

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

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**Charles B. “Chuck” Kruger**  
(Interviewer: *Michael Hastings*)

**GMOH# 076**  
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**Mike Hastings:** The following is a recorded interview of the Senator George J. Mitchell Oral History Project, an activity of Bowdoin College. The date is March 28, [2009], it's a Saturday. I'm at 37 Green Street in Thomaston, it's 2:30 in the afternoon, and I'm here to interview Charles Kruger, known as Chuck?

**Charles Kruger:** That's correct.

**MH:** My name is Mike Hastings, I'm the interviewer. If we could begin, please, can you state your full name, and spell your last name for me.

**CK:** Sure, my first name is Charles B., Charles B. Kruger, I'm actually a junior, but I gave that up because my father passed away in 1994, he was Charles B. Kruger. My last name is spelled K-R-U-G-E-R.

**MH:** Where were you born and what's your date of birth?

**CK:** I was born in Morristown, New Jersey, July 2, 1950.

**MH:** And your father and mother's full names.

**CK:** My father was Charles Bromley Kruger also, and my mother was Barbara Burke Kruger.

**MH:** Is Bromley spelled B-R-O-M-L-E-Y?

**CK:** Correct.

**MH:** Okay, let's begin with them. Tell me about your father's story, where did he come from, where did he -?

**CK:** My dad grew up in the Philadelphia area, outside of Philadelphia, attended Penn Charter School, and then he attended Solebury School, which I also attended, that's in New Hope, Pennsylvania, over on the Delaware, right on the New Jersey line. And he was a World War II veteran, was a bomber pilot, captain of a B-17 that flew missions over Germany, mostly out of England, and he was shot down in May of 1944 and spent thirteen months in prison camp.

**MH:** Where was that?

**CK:** It was Stalag Luft III, which was where the Great Escape took place but he wasn't involved in that in any direct way, because the pilots were kept separate, I don't know.

**MH:** That was within Germany itself.

**CK:** Yes, yes, I should know where that was, but there are several wonderful books about it, there's some stories about it, but he was a prisoner of war. And then he came home and started an aviation business in Morristown, New Jersey, which is where I was born and grew up.

**MH:** Your mother, is she from that area as well?

**CK:** Yes, my mother grew up in Morris Plains and in Morristown, New Jersey; they lived there all their lives. I went away at age fourteen to boarding school in Pennsylvania, and then I came to Maine to go to college in 1969.

**MH:** Brothers and sisters?

**CK:** I have two older sisters and a younger brother, my sister Judith is a photographer and currently lives in Polson, Montana, up on Flight Head Lake, and my sister Sally is also older, she lives in York, Maine. My brother, younger brother Rob, is a line mechanic for the UPS airline division, works in Philadelphia, lives in Mullica Hill, New Jersey.

**MH:** So you lived in New Jersey really, in Morristown, until you went off to boarding school.

**CK:** Correct.

**MH:** And what was living in Morristown like?

**CK:** Well, Morristown was a modestly small town, a nice town, it's right smack dab in the center of northern New Jersey, and even though I left as soon as I could, I wouldn't say the bad things about New Jersey that a lot of people say. It's actually a very nice little town, and it was only about twenty thousand people when I was growing up in the '60s.

**MH:** What is it, thirty miles west of New York, is about right?

**CK:** That's right, yes, that's just about right, and my dad commuted to New York City for most of the time there, he actually went into his mother's father's business, which was originally a tax map, producing tax maps for various cities, and it was called G. W. Bromley & Company, after George Washington Bromley, the founder. And I think Dad was the third or fourth generation in that company, and he took the company in a very different direction and – ask me something else.

**MH:** Well, you say, though, he ended up something that had to do with [aviation], after the war.

**CK:** Well yes, he went into the aviation business, but he was early, and he was actually the first FBO (fixed base operator) at the Morristown Municipal Airport. He built a hangar, bought an airplane with a partner, gave lessons, and did what a lot of small general aviation operators still do today, which is they'll hangar your plane for you, they'll fuel it, I think for a time there was a mechanic there who would work on them, just basically a parking operation and a maintenance operation for small airplanes.

**MH:** So did he do that before or after the Bromley -

**CK:** Right after the war.

**MH:** The Bromley business, though.

**CK:** He wanted to go on his own, in this business, and this, it failed very suddenly when a hurricane or a tornado came through and just destroyed all their property, and they didn't have insurance, they were still in the early stages of the company. Actually, I don't think business insurance was his covenant. So after that he went into the family business.

**MH:** And so is he still living, your mother and father still living?

**CK:** No, he died in '94, my mother died in '03.

**MH:** And they never moved to Maine.

**CK:** Actually, my mother moved to Maine right at the end of her life, into an assisted living facility in Camden. She wanted to be near one of her kids, and she picked me and so she lived there, but she was only there for, oh, four months before she died.

**MH:** So when your father was off in the war, was your mother working, or just taking care of the kids?

**CK:** No, she was a nurse's aide as part of the war effort, but no, she had my oldest sister while dad was away. In fact, because of the way communication worked, he didn't even know he had a child until he got home, and my oldest sister was born in I guess '43, something in that range, and she and mom were living with his parents, in a very nice neighborhood in Morristown.

**MH:** You mentioned that your father went to the same boarding school you did, tell me about, what's again the name?

**CK:** Solebury, S-O-L-E-B-U-R-Y, it's near the town of Solebury, Pennsylvania, but it's

actually in New Hope, and when he attended, and both his sisters went to a school right next door which, by the time I got there, had merged.

**MH:** Was this one of the Pennsylvania Quaker schools?

**CK:** I think it may have been at one time- No, I don't believe it was ever a Quaker school, but it was in that spirit certainly, and it was founded by four young men who wanted to start a school and did. It's still going.

**MH:** So what class was your father?

**CK:** He was class of '38; I was the class of '69.

**MH:** And tell me about the school, how many students?

**CK:** A small coed school, sort of offbeat when I was there, it was really being torn between being a traditional, kind of a prep school wannabe, but it didn't have the kind of college placements that, what really was a preparatory school would have. It was very art oriented, and there was a hippie component in the early hippie days, and also a very traditional component, which in those days was at war, and that was happening in a lot of places. But it was a wonderful rural campus, some very creative and nontraditional types in both the faculty and the student body.

**MH:** What was the living situation like?

**CK:** We lived in dorms that were converted from barns. It was a farm originally, and they built some actual dormitories and all the classroom buildings, but they also converted a bunch of the buildings to classrooms and dormitories.

**MH:** Your father must have, I mean if he sent you there he must have had a good experience there himself.

**CK:** Yes, and I think there may have been even more a connection to New Hope and friends that they still had in New Hope, who could keep an eye on me probably.

**MH:** And what did you study there, I mean what were your interests?

**CK:** I got involved in theater there, and I was interested in English and writing, and played football as a sophomore and then totally lost it for football and most athletics.

**MH:** Were you aware of the war in Vietnam, international events? If you graduated from there in '69, that would have, that was the decade.

**CK:** Oh yes, we were very aware of it, but I don't remember student protests until I got to

college, which is when I came to Maine, and I do remember lots of anti-war and sort of revolutionary spirit that, looking back on it, was pretty silly.

**MH:** Where in Maine did you go to college?

**CK:** Nasson College, in Springvale.

**MH:** That's in Springvale, outside of Sanford. And so did you go immediately from -?

**CK:** No, I had about a year where I lived in New York City and had a very, another strange mix of experiences.

**MH:** What were you doing there?

**CK:** Well, I sang in the Masterwork Chorus, under the direction of David Randolph, which was an amateur chorus but a very good one, and I also played in a rock band down in Greenwich Village.

**MH:** You give me so many things to ask questions about. What kind of chorus, I mean what was the repertoire?

**CK:** The Masterwork Chorus was basically a classical choral group about probably fifty or sixty voices strong, men and women. I had sung in St. Peter's Church boy choir -

**MH:** In New York?

**CK:** In Morristown, growing up, starting at about age eight. And I loved doing that, it was a wonderful experience that has stayed with me, and I really enjoyed singing. And when I got to Solebury I met some interesting people, and then when I got out of Solebury I really wanted to sing, and the falling into the rock 'n' roll business was fairly natural because I had also picked up the guitar at that point. But I also didn't want to give up, I mean I'd really done some, what I thought was pretty interesting work in some interesting material, and it was everything from Beethoven and Bach up to Zoltán Kodály.

**MH:** So in New York, were you, where were you living?

**CK:** Up in Morningside Heights near Columbia [University].

**MH:** Did you have your own place, or did you to room with -

**CK:** No, there were a constant flow of people moving in and out through this apartment, and I contributed my share when I had some, and it was basically around this band that I was playing in.

**MH:** And then were the appearances all in New York City, for this band?

**CK:** Oh no, we played out in New Jersey quite a bit, and we played in Connecticut, we had a number of gigs down in - We would travel as far as Delaware.

**MH:** Did you have a truck?

**CK:** Yes, well we had two station wagons, basically, and then we had a van after that, but I wasn't in the band very long, I was only in the band for about six months. Basically I came in as a substitute and wrote some songs, or contributed some songs to the band which became part of the band's repertoire, so I sort of stayed with it.

**MH:** What was the name of the band?

**CK:** It was called the, well the name changed a few times, it was not, you're going to find it on Google, I don't believe, but we were The Opposite Six for a while, which was a really stupid name, and we were the Electric, we were the Electric-something-or-other until the Electric Prunes came out with their bit hit, "The Eggplant that Ate Chicago." I'm trying to think, the Electric Pink, we were the Electric Pink; pink didn't have the connotation that it has now.

**MH:** So then you decided to go to college.

**CK:** Yes, I got my full taste of New York City in about nine months, I would say. Well, two seasons with the chorus, there would be a spring concert and a Christmas concert.

**MH:** Was that a kind of thing where you were rehearsing daily, or?

**CK:** No, we rehearsed two nights a week, and then there was another singing group that I was a part of that met kind of informally another night. But I was just so totally ready by the end of that summer of '69 to get out of New York, it was a hot summer, I wasn't keeping up financially, I was also doing some commercial song writing, which is a whole other story, but at that point I just wasn't, New York and me, I'd gotten my fill for [it] at age nineteen.

My sister Sally was at college at Nasson and I went up to visit her that spring, and that was my first time in Maine and I just fell in love with Maine, and then I decided very last minute to attend Nasson that fall, as a freshman.

**MH:** Before we get off the music in New York, when did you start writing songs?

**CK:** Oh, I started writing songs when I first got a guitar, which was Christmas '64, I was fourteen.

**MH:** Do you still do any musical writing?

**CK:** Oh yes, well I don't do a lot of writing, I haven't written a song in many years, but I still occasionally play and sing, mostly for myself, but I've done a few command performances, you know, a pace of about two gigs a year maybe.

**MH:** Okay, so we have you up into Maine and to, is it Springvale?

**CK:** Yes.

**MH:** Springvale, right. Nasson was a school of under a thousand, as I recall?

**CK:** Yes, I would say more like four or five hundred.

**MH:** Four or five hundred, right, and you were there for four years?

**CK:** Yes, graduated in '73.

**MH:** Tell me about going to school at Nasson. What'd you like about it, what did you dislike?

**CK:** Well I was a really wild, I was a lousy student, and I was easily distracted by everything I experienced off campus, not so much on campus. Nasson at the time was really divided, because they had started a new division, that's what they called it, was a new division of Nasson College, which was based on Goddard and Antioch and some of the real free-flowing, free-flowing education model, and some people saw this as the future of higher education, and others saw it as a way to get more students and more tuition money. There was also the traditional campus which was called the first division, and those were the ROTC gang and so there was a real dichotomy, a real meeting of the hippie culture and the traditional culture. And in 1969, this is going to sound sexist but it's true, many of the girls were there to find a husband, and many of the boys were there to get out of the draft.

**MH:** Not unlike many schools.

**CK:** No, I know, Nasson wasn't alone in that way at all, but there was this, again, I wouldn't call it a battle, but there was this constant dichotomy of these two opposing forces. And I fit right in the middle, I'm sort of the middle man, I'm not uncomfortable on the conservative side, and I'm comfortable on the hippie side, and I've got parts of me going both directions.

I moved off campus after my first year, did a lot of poetry and creative stuff my freshman year. I was very disappointed with the choral group there, as you can imagine coming from - But I kept playing my music. I was not really ever a rock 'n' roller, I was much more of an acoustic oriented musician, and so I followed that path when I got there and hooked up with a couple of guys, and we started a band immediately and started playing in the ski areas. We could easily get to North Conway, and a little more difficult to Sugarloaf, every weekend. And I wound up playing almost every Friday and Saturday in the winter, through that first winter, up at one of those two places. And we had free skiing and we got a place to stay and lots of gals, and made

good music. And that band was called the Mirror Lake Band, and we were sort of Crosby, Stills & Nash before Crosby, Stills & Nash, they didn't come along until later – two acoustic guitars and a bass, three voices.

**MH:** Did you have a major at -?

**CK:** English, with a minor in theater.

**MH:** And any particular instructors stand out, that you recall?

**CK:** Oh yes, we had some great English teachers. Raymond Stineford is an amazing poet from Maine, actually from New Hampshire but he also goes to Monhegan, and he was an English professor and a poet, and Charles [F.] Herberger was an amazing professor of English. And I also worked with Leonard Whittier, who was the drama guy, from the traditional side, and Ted Davis who was a very fiery, young, almost the same age, I mean a few years older than us, director, and he came from UNH and had no use for the traditional theater and wanted to do all kinds of original, cutting-edge stuff, and I got very much into theater at college. Then I moved off campus to a beautiful farm about ten miles, twelve miles away, up in Shapleigh, North Shapleigh.

**MH:** Right on the New Hampshire border, right?

**CK:** Yes, and North Shapleigh, of course Shapleigh's in the news because they just stood up to Poland Spring.

**MH:** Right, about Poland Spring Bottling Company wants to do another well there, or a spring, okay, Shapleigh.

**CK:** Yes, that's why you've heard it in the news. It's not a big, well-known town, but it's just north of Springvale.

**MH:** So you graduate in 1973.

**CK:** Right.

**MH:** Okay, what next?

**CK:** I fell right into performing professionally. I mean, I already was, and I didn't miss a trick, I did some booking in the first year in the life of the Profile Theater Company, which was started by Ted Davis and Spring Sirkin.

**MH:** Explain to me what spring circuit was, I don't -

**CK:** Oh, Spring Sirkin, she's actually a fairly famous Broadway producer now, and she was

the leading lady in the two productions that I, for a couple productions together. And Ted did some TV and some movie work but he, and I don't know what he's up to, he may still be in academia somewhere, but I did some booking for them, for the theater company, and played some small roles. And Profile Theater Company then went on to become Portland Stage Company, which is still [in operation].

**MH:** Now was Profile Theater, was that in Springvale and around the college?

**CK:** It started at Nasson, but it moved to Portland fairly quickly. Ted was fired or quit in a huff or something and moved to Portland and took the Profile Theater Company with him. It really wasn't the Profile Theater Company, but those key people who were part of the Nasson group, and also his associates at UNH, because he was also teaching and directing plays at UNH, did some really great work.

**MH:** And so that eventually evolves into the Portland Stage Company, which is quite prosperous.

**CK:** Still going, yes.

**MH:** I mean, they probably wouldn't consider themselves prosperous, but it's been a long -

**CK:** Anybody who survived for thirty years is doing okay in the arts.

**MH:** Great, and so you do that for a year or two?

**CK:** Yes, well actually right after Nasson this group continued only briefly, my two partners in that group disappeared. I went on to become a solo act, and fell in love and lived with the woman of my dreams for a couple of years there at the farm, so we were still close to Nasson, although I wasn't connected to it any more. I was traveling an hour-and-a-half every day each way and playing gigs, mostly solo, occasionally with a couple of other people, in mostly bars but I did colleges and developed actually quite a fun, I played at Bowdoin several times, I played at Bates and USM, actually it was called POGO then, but yes, so I mean that was the start of my career as a solo musician, singer/songwriter, minstrel dude.

**MH:** Okay, so get me from that part of the state to this part of the state, what was -?

**CK:** My marriage fell apart late '75, and I had a friend in Appleton who said, "Come on up for the winter," and that's what I did and I'm still here. I mean basically I moved up to Appleton Ridge for several years, and then I moved into Camden in 1978, which is a short hop, and then in 1980 I bought a house in Thomaston, and I've been here ever since.

**MH:** And what have you been doing?

**CK:** Well, my life breaks up pretty easily, if I were ever to pull together the resources to write

a book, I think the title would be *Middleman*. I was born exactly in the middle of the 20th century, July 2, 1950, you can't get any closer to the middle than that, and for some reason, and certainly not by design, I can chop up my life pretty comfortably by decades. And so if you take from '70 to 1990, I was a working musician, performing songwriter. By 1990, well I got married in '83 here in Thomaston, had my son in '84, and by '86 he's two years old, she's working, wife working full time, I sort of was Mr. Mom, which was fine because the timing worked out – I always wanted to be there when he got home from school, and I always was.

But I was really getting tired of the, hitting my thirties, I did the nesting thing, I was really tired of playing for drunks, bottom line. It wasn't as much fun as it had been in the '70s, and when I wasn't married I was traveling a lot more further afield and had a really wonderful circuit that I was playing, and I was adapting my performance format to whatever the budget permitted. I could go in and do a four-hour solo gig, just me and my guitar, or I could put together a band, it all depended on how much money they had. And so my name, I made a record, in '78 I made an LP, and that was a big boost, and I played Boston, Maine, and then I had this gig down in the Caribbean, it would keep me six weeks down there, took the edge off the Maine winter.

**MH:** Now, did you produce your own record, or was it done locally, or did you go to Boston?

**CK:** No, it was done in Boston.

**MH:** Was that interesting?

**CK:** Oh, it was a fascinating experience, going back and thinking about it, I wish I had risen more to the occasion. But I just had some timing and luck things, it was a very successful project, I still sell. I just put them on CD, custom make them two at a time or something, and I'm still selling five or six a month even now, I mean the record's thirty years old.

And then I made another record, which was only released in England. I was paid for it, but it was never released, so I had this kind of bootleg collection that I've been also doing as a recording and making available to people, and people who remember me from the road like to get a CD of it. From '70 to '90 that's what I was doing, on the road mostly, and it didn't matter where I lived.

**MH:** Now, you have the one child?

**CK:** One son, he's now twenty-four, and he has two kids.

**MH:** Does he live nearby?

**CK:** Yes, he actually lives here, in this house, that's part of the reason we have all this chaos; he sold his house and he's divorced and moved back in here with his two kids. I love it, I mean I love having the kids around, it's, I'd much rather do that than anything, but it did cause a lot of chaos.

**MH:** It's a very nice big house.

**CK:** It is, we've got plenty of room, and I just have to deal with all the clutter, and I was not prepared for the amount of paper that comes at me daily as a legislator, much of which I need to consume.

**MH:** I really haven't mentioned this: you're a newly elected member of the state legislature.

**CK:** Yes, that's correct.

**MH:** You're in the, which house [*sic*: chamber] are you in?

**CK:** The Maine House, we have a House and a Senate, I'm in the House, first-termer, representing Thomaston, South Thomaston, St. George, part of Owl's Head, and the two island communities of Matinicus and Criehaven, which is an unorganized territory, and doesn't have any voters right now but does have people out there.

**MH:** Criehaven has a year-round population still?

**CK:** I don't know that it has a year-round population, there are no voters, I do know that for a fact. I don't know if people actually live there, I think it's a summer community.

**MH:** We'll come back to the legislature, but I've got you up to 1990 so I, tell me about the '90s.

**CK:** Well actually, we probably should touch on politics a little bit because you're coming at me with, using the name of George Mitchell, and I met George Mitchell in 1974, did some driving for his campaign for governor in '74, that's when I first got to know George Mitchell.

**MH:** And how did that happen?

**CK:** Actually -

**MH:** It's a very small fraternity, people who have driven George Mitchell around.

**CK:** Right, and I didn't do it a lot. And I got to know Larry Benoit, who I haven't seen in years but I noticed him up in the gallery in the House the other day, I don't remember why, what that was about. But anyway, Harry Richardson just died; he was the Senate majority leader in the Maine Senate in the early '70s.

**MH:** A Republican.

**CK:** A Republican. And he became a fan of mine. Whenever I was in Portland, he would

come and bring a crowd to where I was playing. And Harry actually inspired a line in a song which some people know me for, called "Back to Maine," and a conversation that I had with Harry Richardson was actually part of the inspiration for that song, but I'm trying to remember, I guess I didn't write that song til '76 but it was formulating in that whole era.

Harry was the one who asked me to drive with him, because when he was running in the primary for governor in 1974, which he lost to Jim Erwin, he wanted to get away from the hardcore politicians that tend to be the drivers and want to be close to the candidate. He thought it'd be fun to get out with a guy who could just shoot the shit with him and not have any concern about, not have any great stake in the outcome of the race. And he just loved, I remember going to a bean supper or something and somebody produced a guitar, and Harry said, "Hey, you oughtta hear this guy play," and he had me play at this bean supper in Standish or someplace, I don't even remember where it was. But we had fun, and there was one very memorable trip up to the St. John Valley, which is the first time I'd ever been up to northern Aroostook County, or any part of northern Maine. So I got to know Harry, and then he lost the primary.

And that kind of got me interested in politics, and so it wasn't right after that because the primary would have been in June, but I got kind of, I probably didn't do much in the summer time, and then in fall as the campaign started heating up. I met Jim Longley in a bar, Boss Tweed's in Portland, why do I remember that – I remember his brow, and I remember thinking, this guy's a zealot, this guy's a nut.

And George Mitchell was not a particularly hot candidate, but I think everybody, including him, assumed he was going to win because Jim Erwin, the former attorney general, was a very conservative, not mainstream candidate, and was a lousy candidate. It would be interesting to know what would have happened in that race if Harry had been in it, because George might have won, but Longley wouldn't have won. Anyway, so Jim Longley won, but that's when I got to know George Mitchell.

And after that, George asked me to perform at some fund raisers, and I almost always said yes, because it was just a couple of songs, so it was music that connected me to Mitchell. And I got to know some of the people in his crowd, including Mary.

*(an aside)*

So in '74 I really took an interest in Maine politics for the first time. It seems like Dave Emery was running then.

**MH:** That's correct, Dave Emery was running for the, that was when he ran against Peter Kyros -

**CK:** Right, and beat him, because Peter ran over somebody in Washington or something.

**MH:** That was one of the events, yes. There was some, people have suggested there was

some, that Longley, some of the people who came out for Longley voted for Emery.

**CK:** Ah, okay, yes, that would make sense. Anyway, there probably were beverages involved.

**MH:** So you were a driver.

**CK:** Well, I was sort of a campaign helper, and I think why they wanted me was so that I'd be there to pull out a guitar for some of these events, and I did that fairly regularly.

**MH:** Were you in Camden then, or in Appleton?

**CK:** No, in '74 I was still living down in West Newfield and North Shapleigh. And I was rolling out of, in and out of Portland.

**MH:** Now, Harry Richardson lived in Cumberland, if I recall.

**CK:** Yes, that's right.

**MH:** He had a farm in Cumberland.

**CK:** Yes, he was a great guy.

**MH:** He had a wonderful sense of humor.

**CK:** I went sailing with him about, oh, maybe seven or eight years ago now, geez, it was fun; he was just a really good, smart guy, too.

**MH:** So what have been some of your other connections with the Senator over the years?

**CK:** Well I think that pulled me into Democratic politics. I found that I was indifferent; I mean I'm sure I voted for McGovern in '72, but I was indifferent to the politics of things and the partisanship before that. My connection to Harry wasn't as a result of his party, and nor was George, and the more I got to know George, the more I was impressed with his mind and his ability to connect to people, his sense of humor, which didn't come across in his candidacy, but as you probably know, he's got a terrific sense of humor, he's very fast on his feet, and I just really enjoyed him personally.

Not that I spent a lot of time with him, but we had a few other adventures involving music, and I guess it must have been in '84, I'm jumping around, but I have a picture of myself and Linda, my wife, who is very pregnant so it had to be Memorial Day, '84. I think that I got bumped from a flight on People's Express; do you remember People's Express? And as a result of getting bumped, I got a couple of free tickets, wherever they flew, which at first blush sounds pretty good, but then you think about where they flew you know: Topeka; Columbus, Ohio. Well, we

went to Washington. And it was Memorial Day weekend, so I figured everybody was going to be out of town but we'd have a nice little break, and it was free airline tickets and we'd book a hotel. Well, I contacted the Senator's office, and he was just senator, I mean I don't think he was -

**MH:** He had actually been -

**CK:** '82.

**MH:** It would have been '82.

**CK:** Right, so he was two years in.

**MH:** And it was just before he was elected, he'd been senator for a little under two years.

**CK:** Right. So anyway, I contacted the Senator's office, and I may want to come pull out these pictures because this actually might be something for the history project, and you're welcome to scan these photos if you want. It was Memorial Day weekend, '84, Linda is a basketball, Casey was born in September, she's four-foot-ten, and she's big, so she's round. And I don't know why I'm making a deal about it, but we have this picture of George and Linda and I posing, and Linda's got this thing.

Anyway, George didn't leave town, he was one of six senators who probably drew the short straw, or maybe not, he probably wanted to do it because he was still new in the Senate, [and] every year they do something around the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier. In 1984, as it happened, they did a memorial to the Unknown Soldier from Vietnam, which as it turns out was the last Unknown Soldier, because of DNA, interesting little round of connections there.

But anyway, George had us in his office, and we were talking about going sightseeing and he got us tickets to the White House and all this shit that they do for you when you go down there, and he said, "I've got a little ceremony I'm supposed to go to, would you like to come with me?" I think we were going to go out to dinner after that, that's what it was, so we had some time, but he had to go to this thing, he didn't say what it was.

So we hung around, we got a tour of the Capitol, we went back and met up with him and he took us downstairs, and we got in the senators-only elevator, which is weird, and we went down to the Rotunda of the Capitol, still not knowing anything about this ceremony, we just knew it had something to do with Memorial Day. And we walked in, and the first indication that I had that it was a big deal was that TV cameras were everywhere. And then I looked over and saw tape on the marble floor that said: President Reagan, Mrs. Reagan. And then I looked over and bodies started coming in and there were the joint chiefs, and there was the whole, and there was a delegation of House and a delegation of Senate, and George was one of six senators who were selected to stand there, right there.

And nobody was accompanying any of the other senators. I remember there was Dole, there was Thad Cochran, there was, I've got pictures of all this so we can reconstruct who was there. But I remember Dole, who's six-three or something, and Linda who's four-ten, he was very much a gentleman, wanted to put Linda in front of him. Then he realized, with all these cameras around, he's supposed to be the senator, not this short pregnant gal in a blue shirt. So it was a funny moment there.

And then as we were going back after this, the photographs are really something because the entire Cabinet is there, and you can go back, you forget who these people are but there's William French Smith, the secretary of state, it was really pretty wild. And it was the interment of the Vietnam Unknown Soldier, and they made a big deal about it, which they should have. And the president spoke, and we were ten feet away, I mean it was really remarkable.

And as we were leaving the Rotunda after the ceremony, I'm a political groupie, I'm stunned by what I just witnessed, and the senators-only elevator was getting kind of full and Dole, who couldn't have known Mitchell very well at that point, came out of the elevator, he said, "Come with us, George." And George says, "No, I got my friends here, we'll go upstairs, we'll take one of the other elevators." I thought that was a very classy, very impressive thing, and I won't ever forget that, that he, he could have gone with the exclusive-club guys and decided to go take us up there.

I got a little off track, I don't know where you want to (*unintelligible---Mike talks over Chuck*).

**MH:** I'm just curious, I was talking about the 1990s and you started talking about your interest in politics. Did you work on the '82 campaign for him?

**CK:** Not very much, I think I did a couple of fund raisers, because I have some posters up there for Mitchell for Senate in '82, so yes, I did, I was involved in ways. I've got a poster there, we did a concert, we did a show with, I know I did one that I produced with Tim Sample and Dave Mallett, the three of us, and I remember that because of the poster. I probably wouldn't remember it if I didn't have the poster.

**MH:** Where did you do that, do you remember where it was?

**CK:** I don't remember, but the poster would tell us.

**MH:** Quite a group.

**CK:** Yes.

**MH:** Of course, you have a fairly active group of Democrats here in Thomaston, or at least in this county. I've been kind of following some of those folks, Bonnie Post and the Mayos.

**CK:** Oh yes, well she and Mike Mayo were pretty much my campaign cabinet, and I didn't

always see eye-to-eye with them, but they were usually right.

*End of CD One*  
*CD Two*

**CK:** I guess where I was going, the story I thought, I don't know if this has any relevance, since we're talking much more about me than I thought we would, but in '86, Casey's two years old, I am really ready to move on, to change the chapter, redecorate the barn, and I didn't know exactly what I wanted to do, and it really was easy money. I could play two, three nights a week, Friday and Saturday night, never a babysitter issue, and make \$500 a week, clear, and my only expense was gas. So it was hard to give that up, and there was momentum, and I had friends at all these places, and I'd go to North Conway one weekend, and Laconia another weekend and Bar Harbor another weekend, and Portland another weekend, and maybe run down to Boston or something, and I, so gas was it.

And I had all these scenes and all these friends, and they were always glad to see me because I'd disappear for six weeks, they wouldn't have to get used to me or put up with any of my foibles, it was always, "Hey, Chuck's coming, we'll go out," you know. And it was just wonderful work, can't really call it work because I was getting up there and singing, but the smoking and the drinking got to me, and I've never been much of a drinker, and I quit smoking early, and it just stopped being fun, and I had no idea where I was going to go.

And one night I did a fund raiser with Tim Sample and Stephen King at the just-opened Maine Center for the Arts, and it was a fund raiser. In '86 we had some serious flooding and there were a lot of people who were displaced as a result of the flooding, and so Tim and I cooked up this thing and realized we didn't have big enough star power to fill the Civic Center, or the Maine Center for the Arts, it was sixteen hundred seats, so Tim invited Steve King to come. And that's all it took, and we did pretty well, we raised a bunch of money for the Red Cross.

It was fun evening, and when we went out to dinner, for some reason I got off and started moaning and groaning about how it was hard to stop doing it, but that's what I really wanted to do was stop performing, go back to try and do it for the love and the fun and the emotional reasons that I had when I started.

**MH:** What kind of reaction did Sample give to that?

**CK:** He didn't understand it, but Stephen King did. And I think that Joe Brennan had just been elected to Congress, right, because McKernan and he swapped jobs, and Joe Brennan offered me the job, which was a throwback to, at least Kyros and Emery always had somebody working in Rockland, always had a Rockland office, Joe Brennan offered me that job.

**MH:** Okay, so you were doing for Joe Brennan what Tom Bertocci was doing for George Mitchell.

**CK:** Exactly, exactly. Well I didn't take the job.

**MH:** Oh, you didn't, you were offered it.

**CK:** I was offered the job. And I'm wondering if it was Larry Benoit that offered me that job, did Larry work, no, Larry was working for George.

**MH:** Larry was working in Portland for the Senator, that's right.

**CK:** Somebody, anyway [Dave Kerry].

**MH:** Probably it was Connie Lapointe.

**CK:** That's probably it.

**MH:** Who became Mrs. Brennan.

**CK:** Mrs. Brennan. Anyway, I got this job offer and I was thinking about taking it, and it was such a radical difference. And Steve said, "You don't want to do that, you don't want to work for the government, you don't want to be a caseworker, I know you want a salary but you don't want to do that, you're much too artistic, you don't want to do that." "Okay." And pretty soon, we worked it out so that I went to work for Tim, actually, managing him, because he was just hooking up with one of his many wives and didn't want to do any of the business that he had been doing, and he was ready to kick it up a notch, he had a secretary before that, and I was going to really be a manager/agent.

So that's what happened in '86, and then Jim Tierney ran for governor in '86, in the Democratic primary, and he had been a friend, again, mostly as a musical connection, and I went to work in '86 – I think I've got, I'm not certain on my time tables here, but I worked in the primary for Jim when the campaign was in Brunswick; we had an office in Brunswick. When he won the primary, a five-way primary, Pat Eltman came in to run the campaign and she moved the office to Portland, which made sense for the campaign but it did not make sense for me, with a two-year old son, commuting between here and Portland, it just didn't make sense. And I was ready to, it didn't break my heart at all.

I guess what happened was, yeah, when Tierney won the primary, I worked up here for Tierney and Joe Brennan, that's what happened, and then in the fall we must have done that benefit, because I got this beautiful facility in Rockland which is now [Harbor Square Gallery], it's right on the corner, right near the Farnsworth, on the same side of the street, and it's a gallery.

**MH:** Is it the (*unintelligible*)?

**CK:** No, that's the Island Institute.

**MH:** It's not that gallery, not that craft shop.

**CK:** Right, no, it's down a little bit, but it was an old bank, and it was just a fabulous piece of real estate and nobody was using it at the time, so I rented it for the Knox County Democrats, and ran the Tierney, Brennan and local campaigns, and most of my time was spent with Jean Chalmers' campaign, I had run her campaign in '84 for the state senate. I don't know how much of this minutia you want.

**MH:** No, no, this is perfect, this perfect, very interesting to see how this, particularly because understanding how the Knox County Democrats became so strong, it's very interesting.

**CK:** Well that was when Joe -

**MH:** It's not logical, that's interesting.

**CK:** Logic doesn't enter into it. That was when Joe Mayo was really getting geared, he replaced his father, who died, he was elected to the seat that I now hold, it must have been '82, and then he died shortly thereafter. And Joe ran for the seat and won it, and served for many years and then became the assistant clerk of the House.

**MH:** Right, he had a legislative position.

**CK:** Yes, well, and his whole life plan before ALS struck him down was to be the clerk of the House and retire as the clerk of the House, so he was looking at twenty years more of, or thirty years or something, of working as clerk, and it didn't work out that way. But yes, Joe, and Rita Melendy was representing Rockland, after Bonnie Post, who followed Dave Emery. It's all these characters, we're all still, I mean everybody's still around, most of them.

But the summer of '86 I was very involved with politics, and then I was asked to join the State Committee, which I very much got into and now look back and say, what a waste of time that was. But I wound up -

**MH:** Who did you serve with, (*unintelligible*)?

**CK:** Well Tony Buxton was the chair, and then Rick Barton became the chair.

**MH:** Now were they, were the chairs also the National committeeperson?

**CK:** No, the chair of the State Party goes to the National Committee, but there are two elected at-large National Committee people, and I don't remember -

**MH:** Probably Severin, I suspect, Severin was on, Severin Beliveau was on the -

**CK:** Could well have been. Although I think by the time Tony was rising, Severin was

moving back. Severin was very involved in George's campaigns, but I don't remember Severin, in fact Severin ran, maybe he ran for governor the next, no, he ran in the same primary that Tierney ran in, for governor.

**MH:** Right, he was one of the five.

**CK:** And Joe Ricci was another one, and Bill Diamond and -

**MH:** I was out of the country then, so I don't, my -

**CK:** What were *you* doing?

**MH:** I was overseas, working, but I, so I know a lot of the characters but I don't know what they were doing during the, between '80 and '91, or '84 to '91. So tell me, now you're in the legislature for the first time, you're actually an elected (*unintelligible*), how did you like running for office yourself, did it surprise you, was it much like you expected it to be?

**CK:** It was pretty, it seemed right from the very beginning. In the very beginning was when Chris Rector, who -

**MH:** One question I have for you, I want to ask is, did you run against Chris Rector earlier?

**CK:** No.

**MH:** So Chris Rector, who's a Republican from Thomaston, was the House member, and he decides to run for the -

**CK:** Christine Savage is termed out, and I think he got a lot of pressure from the Republican establishment to run for the Senate seat, and he responded to it and had a tough opponent, Dave Miramant, and it was a close race but Chris won. And when Chris told me – the election was in '08, so it must have been in April of '07 – I ran into Chris at a function and he told me that he was going to run for the state Senate, and that's when the wheels started turning in my mind that maybe it's time for me to do this.

Because I was very involved business wise with MBNA, I produced – we haven't talked about my agency, or my company yet, but probably one of the high points of that whole experience was working for MBNA, the credit card bank company that was absorbed by Bank of America, and they had this absolutely bizarre notion of throwing parties to impress themselves. Most corporations throw parties to impress their colleagues and their customers and their vendors and people like that. MBNA just had to impress themselves, and they had to top each other every year. And so they needed national acts and major artists who could work with them, and that's what I did, was I booked -

**MH:** Now did you do it as a contractor for MBNA or did you do it, were you in-house -

**CK:** No, I was not employed, never employed.

**MH:** Okay, and when did this begin?

**CK:** Well, my first involvement with MBNA was back in '88 actually.

**MH:** So when they were first in the Knox Mill in Camden?

**CK:** No, well before that. They started coming up here, because Charlie Cawley had this connection, they started coming up here for their summer conference, and the first summer conference I think was in '88, and because I was doing a lot of off-site stuff for the Samoset at the time, still do, they connected me to MBNA, and MBNA had me do the entertainment, the transportation, which was mostly buses, and boat trips, because I had this other side business of boat charters, which I've since sold.

**MH:** When you use the term off-site business for the Samoset, what does that mean?

**CK:** In those days there would be four- and five-day conferences at the Samoset, and the conferees would certainly want to have two or three nights at the Samoset, but then they'd need some off-campus activity. And the Samoset didn't want to get into booking activities that might take too much money away from the Samoset, so they needed somebody basically to arrange boat rides, that's mostly what it was because we didn't, I wish we'd had the train then. So I arranged boat trips and things like that for groups at the Samoset, and I -

**MH:** From the pier in Rockland?

**CK:** From wherever they wanted to go, sometimes it was out of Belfast, sometimes out of Boothbay, bus tours, trips to L.L. Bean, things like that. The Samoset really didn't want to be involved when people who were staying there went off the property of the Samoset, so I became their go-to guy when the clients asked them to organize something, that was me, and that's how I got involved in MBNA.

And I got very involved in MBNA because they wound up using me mostly for entertainment, because they had all their fleet people and transportation people, but I booked all their entertainment for their parties. And one year I did Ottawa, Dallas, San Francisco, four or five things in Delaware, several things in Maine, and I used to do some pretty fast turning stuff. I mean, you've heard about how they worked.

**MH:** Somewhat.

**CK:** I have some great MBNA stories that I really think I'd like to write sometime, but it probably should be done by interview because I'd get it out better.

**MH:** We could get another project together.

**CK:** Sure, let's do it. But, so, now how did I get onto MBNA?

**MH:** Well, you made reference to your businesses, and we were talking I think about the, you were talking about being in the legislature.

**CK:** Oh, well right, when MBNA went away, they went a-w-a-y, and I staffed up, at one point I had three other people working here besides me, now it's just me and I'm gone all week, which is why it's getting full of shit. In those days I was really screaming with my business, and I was very engaged and there was no way that I could have taken on anything resembling what I'm doing now with the legislature. But I knew that, I never was under the illusion that this was forever, that this was an entitlement. I knew the way they worked that the only thing that was constant was change with them, and just as things had grown to ridiculous levels, so could they go back.

So I've kept very flexible low overhead, I pay rent to myself for this office, so it wasn't a big blow when MBNA went away, there was relief there because I'd done it intensely, sometimes traveling a lot, for a few years. Not a long time, but a few years, enough to be ready for something different, and so when – that's how we got to Chris – and so when Chris said to me that he was going to run for the Senate, he said, "Why don't you run for the House?" not knowing whether I was a Republican or a Democrat. And I said, "Well I might just think about that."

So I gave it about six months, and I looked at it from all different kinds of angles, and then I did an analysis of my business and I realized the part of the business, this was a real revelation to me, that the part of the business that caused me the most stress was worth about \$10,000 a year to me. And I said, well now how could I replace that \$10,000 a year and do something that would be interesting, would involve team work, and wouldn't be a big investment on my part, because at fifty-eight or fifty-seven, I didn't want to roll the dice and get a big investment. And this all sort of came together -

**MH:** Have you enjoyed it so far?

**CK:** I'm loving it.

**MH:** What committees are you on?

**CK:** Judiciary and Marine Resources.

**MH:** Do you feel the committee, your committee placement is appropriate, given your constituency?

**CK:** Oh yes, Marine Resources, it was almost a must-do. Judiciary was a stretch for me, but I

thought it would be a stretch and I was right, but I'm also liking it a lot.

**MH:** How many non-lawyers are there on the Judiciary Committee?

**CK:** Five, out of fourteen.

**MH:** That's probably healthy.

**CK:** Oh yes, I'm sure that it is.

**MH:** Now, have you introduced many bills yet?

**CK:** No, none, I made a conscious decision that I was not going to introduce any bills this year, because the legislation that I was thinking of was all sort of big scale, would have a large fiscal note, and nothing with a fiscal note is going to get through the appropriation process, I mean that's a given, I don't think there's anybody who thinks otherwise. And so I just decided I wasn't going to, I mean there's so many of these stupid little bills that come and go, and they just disappear. And I suppose from an educational standpoint, I do have one, it's not very controversial, I think it's going to pass, but I do have a bill to create an annual Andrew Wyeth Day. I don't expect a lot of opposition.

**MH:** Does your area include Cushing and -

**CK:** Actually, he's buried in Cushing, and no, Cushing is not in my district, but he lived in my district, in Port Clyde.

**MH:** On the island there, Allen Island?

**CK:** And Jamie and Nicky both live in the district, and so it was appropriate that I do this, and I'm glad to do it because I had to go to the legislative council and get it approved as an emergency bill, and when they asked me why I said, "Well, he died after cloture."

**MH:** And they (*unintelligible*).

**CK:** Damn him, so Libby Mitchell was going (*unintelligible*). So, that was funny. Yes, so I do have the experience of pushing a bill through, but I haven't introduced any bills and some of the majority office people wish I had, just because it allows them to put out press releases and allegedly helps me with reelection, but I'm comfortable with my position that I wasn't going to, I mean, some of these bills, making disposable toilet seat covers mandatory in public restaurants. Is this really why we're here, folks?

**MH:** So, of the legislative time that you put in every week, what percentage of it goes to actually worrying about legislation, what percentage of it is constituent service?

**CK:** Well, a lot of it is both, because what I'm experiencing is that the constituent contacts are almost all about legislation, and even though seventeen hundred is the number of bills that were introduced for this session, that's a lot to track. It's a low number, everybody was asked to put in as few bills as possible. And I just didn't feel the obligation to put in a bill just for the sake of putting a bill in, and there are some interesting issues, I had no idea what a crew the small breeders of dogs were, but there's a bunch of bills in there that are going to make life absolutely miserable for these well-meaning people, who are not doing any harm to the planet, and the legislation is intended to go after the puppy mills and the abusive places, but they're also going to catch these small breeders and put them out of business.

So I've been working on some advocacy for them. I've actually been doing, and I really like this part of it, some big picture messaging work on tax reform. We have another, we're taking another shot at tax reform, and the key to it is, if passed, this bill is going to drop the income tax in the state of Maine from eight-and-a-half percent to six-and-a-half percent, which is a significant improvement. Now in order to make up the dollars, this bill would broaden the base of the sales tax, in other words the sales tax would apply to more categories. It doesn't raise the sales tax.

**MH:** There's quite a lot of things that are exempted actually, from the sales tax.

**CK:** Exactly, so there's tax equity in the sales tax, we're not touching property taxes, because the last time property tax reform was tried on a state level, other than the TABOR things, several towns that got big breaks and boost in revenue sharing and things, state revenue things, would just go out and buy a fire truck, it doesn't affect the individual property taxes. So they decided this year not to touch property taxes, that's a municipal level.

**MH:** What are the biggest issues in your constituency?

**CK:** Well, the marriage bill is huge.

**MH:** School consolidation, is that an issue?

**CK:** Well that's big, but we've gone through it. In my district we're already through it, not a lot of people were happy about it, nobody was happy with the way it came down, but we succeeded in consolidating Rockland and Thomaston schools, SAD 5 and 50, so school consolidation is not a big issue in this district. Most of my e-mail is about the marriage equality bill.

**MH:** Do you have any reflections on people like Joe Brennan and George Mitchell, now that you're a legislator, do you appreciate their job a little bit more than you did before?

**CK:** Well see, I always appreciated it. I always thought that it was a fun business, and I met Joe Brennan when he was attorney general and running for governor, the first time – he ran back in '74, too.

**MH:** That's right, and George Mitchell beat him in the primary.

**CK:** Right, and then he wound up appointing George to the Senate. And I guess it was Harry that, and maybe Pat McGowan who, we became buddies, his mother Ann McGowan wrote a number of articles, she's a writer for the, well retired now, but wrote for the Waterville *Morning Sentinel*, and she wrote a bunch of articles about me, and she and her husband Barney were kind of fans and they'd come out to see me and call it work. She'd write an article and get paid for it. And I don't know whether she was freelance or on staff, but I have a bunch of stuff in my scrapbook that Ann McGowan wrote.

And at one point Ann must have called me up and said, "My son Pat is running for the legislature from Canaan," and this would have been early '80s, "will you come do a song?" And so I did a whole benefit concert for him. And then Pat sent me, yes, it must have been '86, or maybe '84, because Pat sent me a twenty-five dollar savings bond for Casey, who was a baby, still have it, we haven't cashed it yet.

**MH:** They don't accrue anything after six years or something – after twenty years, I don't know what it is.

**CK:** And then Ann wrote this really nice note to me, and I wrote back and said, "I'm so glad Pat's running for the legislature." Oh, I know, I met Pat at a very cool party; it was the fortieth birthday party for a guy named McKelvey, Bill McKelvey. Do you know who he is?

**MH:** I remember the name; I don't know why I know the name.

**CK:** He had this beautiful place up on Moosehead Lake, and he threw a hell of a birthday party and hired my band to come up and play, that's when I met Vaughn Meader, who was a real character and I wound up doing some performing and recording with him.

**MH:** From Hallowell, Vaughn Meader was from Hallowell.

**CK:** And also up there was Jerry Nelson, who was one of the original Muppet creators, he was the guy's partner.

**MH:** Henson.

**CK:** Jim Henson's partner, originally, in the very early days of the Muppets, and Al Corey's band played, and Jud Strunk, who was a friend of mine, played, I don't know if Mallett played or not, but we wound up getting the best slot, and maybe because we had drums or something. But we got that great light that comes before sunset, and everybody kind of gathered around, it was just a great party.

And what happened just before we played was, a plane flew over and a bunch of guys jumped

out of it with parachutes and landed right in the middle of the party, and they were this group called Jump, Maine, and one of them was Pat McGowan. And that's when I met Pat, was at Bill McKelvey's party, and we became pals, and I went on later to do fund raisers for him. And there's this one fund raiser, or this one note I wrote to Ann, found its way into Pat McGowan's mail card that he sent out, and it was a caricature of Pat in a parachute, and it's a quote from me that says, "It's about time we sent somebody to Augusta who knows how to take a flying leap." And that became his campaign slogan for that run.

**MH:** So now that you're in Augusta, you know a lot of the faces there, even though -

**CK:** It's funny, it's really amazing, because I run into all these people who haven't seen me -

**MH:** Pat is now the commissioner of conservation.

**CK:** Conservation, yes, and I see him a lot, and Paul Jacques, and I know a lot of people. In fact, the Judiciary was amazing, one of the first hearing days, I didn't know the chief justice, but she knows me through my music, she was a long time fan I guess, so I gave her a CD and we're, I don't know if that's supposed to be public knowledge, but yes. So I've run into a lot of people, and it's really fun.

**MH:** Have you followed, I assume you followed Senator Mitchell's career as it -

**CK:** Oh, yes.

**MH:** Any of it surprise you or -?

**CK:** Well, I think, no. When you look at his, think of the quality of his mind and his character, it shouldn't surprise anybody who ever knew him that he's done as much amazingly good work as he has done. When I first knew him, I would not have predicted that this man would go on to be majority leader of the U.S. Senate, and broker the peace agreement in Northern Ireland and all the other things, Disney board, all the other things that he's done that are really, truly remarkable. When you first meet him or first get to know him, you would not expect that you're in the presence of a man who would achieve so much in his lifetime, and be going strong.

But then when you think of his speech to Oliver North, in that committee, in the Senate, I don't know that there's a time, it certainly ranks up there with one of the high points of my life, when I watched him on television dress down this military crook. And he made me feel so good at that moment. And I know I'm not alone, because I remember people putting signs up with the quote, "God doesn't take sides," I mean that was just absolutely remarkable. And there are many moments, I mean the more I think about it, the more they come out, where George Mitchell's greatness is just right out there on display. And he's so humble; he doesn't come off as the brilliant man that he is, very admirable.

**MH:** Now, you mentioned going down to his, was that your one trip to Washington, when he was a senator, was that, you went down to the Unknown, the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier?

**CK:** Yes, we took, that would have been the only -

**MH:** He comes up from time to time to the legislature; did he do that this year?

**CK:** I haven't seen, no, he hasn't been in the legislature, but I saw him at an event last fall right here, he came and did a fund raiser for one of the environmental fund organizations, and I got some time with him and it was great to see him.

**MH:** Was that at the Samoset Resort?

**CK:** No, it was over at Sarah Rowe's summer house in Cushing. Hannah [Pingree] invited me to go.

**MH:** Do you think you'll run again for the legislature?

**CK:** I don't know. I'm feeling good about the idea of doing it, but one of the reasons that I was so comfortable running was that I had absolutely no fear of losing. I'm sure I would have licked my wounds for a day or so, but I really had no fear of losing, so I can see myself going back and taking a more active role in actual legislation next time. I like everybody that I've met, so far I haven't reached the point with anybody that I said, "What an asshole."

**MH:** Do you think, is it more or less partisan than you expected it to be?

**CK:** Less, much less. We haven't gotten to the biennial budget, but the supplemental budget was a snap, and some people say that's because of the numbers, but I think that the, especially the leadership in the Senate is, the Republican leadership in the Senate is less anxious for a fight, not as confrontational, more reasonable. And I find myself very comfortable with Republicans, I'm not one of these, 'I can't be your friend if you're a Republican.' I get along great with everybody and like everybody.

**MH:** Do you see any other legislators coming through that remind you of George Mitchell?

**CK:** Possibly John Piotti.

**MH:** And what kind of characteristics do you see that's common to the two of them?

**CK:** I would say the combination of earnestness and affability that can sometimes hide a quick mind. And I haven't thought about that yet, that just rolled out when you asked me the question, but, and also Hannah, I would say that Hannah has a lot, Hannah is a remarkable leader. You wouldn't think, you take a look -

**MH:** You're referring to Hannah Pingree.

**CK:** Hannah Pingree, speaker of the House, yes, I'm sorry.

**MH:** Just for the record.

**CK:** Right, right, and John Piotti is the majority leader of the House, and his big issue this year is tax reform, and he's very smart about that, but he's also very unassuming, you don't look at him and say, "Now there's a guy." You look around the room and you see a lot of people who think of themselves, already see governor, they already see themselves as the governor. John isn't that way, I have no idea what his ambitions are. I think either John or Hannah actually could be that, and I'm also very impressed with a freshman Republican named Jarrod Crockett, who serves with me on Judiciary, and in Room 438 on the fourth floor of the Judiciary meeting room. There are portraits on the wall of former chief justices, I think, or justices, and one of them is his grandfather, and he sits right in front of this portrait of his great, great grandfather, and that's kind of neat.

That's one of the things that's really cool about it, I was in one of the retiring rooms on the third floor, and Charlie Harlow, from Portland, was looking at the 103rd Legislature or something, this being the 124th, and he said, "Yup, that's my grandfather, and that's my uncle." And it's just really neat, these traditions, I mean it's really given me a new, a fresh love for the state of Maine, is to be up there.

**MH:** Well, I think we're winding down now. I want to give you an opportunity to, is there something you'd like to, any story that I haven't asked a question that could bring it out, or any reflection on George Mitchell you'd like to offer before we draw this to a close? Some people have thought about something, saying, "Oh, I hope he asks me a question so I can -"

**CK:** Yes, I'm not sure if I've got anything. I probably will think of three or four after you leave. But I have your e-mail, so.

**MH:** Yes, and I'll be back to Thomaston, and we can bring the recorder back if you think of it, it doesn't have to be as long a session as this, but if you do think of something you think would be worth having in the oral history project, we'd welcome it.

**CK:** Okay, okay, I don't, nothing comes to mind right now, but I'm sure there will be.

**MH:** Thank you, Representative Chuck Kruger.

**CK:** My pleasure.

End of Interview