come to, in my thinking, come to a dead-end there, and don't have anything to offer on how that can be done.

I: Yeah. A lot of questions and it's kind of hard to come up with answers to complicated questions.

JG: Yeah, and, and uh if, if we could fill up all the vacant stores downtown, with businesses, and if they could not compete with Wal-Mart, naturally, and turn a profit, naturally they're not gonna survive, and we'll have the empty stores again, so it's one of the real tough questions, and it might be that we have to accept that as part of our changing society.

I: Um, we've talked a lot about the town, now let's go back to you a little more. Um, let's see, you have a wife?

JG: Yes, uh we've been married since 1949, and I have 3 daughters who, 2 of them here in Iowa, and one of them in California, Pasadena.

I: Would you say that basically that your experiences as a parent have been peaceful, or am I just being naive about that, having never been a parent myself?

JG: Well, but you've, you've had parents. (laughs) So you know how it works. Uh, every day is not apple pie, you know, uh but, I, I feel like I'm blessed because, uh, I have, even though we've lost a child through stillbirth, and another through miscarriage, the ones who, who were given to us have done well, and uh, maybe not



financially but they've uh, done well. They've uh, they all have their college degrees, they were all top students and uh, they're good people. They're a joy to know. Uh, we've never been out of touch with them, you know and couldn't ask for anything more there.

I: Yeah. Uh, what, what are the names of your wife and children.

JG: Well, um, my wife is Isabel McCray, the name McCray, she's uh, she's a hundred percent Scot, both her parents came from Scotland, so, and uh, I'm half, a little over half Irish, and a mixture of things, so we're kind of a Gaelic persuasion. And I have a daughter Cheryl, who is married, and who is now Cheryl Osterhouse, married to Don Osterhouse who is the media specialist in the uh, public school at Grundy center which is 50 miles away to the north. We have 3 children, and have Anita George, who's been uh, she's worked briefly here at the college, has been at Pasadena, California, for almost 15 years and she uh, she's interested in and has done some things in the film industry, not, not full-time. Um, and then our youngest is Janet, who is the uh, administrative assistant in the Off-Campus Studies, uh, Office here for what, 4 years, and is now married and in Burlington, which is, is down the Mississippi.

I: Um, let's see what else, uh, religion, has that played, since you came from a parochial school, would you say that uh, religion has played a major role in your life?

JG: Well, that might be understating it. I, yes I am pleased that, I feel blessed in that way, that uh, obviously it's the Catholic faith that we've followed, uh, I don't have a closed mind against any other, but it definitely has worked to the advantage of our family I think. The others have uh, stayed with that persuasion. Uh, I think it's been what'll I say. You know, the older you get the more philosophic you become about these things, you know, and the more appreciative, but I think it's probably the dominant force in one's life because, uh, the other things are pretty transitory, when you put it up against the uh, deeper meaning of life, and I think, I think religion uh, has served me, and apparently serving my family very well.

I: Your uh, children, do they share this belief?

JG: Yes. They all still do, and uh, we haven't had to go through

the trauma of uh, of uh, you know, ~~divorce and drugs and that kind~~ of, things that beset other people. It doesn't make us any better, it makes me feel lucky.

I: Considering all the problems of the world.

JG: Yeah. The odds are not real good anymore.

I: Um, did, did uh, the fact that, Iowa is a predominantly Protestant state, is it not?

JG: Well, I guess that you would prob-, if you were to characterize it, just from the way people feel, it might be considered kind of a Republican Protestant, but I don't know what the stats tell us, you know. If you were to look at the demographics, whether, where the Catholic numbers stack up against the, the Protestant. There are so many Protestant denominations to choose from. And it depends whether you, uh, compare the Catholics to the other Protestant denominations or put them in 3 different categories you know, like Catholic, all the Protestants together, and then the Jewish and Islamic and that type of thing.

I: Would you say you've, in your life, you've never experienced any anti-Catholic bigotry?

JG: Well, uh, in my youth, uh, the buzzword of bigotry wasn't around (laughs) and talked as much, but there definitely were anti-Catholic feelings, and uh, just as uh, I think, negatively anti-Protestant feelings by the Catholics, and we kind of stood at our distance. Uh, and I think one of the great things that uh, of modern times is the Ecumenical movement, and uh, I'm all for that. I, I really, I get a lot of enjoyment and inspiration out of uh, the different denominations sharing and working together.

I: Um, questions. Um, overall, would you say that the town itself has changed, and your feelings towards it, have they changed over time?

JG: Well, obviously I think Grinnell is a good place to live. You know I wouldn't have been here forty, even though I was fortunate to have employment opportunities. I wouldn't have stayed if I thought it was a poor place, or not a good place to live. I think that it has so much to offer, a lot of it due, due to the college, and a lot of it due to other, other businesses, uh, in town that



serve the uh, the community very well, such as Grinnell Mutual Reinsurance and the telephone company and, and as a more recent development, the small uh manufacturing places that are providing lots of, lots of employment. And uh, cities and towns everywhere are beset with troubles, as far as public funding, tax burdens, and uh, crime and that sort of thing. But, from my standpoint, uh, and I suspect that you're from a city...

I: Um, a suburb actually.

JG: Yes, well...

I: Kind of in between there.

JG: They can have the metropolitan areas, I mean as far as my preference is concerned. I'm, I'm content here because it has everything I need, and if it uh, if it doesn't, in an hour, I can, in an hour to an hour and a half I can, I can be where I need something more.

I: So you basically feel that, that the benefits far outweigh the costs.

JG: No question in my mind.

I: It's very peaceful and you don't have to worry about crime.

JG: M-hm. You can be comfortable here. And I, I don't think it's changed anymore than society has impacted communities generally. If anything, it's, it's uh gotten a lot better.

I: Um, speaking of which uh, like politics here, would you say there have been any memorable elections or scandals.

JG: Well, uh, I don't know about scandals. We're, we're a little uh, I would say, in, in short supply on scandals. One of the uh, one of the difficult things I can recall is the, is it was in passing school bond issues, you know. You have to have your 60 percent to pass a uh school bond issue, and I can remember in, in the 50s when we were trying to build a new elementary school, we had to have, I think, up to 5 elections to, to get that job done, and we wasted a lot of money in the interrum. Uh, that, that I recall, uh, was a frustrating, frustrating experience, and we, we may have more of that now uh, ahead because people are, uh, very leary of tax burdens and uh, potential tax burdens.

I: Um, in the recent, recent uh, Clinton-Bush campaign, would you

say during, around election time, there was, people were uh, was there a general feeling towards or against one candidate, or was everyone just kind of confused, kind of not sure who's tell the truth and who wasn't.

JG: Well, I, I think that, for good reason, that the American public now is very disillusioned, disenchanted, skeptical, whatever you want to term it. I think they've had enough of the way we're going, uh, and I, by tradition, I'm a Republican and uh, but I crossed over this time, hoping that a new look and a new candidate and so forth, and I uh, and I felt optimistic as a lot of people did in the first, the first. But now I think that we're going into the critical period where we'll find out whether anybody can lead this country uh, because of the pitfalls of bureaucracy and uh, gridlock uh, in Congress. I, I think we've created a monster, and, and I don't know how, how we can tame it, frankly.

I: Um, would you say that generally people have a negative view of like, Congress in general, but uh, like representatives and, and senators from Iowa, would you say that Senator Grassley, for instance, still has a good uh, following?

JG: Well, I, I think generally that's true. Uh, I, I don't think that people are coming down on Grassley as much as they are the system. It uh, the people I talked to are, well I guess fed up's the word. They want the problem solved but because we're fed up it's hard to generate optimism.

I: There is a lot of cynicism out there.

JG: Yep.

I: But...

JG: But you can't just throw in the towel either and uh, do nothing.

I: Yeah, uh, some pretty tough questions there. And wrapping, wrapping this up, um what is uh, what do you think of the future, what is, what, what's in your future, and uh just generally, are you optimistic?

JG: Well, I think from a personal standpoint, regardless of age, I have to be thankful and optimistic, uh, but temper it with realism, you know. Uh, I think that if uh, societywise, if uh we can't get

some of our problems solved, the many that are lined up for us, crime and drugs and deficit, uh, heavy debt, whatever your laundry list is, I mean if we can't make prob-, uh, progress on that we're going to be like the uh, the uh, impoverished countries eventually.

I: A giant. A lumbering giant basically, with many wounds...

JG: Yeah, stumbling as much as lumbering.

I: Yes, stumbling, with many arrow wounds all over. Um, personally, are you looking forward to next few years, just in general, of your life?

JG: Well, people think I'm kinda loony, to be uh, some of my colleagues who are uh, retired period, wonder why I'm still at this, but uh, I think it's a good thing for me, because uh, it, it gives me some regimen to my life, and uh, gives me interesting work and association with uh, interesting people, and with young people, and uh with, a few extra dollars come in handy of course but, yeah, I think the main thing is that I keep active and uh, and I guess I'm going to go at it another year. I, I have had open heart surgery at the end of '91, but came back beautifully from that so, I, I can't see, unless my heart, heart! Unless my health should take a downturn, I'll, I'll just keep going I guess.

I: OK! It sounds like you, you're just living life for today, just keep on going, right?

JG: Well, I, I think that, I think that's the best philosophy for me, I, I think that's better than, than not, than not doing something.

I: Well, can you say in, in conclusion you've had a pretty satisfying life? Your experiences have been pretty good, would you say life is the greatest adventure of all?

JG: Well um, that, I think you put it very well, and like I say, I, I feel like I've, I've been blessed, you know. Some turns of the road could have been better, uh, maybe financially, some things like that if I'd made other choices, but this is no time to second guess, there's no point, you're going to have some highs and lows uh, moodwise, but to me this is no time to wring the hands, you know.

I: Uh, sounds like...





JG: Keep going.

I: Sounds like you're uh, pretty optimistic about everything.

JG: Well I guess, generally that's true.

I: Well, thank you for the interview.

JG: Well, thanks a lot to you, Jim, and uh best of luck to you with your oral history project.

I: Thank you!

JG: I hope if they give A+s at Grinnell, I hope you get one.

I: Thank you!

JG: (Laughs)

I: Thank you very much! It's been a, it's been a pleasure.

The End

I would like to thank Jim George for his gracious cooperation, and I hope this interview reflects well on his life.