

George J. Mitchell Oral History Project

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Dennis W. DeConcini
(Interviewer: *Brien Williams*)

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Brien Williams: This is an oral history interview for George J. Mitchell Oral History Project at Bowdoin College with former Senator Dennis DeConcini. We're in the Washington, D.C., offices of the government relations firm Parry, Romani, DeConcini & Symms. Today is Wednesday, September 16, 2009, and I am Brien Williams. I thought we'd start about the class of '76, when you were voted into the Senate. That was a year of big changeover in the Senate.

Dennis DeConcini: It was.

BW: And a group of you, new blood, came in. Did you see yourselves as a cohesive group, or were you all just very individualistic?

DC: Well, when you first come into the Senate, my experience is that you're overwhelmed, unless you have been in Congress and you know the Capitol. I didn't, I'd been a prosecutor, a district attorney, and [I also] worked for a governor in Arizona, so [the U.S. Senate] was a little overwhelming. [] The seniority system [] puts you in your place right away, which is fine. So [the group I came in with] was only cohesive in the sense that there was a senator, Senator Melcher from Montana, who'd come over from the House [and] immediately put together a coalition of western senators, and I ended up chairing that [coalition] with Paul Laxalt my second year here, and that made it cohesive.

But to answer your question, from the standpoint of dealing with the other side of the aisle, it was so much easier then. I attributed some of that to the fact that I came from a western state and Barry Goldwater was my colleague there, and Arizona was just moving towards a Republican majority, I got elected about the last time there was a slight majority of Democrats elected, next two times it was a majority of Republicans, so we had a lot more in common with western senators.

But having said that, we had Alan Cranston from California, one of the most liberal senators, and we could work on Western issues. So there was a lot more camaraderie, it seemed to me, than there is today. And I verify that through my friend, I just saw at breakfast today, Orrin Hatch, I've talked to him so many times, we came into the [Senate at the] same time, and we [both believe] [p/o] that it's changed, and it has changed for the worse, in his opinion. [p/o]

So when [I] came [to the Senate], people really went out of their way to be friendly. Bennett Johnston, for instance, from Louisiana, was the chairman of the Senate Campaign Committee.

They didn't give me hardly any money because they didn't think I had a chance, but when I came here, nobody could have been nicer to me than Bennett Johnston, and he apologized, kidding, he said, "God, I didn't think you were going win, or I would have dumped some money in there," and that's the way it was. So it was friendly that way.

And then the other thing [] that was so beneficial to me [was] the man that Barry Goldwater beat in 1952 , [] a guy named Ernest McFarland, who was the majority leader [and] very close to what they call the 'old bulls' here, Eastland and Talmadge and those old fellows that ran the place. There was Russell Long and [Howard] Baker and [Bob] Dole and all the [famous ones]. So he [i.e. Sen. McFarland] called all those Democrats that he knew very well ([he] used to play poker with them and drink with them), and told them, he says, because he was a very dear friend of my father, my father had been his campaign chairman and he was of course my acting, the figurehead campaign chairman, and he called them up and said, hey, Jim Eastland told me this story, so did Stennis, he says, "This is Mac, [] now you got a funny sounding name coming up there from Arizona, you treat him right." And they told me that, because I went around and introduced myself to all the so-called senior guys, and so many of them told me that, that helped me a lot to break the ice.

But overall, to make – and I don't want to take too long to answer your question – it was a different environment, at least in my observation.

(an aside)

BW: Good. '76, the Democratic Party still had shades of McGovern '72 in it, moving maybe a little bit in a different direction. Where did you place yourself in your campaign as you came to Congress?

DC: I ran the same time Jimmy Carter ran, and I was not getting close to Jimmy Carter. Even though he was a reformist, he was for some gun restrictions [p/o], and the big change he was making and talking about health care and stuff, and I came from a conservative state and I never was able to support wholeheartedly the Democratic platform, [p/o] even when my good friend Walter Mondale was running, I just didn't support the platform, I supported the Democrats.

So I ran as an independent Democrat, and that's how Democrats got elected there, with probably the exception of Morris Udall, who came from the southern part of the state where I came from (which was a more liberal community, or more moderate community). But Arizona was very, very conservative, but they were Independent conservatives, they would switch over. The governor that I worked for was a Democrat, and then they [elected a Democrat], and then they put a Democrat back in, and that's the way they kind of do it in Arizona.

BW: So who were similar Democrats in the Senate when you arrived, did you have buddies, politically speaking?

DC: Yes, there was several. One turned out to be Bennett Johnston, he was already here, and

Sam Nunn, two people that I gravitated to, it so happened we just found out we had been in the same fraternity in college; [that] didn't have anything to do with it, but it just so happened that way. And then as other members came in, Jim Exon and [others] that [were] more in the middle of the road, that's where I gravitated to. Orrin Hatch and I sat next to each other and Malcolm Wallop, we were the last three guys in the back row, and we became friends and we all sat on the Judiciary Committee.

And Bob Dole sat on the Judiciary Committee, and he immediately, he's such a bright guy, he immediately could tell I was more of a centrist, and we had Metzenbaum and Abourezk and Culver and Kennedy—and then we had Jim Eastland, who was the chairman. So Dole went out of his way to extend friendship to me. He was [the] minority leader, boy I'm really impressed, and I don't begrudge him for that, but we worked on a lot of bills [].

And at the same time, the more liberal members, such as Ted Kennedy and maybe Dale Bumpers and Ribicoff and some of the ones in the northeast, they couldn't have been nicer to me, and I'm just a little guy coming from Arizona. Even though the seniority system placed where you're going to sit all the time, it just wasn't that way, it was the most friendly thing. The first CODEL I went on, Abe Ribicoff led [it, and] there were twelve of us, senators, my wife and I were the [least senior] ones, and they treated me [very nice] - Except I sat in the back of the plane; so what?

BW: Where did you go?

DC: Well, we went to the Soviet Union then, and I was a big supporter of the Refuseniks because of the many Jewish contacts I had in Arizona, and I had worked hard on that issue and so I went there. And under the Carter administration they discouraged us [from] going out and meeting with these Refuseniks, because they were working whatever they were working way above my grade, and I was the only one that went out. I took a staffer with me, and we found these Refuseniks [p/o], we went to see them, and Dr. Lerner was one of the famous ones that [I met with] —I went to his flat. And we'd go outside and walk so they wouldn't be bugged, because some of them had been in jail and what have you. I did that many, many times in the Soviet Union, but that was my first time, and it was an experience I'll never forget, talking to these people [who] can't just express their religion. I mean, they're not talking about trying to change the Soviet Union [in]to a democracy; they just would like to be able to go to [religious services], and raise their kids in the Jewish religion. And then we met some Baptists that were [in the same boat]. [I] went out of my way to not just make it a Jewish issue, because I wanted to be able to appeal to a greater audience at home.

Traveling with members is a great way to get to know them, when you see them almost twenty-four hours a day, or at least twelve or sixteen hours a day, and you get to see the real side, and their wives, too.

BW: While we're on that topic, did you do CODELs with Mitchell at all?

DC: I did, I did. The first CODEL he went on, I can't remember what year it was, and he was the junior guy there and we went to the Soviet Union. And I was not the chairman of it, and he, he took a picture of me sleeping on the plane and later handed it to me on the floor, and he says, "Dennis, if I don't get your -" (he was kidding of course). "If I don't get your vote," he said, "I'm going to turn this over to the *Arizona Republic*." He knew the newspaper, I'm sitting, snoring – just a terrible picture. So, I'll never forget that.

And then he had – I think Sally was his wife's name, she was with him [p/o] – I think that's the only CODEL I went on with George. I went on a lot of them as chairman, with Steny Hoyer and Al D'Amato of the [] Helsinki Commission, [or] the Commission on Security and Cooperation, the congressional [human rights committee] – I worked myself up there for about four years, Russell Long finally handed it over to me, he said, "I don't need this anymore," so I was next in line so I became the Senate ranking member, or chairman of it and so I traveled all over, mostly under the auspices of the Helsinki Commission. And Mitchell met us once, he was on another CODEL, I can't remember where it was. It was back after we were in London [] and I remember him joining us. [p/o]

BW: The Helsinki Commission, was that, did that consist mainly of members of Congress, or -?

DC: Yes, all members of Congress, all the members appointed by the leadership, it was bipartisan. I think the Democrats had one vote, but it switched back [and forth] to the [] House and Senate. Steny Hoyer was chairman, and then I'd be chairman, and then when the Republicans took over under Reagan, Al D'Amato became chairman on the Senate side, and I can't remember who was on the Republican side [p/o].

BW: And in a word, what was the mission?

DC: A Helsinki Accord was signed [into law in] 1974 when Ford was president, and he signed it in Helsinki. And Brezhnev [] was the secretary general of the Communist Party and the dictator of the Soviet Union, he signed that accord in Helsinki, and he signed for all of the Soviet Union republics []. And I guess he did it because he didn't think anything of it and he didn't want the bad publicity of not doing it, and maybe there was some deal going on to release some prisoners or something, I don't know, but he signed it. And from their standpoint, it became a huge mistake because every time we met with them in any international meeting, the Soviets would send a delegation [], including the UN, [and] they would get beat up for not complying [with the Accord].

And the Helsinki Accord just was a basic human rights [accord], the right to express your opinion, right to practice your own religion, right to read and not be monitored, right to travel and, it was not something revolutionary, because it didn't say you could take up arms and revolt against your government, it was just that your government was supposed to do [what] they signed []. And so it was something that I got deeply involved in, and traveled to the Soviet Union probably seventeen or eighteen times before the Wall came down.

BW: Just continuing on that line a bit, did George Mitchell have a strong commitment to these kinds of issues, foreign affairs and whatnot, and if so -

DC: [] I didn't serve on any committees with Senator Mitchell. First let me give you a little anecdote, and if you don't want to use it, it's fine, but my relationship with George started off in a peculiar way. When he was running for chairman of the National Democratic Party, [] and I wasn't here then - I was the prosecutor and the vice chairman of the Democratic Party of Arizona, and my mother was National Committeewoman [for Arizona]. And she went to the convention, and Mitchell was really a young star coming up, and he was running against, unfortunately, somebody you couldn't beat and that was Bob Strauss, Sr., and my mother had become friends with him.

BW: With Strauss.

DC: With Strauss, so she cast her vote for [him], and George Mitchell came to see my mother and I - my mother told me this story - and my mother really liked George Mitchell, but she had to go with the friend, family friend, [his] son who lived in Tucson. So Mitchell, first time I meet Mitchell he tells me, "Your mother voted against me." And so we used to laugh about that all the time. And when he became leader I said, "I'm sorry, would you like an apology from my mother, she's still living in Arizona." He said "No, it's not necessary."

I didn't serve on any committees [with him], but Mitchell [was] such a bright guy, you could just see it immediately when you got to know him, and where I got to know him probably better than anything else was on the Steering Committee. I was put on the Steering Committee as one of the freshmen - [] there were two of us, just Jim Sasser and I - we were the only freshmen Democrats put on the Steering Committee, if you know what that is, the Democratic Steering Committee. There was about fifteen or sixteen put on by Byrd, [and] because I chose Byrd for majority leader [] he rewarded me, and also helped me get on the Appropriations Committee.

So when I got on there, after a [few years], I started to figure out how to use the members on this committee to trade off the votes so I could get westerners on the Appropriations Committee to help Arizona with the Central Arizona Project [p/o]. And Harry Reid was one that came along, and a couple others [p/o] - I helped Harkin. So when [senators requested to be on the Appropriations Committee] I would argue for them because I had helped them get elected, did a little bit of raising money for them [p/o].

Well when Mitchell came in, I was still on the Steering Committee. Mitchell saw this right away, so he changed the rules [] so the nominations [to the Steering Committee] were made by him, by the majority leader, and then you could come up with another nominee but he started to [take] control. And I thought, 'this guy's really smart' - and Byrd's smart too, [but] I don't think Byrd had figured that out. Mitchell had sat on that committee when he first came here, shortly after, he became the chairman of the Democratic Campaign Committee, and he figured it out right away, he said, "DeConcini and Sasser, some of these young guys are rolling the chairman,

getting who they want on instead of the majority leader,” and when he became majority leader that changed. At least in my perception – with no animosity, just admiration.

But Mitchell was so outstanding, he used to come down to the Senate’s private dining room and sit there and have lunch with us, [p/o] and no other leader did that except Bob Dole on the Republican side, and once in a while Howard Baker. But he’d come down there a couple times a week and sit there, and I explained all that in my book, and he was really good. I sat there and just watched him. And then when he ran for majority leader I didn’t support him, I supported Bennett Johnston, and I really had a hard time there because I really thought Mitchell would be a great leader, and he was, he was just outstanding.

BW: Well that was an interesting part of your book, because you said actually you -

DD: Wanted to support Inouye.

BW: That’s right, and then voted for Johnston, and Mitchell won. So explain that, explain yourself.

DD: Well, Dan Inouye had helped me so much, as had Johnston, they were both on [the] Appropriations Committee, they were always helping me, and we started going to the Virgin Islands with the family at Christmas time, and Bennett Johnston was down there with his family, and his kids went to the same high school [as mine]. So we didn’t become tight social friends, but every Christmas we’d spend a couple days down there with our families on a boat together. So I got to know him and [] so he asked me [if I would support him for majority leader], [] and I just said yes, and then I went to Inouye and explained [that] to him. He was so nice, I’ll never forget that guy, he says, “It’s okay, I understand those friendships.” And then he never held it against me at all, he just came back and helped me so much, and during the Keating thing he volunteered to come testify for me, and Bennett Johnston didn’t, and that’s okay but it just shows you what a great man Inouye was.

And Mitchell, he asked me, and I explained to him and he said, “That’s okay, Dennis, I understand,” he says. I can’t remember if he said, ‘you’re going to wish you did this,’ or something like it, just a little kidding, Mitchell was good at that. Like, well, ‘I’ll get you next time,’ I guess that’s what he said, something like that.

BW: So this was in the conversation the two of you had prior to the election.

DD: Yeah, when he was trying to get -

BW: I would -

DD: I said I didn’t serve on a committee [with Mitchell, but actually] I did serve on the Veterans’ Affairs Committee with George [].

BW: Just going back to the leadership vote, putting myself in your position, it would be hard for me to say to a colleague, I'm not going to vote for you, but essentially that's what you did.

DD: That's what you had to do here, I had to do that the first couple of months here, for [the] majority leader. You had Hubert Humphrey who, my family had worked for him, my brother had advanced his campaign in Arizona and New Mexico, and I knew him []. My mother was National Committeewoman, she knew him, [and she] liked the guy so much. And then you had Fritz Hollings, who I didn't know but [who was] just insatiably nice, and starts sending me money, as soon as I get elected I get a check, and I get another check. And then you had Bob Byrd, who did come forward a little bit before [the] election and sent me a check from his PAC [].

So we come back here, and you have to say no. And that's really not easy, because you don't know how they're going to take it. So George Mitchell certainly never indicated any animosity as a result. I was not one of his lieutenants, and that might have been partly on purpose because I was always a little leery of getting too close to the leadership here. Not that I could have got elected, but I didn't want to be chairman of the Policy Committee or deputy, deputy whip or anything, because I had to go get elected in Arizona so it just wasn't good for a guy like me to do that. And [Jeff] Bingaman has kind of been the same way, just one guy that I know that – at least he hasn't done that, I don't know if that's why [] he hasn't tried to, he wants to be chairman but he doesn't want to be in the leadership because he comes from a somewhat conservative state. [That's my opinion.]

BW: You and Mitchell served on Intelligence, too, there.

DD: And served on Intelligence, yeah.

BW: And for a while you were chair.

DD: I was chair, yeah.

BW: And did being chair of Intelligence put you in a special position in terms of the leadership of the Democratic Party?

DD: How it works, Brien (and you may know this), because he was [the] leader he was entitled to the Group of Eight, as I was, there were two of us on the Senate side and the majority leader and minority leader [], and then on the House side. So we got the briefings, but rarely did we get them with the majority and the minority leader, mostly because of scheduling. On occasion, there would be those briefings, but mostly [] George did not attend a lot of the meetings when I was on the committee, and certainly when I was chairman, which was understandable, that just goes without saying.

He did have a staff person there. I can't remember who it was – [he] was a senior staff person that he brought on the committee. In those days you could bring [your staff] on, everybody got

to bring somebody on, and then after [the chairman] went off, if they were really good the next person would keep them, and if they weren't, they went back to your office. And I can't remember who Mitchell had, but he had somebody there that was really good, because I used to work with him, and my chief of staff there on the Intelligence Committee would tell me, this guy's solid, we can do anything with him, and he'll talk to the leader and what have you.

So, most of the intelligence or joint stuff was not done face-to-face with Mitchell. I do remember him coming to some committee meetings, particularly on [the] confirmation of CIA director, [or the] NRO director, something like that, he would come and vote for it in the committee and maybe make a statement or something, but he wasn't there at the hearings, because he had a lot of other things to do.

BW: On the other side, with him as chairman, or as leader, did he sometimes meet with the group of chairs, or did you not have special standing in the leadership of the Democratic -?

DD: Well, yes, he would meet with [us]. He would have the chairs over to his office, in the conference room, when there was [] major legislation that we were trying to [bring to the floor]. The one that comes to my mind is the Crime Bill, and Biden was chairman [of the Judiciary Committee]. [p/o] But there was only about fifteen or eighteen and I was there, and most of the chairs were there. This was a big deal; they wanted to get all the votes together.

But if you read my book, as I explained, how Mitchell did it, at least with people like me, and other members told me the same thing, is he'd come to lunch and ask your opinion, and then when he gets up he says, "Dennis, can you come around later in the week, I'll call you." Well sure. So then he'd call you over [to his office], and then he would have the key senators on the issue that he wanted to talk to you about, Kennedy and Biden, or Stennis and Nunn or something like that, and that's how he worked. And it was very persuasive. Peer pressure, [but not in] a way that you felt offended that if you don't do this you're going to [be punished in some way].

Now with Byrd it was a little different. When you crossed Byrd, you paid a price. And the man, I say that with great respect because [he] put me in a position to be on the Appropriations Committee [my] first year [in the Senate], and [also to] be on the Policy [*sic*: Steering] Committee, and it wouldn't have happened without him. But later I crossed him, because I wasn't following the liberal line that he wanted to go down on legislation, and you paid a price.

Mitchell never expressed that. If you voted against Mitchell he just, at least with me, he just accepted it. And then if you wanted to, you'd offer your amendment. [If] he was on the floor he didn't say, 'I'm sorry, you didn't help me last week,' as other majority leaders might do, and did, but not Mitchell. He said, "Sure, get in line, here it is, you can say what you want now."

BW: You served with four leaders, Byrd, Baker, Dole, and Mitchell. Sort of describe their styles and how they were different.

DD: Byrd was a master of the Senate even before he became [universally known as] a master

of the Senate. It was his life; he was a very Southern gentleman, but tough as nails and wanted his way. And he usually got it, because when he became leader, I think there were sixty-four or sixty-five Democrats so it was a lot easier. Later it became a lot harder, and certainly when Mitchell was leader it became more difficult because we had fifty-three or fifty-four []. And he was tireless, Byrd was, he just was tireless. And he was a guy that would, I remember during the Panama Canal, I think I put it in my book, he came over to my office to see me, freshman senator, I'm only in my second year here, and the leader never goes to [any member's] office, you always go [to his]. He comes over to see me, so I know this is heavy duty, and he said, don't come [out against] this, because he was trying to get me to vote for it.

And you really respected him because he was so knowledgeable, and he was on the Judiciary Committee at the time with me, on the Appropriations Committee, so he was somebody I had to work with. But he could be difficult if you crossed him, and you didn't want to cross Byrd because he had a memory that didn't let you go. And I just wrote him a letter, because I sent him some pictures that he came out for a fund raiser for me right after I was elected; he, Cranston, and Claiborne Pell came out, and I had these pictures. A good looking guy, too, in those days, as handsome as could be, with his fiddle. And I'm so indebted to the guy that I don't want to say anything negative at all, except that's what I would say: if you crossed him, you could pay a price.

Baker, along with Mitchell probably, were the most outstanding leaders because they were leaders that were willing to take some risks. And leaders, in my opinion Dole and Byrd, they wanted to be sure that everything was going to go the way they had planned, where Baker – and with Panama Canal's the best chance, it was just outstanding to do what he did. That canal treaty would never have passed, not with DeConcini's amendment] or anybody else's, had Howard Baker not decided, 'I'm going to do this, this is the right thing to do.' Those are the kind of people you don't forget when you serve with them.

And Dole was more in the line of Byrd, he wanted things running, he wanted to run the train. And there's no objection to that, and that's how I would probably want to be a leader. And Mitchell was more on the Baker side. So they were all great leaders, because Baker was very kind to me on the Panama Canal Treaty [issue], I talked to him a couple of times because I was wondering why he would be out there, and what do I do, and I'm going to change my mind, he was very nice to me.

And then Dole had such a sense of humor, you couldn't stay mad at Dole even when he voted against you or did something you didn't like. Dole was just a master at using self-deprecation [] and everything else, and he was a master at it. And of all of them, they're all very good, but Mitchell was the best, in my opinion. And I say that with reverence to the other three, because I like them so much and I thought they were all good, but Mitchell was, and I don't know if it's because my father was a judge and I saw some things in Mitchell that reminded of sound judgment and not rushing to judgment, as a lot of people do, particularly political people, including myself. Mitchell thought [matters] out, and when he came to his conclusion, he had really thought it out. I always got that feeling, even if I disagreed with him.

BW: The leader has so many fingers in so many pies, I would think.

DD: Yes, he does.

BW: For many, I guess for the whole time that he was leader, he was not married.

DD: A long time, yes. I can't remember how many years he was here before he got divorced from, I think it was Sally.

BW: I think it was '87.

DD: 'Eighty-seven?

BW: I believe so, just before he became leader. I think I'm right on that.

DD: Yeah, I think he was here four years before he became leader, because he became leader faster than anybody, and it had a lot to do with his success winning the Senate back, because everybody gave him credit for it, everybody. And he worked all the members, but he was tireless, and when we won everybody said, gee, George Mitchell was the guy, and nobody disputed that. Not even Bob Byrd or anybody else would dispute that, yeah, it was Mitchell that did it.

BW: And where was he focusing his energy?

DD: You mean in -

BW: 'Eighty-six, with the successful campaign.

DD: Campaigning, he was raising money and speaking for people, and consequently, he made a lot of friends and that's the way he was, and those friendships you don't forget. Some senator coming out and speaking for you, like Alan Cranston did for me in my campaign, in my primary, because I had some mutual friends, you just don't forget somebody like that. And Mitchell did that for, I don't know, ten or twelve people. [p/o] All the people that won, Mitchell was the guy that not only delivered the check, but they all told me, he came down [to their states] two or three times, he sent people down [], paid for it, I mean he invested a lot, and you don't forget that kind of thing. And probably had he done that for me, I probably would have voted for him too.

BW: Did he play any role in your '88 reelection?

DD: I think he came out for me, I think he came out for me, and I'm sorry, Brien, I can't remember. [p/o] I think he came out just for an event – he came out I think with Bill Bradley [p/o]. [They] made a speech [] in Scottsdale for me, I'm almost sure that was [in] '88. And that was helpful, having the majority leader. The nice thing he did is after I retired. I had a dinner,

they had a dinner for me, and it was a tough time for me, I was going through a divorce. Barry Goldwater came to my dinner and the governor came, and Mitchell came out for my dinner. And he had done some research on how much money I had gotten for Arizona in earmarks, and he got up and he made this speech, he says, "With all due respect Barry, all due respect Mo Udall, and everybody else here, there hasn't been anybody since Carl Hayden," he'd done some research, "that's done more for Arizona." He starts listing all this stuff, and I'm almost embarrassed, but he went out of his way just to honor me.

I'll never forget it, I'll never forget that, because I was surprised he came out. They invited him, and he said "Oh yeah, I want to go say something about my friend Dennis," is what he told my staff. And I'll never forget that as long as I live. He's quite a guy, George Mitchell, and boy, [if] anybody deserves a Nobel Peace Prize [it is Mitchell for all of his hard work on Northern Ireland]. I've been to Northern Ireland a lot of times, and I went there long before Mitchell did, with the Helsinki Commission. Hoyer and I went, and I went on my own and I met with Paisley and I met with Maguire [*sic*: McGuinness] and all these guys trying to say, 'you got to find something better.' I had no influence at all. Of course, I only stayed four days. But Mitchell putting that together, and his staffer, I forgot her name -

BW: Martha Pope.

DD: Yeah, Martha Pope, she was so great []. I didn't know her real well but she's so smart, when she worked here in the Senate and then she helped put that together. So I've been back there, and if you've been to Ireland, particularly Northern Ireland but any [part of] Ireland, they think Mitchell is like a prime minister. I mean honest to God, it's Saint George there, and rightfully so. And I was just there two years ago and it was just marvelous, what a change, and I hadn't been there for about ten years, and what a change, what a change. I mean he's a master at relationships, he's got a knack that not too many people [have] - if he pulls this off in the Middle East, it'll be really a miracle.

BW: Well, back to my question -

DD: I'm sorry, I got -

BW: No-no, that's - Did the fact that he was not terribly involved in his personal life, didn't have a lot of things going on in his personal life free him up to be particularly -

DD: I think so, yeah, I think so, I do. On the other hand, you take Bob Byrd, who had a devoted wife [], I don't know how much Irma ever saw him. He'd always talk about Irma, and he'd bring her to functions, but the guy just lived [in the Senate] and I'm sure many nights he stayed overnight because he just didn't want to go home. So it kind of comes with the territory, but certainly I believe that helped George not [to] feel the pull and stress from that side of the family. What had happened had happened, and it was behind him. And it was before he, he had a couple of romances here that, people would see him, I forgot the lady from the State Department that he was going out with - nice lady. I knew her, and that was always in the Style

section [of the *Washington Post*], but I don't think it interfered with his leadership at all.

BW: He came to the Senate in 1980, when Ed Muskie went over to the State Department. Do you recall your sort of first impressions of George Mitchell?

DD: My recollection is, he came on the floor, [p/o] and then he tells a famous story about, when he's right there and we're having a filibuster and we're all sleeping in [] the caucus room there, and he's next to John Warner, who's married to [Elizabeth Taylor] – [I] just love that story. And I was there when he told that story, maybe not the first time but early, early, before he was leader or anything else, at lunch he tells this story, and I thought, that's a great story. I remember asking him, "Can I use that story?" He said, "Sure." I used to use that story [p/o].

But I met him one or two days right after he was appointed, because he came in in the middle of everything, it wasn't like a normal swearing-in. He came down here, I can't remember, we were having a vote I think the night he came in on something, and I don't know if I met him that night but I met him certainly the next day.

BW: And when did it occur to you that this guy had potential?

DD: Well, it didn't occur to me until [I saw] the following he [had] developed, through being chairman of the DSCC [p/o]. I thought, "This guy is [really special]," you know, because [he had all] these new people coming in – [were running and got help from him, the stories] were just amazing. And you talk to Steve Symms, Steve was very friendly to him, even though he went out and tried to beat Steve, and I'm sure Steve told you the story. And it was hard to not like George Mitchell, just like Steve Symms, one of the most popular, nicest guys, though he's far, far to the right than I am. I was more in the middle [], but he's just one of the nicest guys. And Mitchell had the same kind of infectious capability of friendship. And that's when I knew, when we won the Senate back, long before anybody said George was going to run, you knew this guy was a comer. And he's only been here four years or something like that, and all of a sudden he's [the leader]. It took me twelve years to become chairman of [a] committee, not a subcommittee but a committee, and so here he is, really a player.

And in the Veterans' Committee, he used to come to that committee. I can't remember any particular legislation [he was involved in], but he was very interested in veterans. I never knew quite why, if his dad had been a veteran or what it was, but he wanted to do something for veterans in his state, and I remember him being there and participating. And before he ran for the [leader], before he was the head of the DSCC or whatever it was, he came and did his work there in a manner that just demonstrated, he wasn't trying to show off, he was trying to do something. And I didn't serve on the Finance Committee, he was on Finance, or [p/o] Commerce, I didn't serve on those committees so I didn't see him in operation [except on the Veterans' Committee].

BW: You mentioned sleeping in the cots. It seemed to me that in an earlier time in the Senate that happened, not exactly regularly, but quite a few times. And I haven't heard of overnights for

a long time.

DD: They don't do that anymore.

BW: Why not?

DD: Probably because of George Mitchell, and maybe Dole. Byrd and Baker were into that, 'we'll force this through; we'll stay here.' And Byrd thought nothing of keeping us here three days, and hauling in the cots and it was always a threat for anybody who was going to filibuster, particularly if you're a Democrat, like Abourezk or Metzenbaum or somebody that's going to filibuster, or Allen from Alabama, who was here when I came here, a very conservative Democrat, a problem to Byrd on almost everything Byrd was trying to do for the Carter administration. And Mitchell and Dole, and I don't know this for a fact, but I suspect Dole didn't want to do that either when he was leader. And Baker I don't think had a lot of options, because Byrd was running the show.

But Dole I think didn't want to do that either so he was, 'let's organize it so we'll talk 'til two o'clock and then we'll go home, we'll come back at eleven,' and that's how Mitchell did it, which was a great relief. It still dragged out, [but] people got to do what they want, but you didn't punish those of us who just sat around usually when it wasn't our issue. And you really felt you were being punished, notwithstanding the friendships, you were just, sleeping down there at night when your family was home; [it] just wasn't something which you thought was in the game plan for being a senator.

End of CD One

CD Two

BW: Talk about the role of the filibuster over your period of time in the Senate.

DD: Well, I came here, and [] I thought they should have [a] vote. That's when I got at cross purposes with Byrd, because I would support cloture. I thought, no, we should [have a] vote on these issues, that's what we're here for. And later came where you had to have a super majority for some times, so you can still protect, it takes more than fifty-one votes. And I still have that philosophical approach, that we would be better [off] if one senator [couldn't] go there and hold up the [entire] body.

Not a lot of fine senators before me [or] after me will be contrary to that view; they feel it's an obligation, it comes with the office, it's a duty for your state, and I know all the arguments. And Claiborne Pell was the other guy that had the same philosophy as I did, and I don't know if I got it from him or I just came with it, but I [really admired] Claiborne Pell. He had a son who lived in Tucson that I knew, [who] was in the automobile business, and became a little bit of a friend of mine, and so I liked Claiborne so much, [I] had so much respect for him, and I used to talk to him about this. And he'd done a lot of research on it, in his own mind and what have you, and I don't remember it but he would give me the same reasons, kind of bolster why I [had taken the

position I had]. So I can't remember more than two or three times I ever voted, not [to end] the filibuster, even when the Democrats wanted it. If the Republicans wanted it, it sometimes made it even worse, when we were in the minority.

BW: Another thing I wanted to ask you is about trips home. Did you right through your career sort of have the same average number of trips per year, or did that change?

DD: Pretty much so. When I ran, people didn't go home on the weekend. Barry Goldwater was here, if he went home once a month it was a lot, maybe not even once a month. He had a nice home, a big condo here, and he was bullet proof out there almost. And this guy Ernest McFarland that he beat was the same way, rarely went home. Carl Hayden was the icon of Arizona, he hardly went home, and then of course he was [in his nineties], he couldn't go home the last term he was there, I used to work in his campaigns.

So when I ran, one of the things I said, "I'm going to be here at least two weekends out of every month." And that was kind of revolutionary: my God, this guy's going to come back this often. Which I did, and sometimes three, and some of it was just out of self preservation, I needed it because I wasn't the Goldwater, or even the Udall, and so I started doing that. Well, pretty soon we get, these guys get elected that are going back every week, like John McCain did for a long time, and Jon Kyl did, and J.D. Hayworth never rented a place here, the congressman, he slept in his office. We had a breakfast here yesterday for Jason Chaffetz, from Utah, who I just met, and he doesn't have a place here to sleep, so they go back every weekend.

That was just almost unheard of in those days. You had Joe Biden, and [Bill Roth]. Oh gosh, great guy, nice guy, and they'd just go back every day, which I thought, geez, how would you do that? So it was twice a month for sure, and often three times, unless I was on a CODEL, which would be maybe once a year, at best.

BW: Senator Roth?

DD: Senator Roth, yeah, Bill Roth, thank you.

BW: You had some very important issues that you stuck with pretty much over your career, and I'm interested in your identifying those, and then telling me whether Mitchell was important to your working -

DD: Well, you know, my issues dealt with a couple of areas. One was Western issues, Arizona, dealing with water. That was just important and drummed into me, my father had been on the State Stream Commission, [and he] was a good friend of Carl Hayden, [who] got the Central Arizona Project [authorized], and then I had to get the money, [or] help get the money [to fund the project]. And Morris Udall was on the House side, though he was not on the Appropriations Committee, I was, and John Rhodes, who [] was the minority leader, he was on the Appropriations Committee, so I started off with a little bit of a history here to follow that up.

And that's where I spent a great deal of my time, not just on the Central Arizona Project, but on constituent service in Arizona. I was determined that I was going to be the best constituent service senator, and that's what my staff did [for me]. So whether or not it was a veteran [] not getting their benefits, if you come to DeConcini's office, if the staff thought it was necessary, I'd call the secretary, or the director of the hospital, or if it was an issue with the Interior Department for the Native Americans, what have you, that's where I spent a great deal of my time, particularly [during] my first term – [I was] just determined. And it was very helpful because with the Panama Canal, it turned out to be maybe my lifeline [p/o].

Having been in law enforcement, I spent a lot of time on [the] Judiciary Committee, as well as [the] Appropriations Committee, doing things for law enforcement. One of the things I passed was the pay increase that John Glenn and Ted Stevens, or no, it was Bill Roth, John Glenn; Bill Roth had it in their committee and just never got around to bringing it out. And Steny Hoyer [and I] put it on our appropriations bill, we passed it, and it made me really [nationally] recognized in law enforcement. And I had done a lot of stuff before then, but this all of a sudden – and I always was very favorable to law enforcement so I spent a lot of time trying to improve law enforcement, whether it was Border Patrol or Customs or ATF or the FBI, and those were issues that I really liked, because I [was on] both Appropriations and [] Judiciary Committee[s].

Mitchell was not hands-on with that stuff. I don't remember him ever saying, "Dennis, how come you're putting all this money in [the] Border Patrol?" It just wasn't an issue to him. It was for Fritz Hollings because he had the Appropriations [Sub]committee that actually [funded the Border Patrol]. And I used to put it in my bill, and then he would sometimes take it out of my bill, if his bill came later, because he wanted it someplace else. So those are the kind of things I worked [on].

With Mitchell, on the Intelligence Committee I remember talking to him when we had Haynesworth [*sic*: Aldrich Ames] I guess it was, the spy, I said in my book too, who had turned all the [U.S.] Soviet spies over to the Soviets -

BW: You're talking about Aldrich Ames.

(brief exchange omitted)

DD: [] Aldrich Ames, so I remember talking to Mitchell about it, about how far Warner and I both wanted to pursue this, with the problems between the FBI and the CIA non-[cooperation]. And I do remember Mitchell listening to both Warner and I, and I can't remember if we even had any staff there, we were obviously well briefed, and he was totally supportive. And we all knew what we were talking about here, because we all had had some [knowledge about the] relationship [] problem between the CIA and the FBI and how they dealt with espionage, and the DIA, the Defense Intelligence; they all have a different view of how you should handle contacts and informants and how you do it. And Warner and I had agreed that we wanted to go into depth here and find out why this happened. I'm not sure we did, but we went into real depth.

Before doing that, I had to have Mitchell's approval [] or his concurrence because I knew there'd be resistance from the administration of doing that, from the director of the FBI, director of CIA, director of DIA, the secretary. And Mitchell [said], "You guys are doing the right thing, do you realize -" I think he said something like, "Do you realize what you're taking on?" And Warner couldn't have been a greater co-ranking member because he and I got along so well. And Mitchell asked me a couple times, "How's it going?" And I would, my recollection is I said, "George, if you've got time, you ought to have (whoever his staff guy was) just come over and tell you, because he's in on everything."

And in that course of Aldrich Ames – thank you for remembering his name – we concluded that there was a mole in the FBI. We didn't know who it was – it turned out to be the guy who wrote the book – [I] can't think of his name either now. But we found that out, and I remember so well being sure that Mitchell's staff member knew what we were confronting the FBI with, because we were telling them, "You got somebody there." "Ha, we don't have him." And [p/o] it finally came out, he was a big Catholic and – I want to say Hess, but that wasn't it.

BW: Hanssen?

DD: Hanssen, Hanssen, and we didn't know it was [Robert Philip] Hanssen, but we got into this because we looked at all – they didn't have e-mails then – all the faxes and some of the recorded phone conversations between the CIA and the DIA and FBI, and what they did share and what they didn't share, and we had some pretty good investigators on our staff that were able to trace some sharing of information that only some mole could have, somebody doing the wrong thing in the FBI had done. We tried to present that to the FBI, I think it was Sessions then, and I like him a lot but he wasn't too receptive, but I wanted to be sure Mitchell knew about it, and I presume his staffer did it, because Mitchell never mentioned anything to me [except his support].

BW: And then you took on James Woolsey.

DD: I took on James Woolsey, yeah, James Woolsey was real difficult for me, because I thought he was going to be such a great director, and he started off real good but - That's all in my book, about how he expected us to just put all this money in, and he didn't have the White House [support], and Warner and I thought it should go into human intelligence and he wanted to use it for language and some other things, and so we put it in human intelligence and he didn't like it, he really didn't like it. And I had to go down and see the president about it, because he was telling people I was disclosing classified information, which of course [I was not]. And [National Security Advisor] Tony Lake called me and said, "The president has talked to him." I don't know if that really happened or not, but that was good enough for me.

BW: What about your campaign, I think this is right, against assault weapons?

DD: Well that was a difficult thing for me, because I had been [the] NRA Man of the Month in Arizona, and I just didn't think there was a big problem. And after, not Columbine, [but] the [tragedy] in Sacramento, there was a high school up there and a shooting, in 1988 or something

like that, and I got the pictures of it. So I immediately talked to the NRA, because I had good contacts with them, and I said, "We need to do something, you need to do something." And because they liked me, I think, and I'd been such an ally, we really worked on it for a long time. And they finally just told me flat out, "Sorry, Senator, we lose members if we go along with this. And now, we're not going to call for your resignation and try to run you out of office, because you've been a good friend and we know where you're going here" [p/o].

So I had a staff guy who was just really good, and we took this on, in a way that we thought was really responsible, and as you know, it passed by one vote. And to her great credit [Sen. Dianne Feinstein took it over and, [with no reluctance, I] was glad to have somebody [take on the issue], because I was leaving and I wasn't going to be around. And she took it over, and Biden really got on board. Biden was okay with what I was doing, but Biden really got on board when he saw the persistence that [Sen.] Feinstein had and the beginning success, and ultimate success, she had over in the House. [p/o]

But I was extremely proud of passing that bill, and as I point out in the book, some of the people that changed [their positions] on it, [like] Bentsen and Nunn, who'd never voted for it, and then of course Al D'Amato doing it just out of friendship for me, it passed by two votes I think. And those are the kind of things you just [] remember when you have a success like that, because you have a lot of failures.

BW: Was Mitchell, what was his relationship like with the NRA and on these issues?

DD: Well he was for this bill, but he had a good relationship with [the] NRA, to my recollection. I don't remember why or how, but he was not a target like Kennedy or Metzenbaum were every time they spoke. And I don't remember them demonizing Mitchell. Maybe later in his career they did, because he did support all these gun control bills, but my recollection [was that] he had a decent relationship with the NRA. I don't know if that's accurate, Brien, but that's my recollection. But he supported my bill.

BW: On trade, you might have had some differences of opinion with George Mitchell, like what about NAFTA?

DD: I was big on NAFTA. I can't remember where Mitchell was, if he was even here when Pete Wilson was [serving] from California. But Pete Wilson and I took on Mexico, and we had a resolution condemning Mexico, and I think prohibiting them from flying airplanes in here or something just dramatic, and it passed [the Senate]. I don't know where Mitchell [was], if he was even here then, and Tip O'Neill was still here so maybe Mitchell wasn't here, Tip O'Neill just said, it's not going anyplace []. But Mitchell was more of a free-trader, is my recollection, he really believed in [it], he was on the committees that had some [jurisdiction].

I was more of a protectionist, until NAFTA came, and I was convinced by a lot of different people but mostly Arizona constituents that this was good, so I switched camps there. And as I became chairman and more knowledgeable in the international field, mostly due to [my service]

on the Appropriations [Sub]committee for Foreign Affairs, [and] on the Helsinki Commission, which really gave me a wide perspective of what foreign policy was, rather than just Arizona's view of it.

BW: Were you with George Mitchell when he met with Bush One and Clinton White Houses very often, and if so, what did you witness?

DD: I went down there at least once, if not twice, with Mitchell when Clinton was there – because I was only here for the first two years of Clinton, and it was on health care and I was just kind of one of the guys that Clinton or Mitchell called down there. I was not a real player, I was just there and I had objections, but I was not one of the leaders there. And I'm trying to think about Bush, I don't remember with Bush. Now [George H.W.] Bush, the first Bush, I really liked. He asked me to be the drug czar and what have you []. This guy [i.e. George W. Bush] was not a chip off the old block, the second Bush. I do remember going down there, I don't know who I was with, and I remember Mitchell being there, there were ten or twelve of us, but I don't remember what [the issue] was. Do you know what it was? No? You don't either, you didn't come up here?

BW: Were you surprised when George Mitchell said, "I'm not going to run again?"

DD: I was surprised. I sat next to him in the caucus, I had already announced [that I was not going to run], and he sat down, we were having lunch, and I'm sure he told other people, and he said, "Well Dennis, good luck," and one thing and another. And somebody was speaking and I said, "George, what are you going to do?" He said, "I'm going to retire." I was just taken aback, I thought he was at the pinnacle of his success, I was quite taken aback. I said, "George, you're going to retire, why?" He says, "I just got to, I got to move on, I got to make some money, I've got to make some money, and I love this job but," he said, "it's time for me to move on." Because I don't know how old he was, but he was younger than I was, and I was taken aback. And he did make some money.

I remember meeting he and his [friend], I don't think he was married yet, the tennis player, down in Miami at a Super Bowl game, we were at the same restaurant there. And they were sitting next to us, so we kibitzed a little bit, and I never got to know her very well but she seemed like such a nice, nice lady. And they had one or two children? Two?

BW: Two.

DD: Two, yeah.

BW: Conservative Democrat, is that an endangered species these days, or not?

DD: Well, it depends on how you play it. It just depends how you play it. If you're lucky and you're smart, you can be a conservative Democrat. If you're unlucky and you're not smart, you—same thing with the Republican Party—you become an Arlen Specter. So you have to

pick your battles, and you have to keep your home base strong for you. And I was able to do that, a lot of other senators came from conservative states and they were Democrats, Sam Nunn and people like that. And of course the South is a little bit different, but still the same way, Jeff Bingaman, you can – no, I wouldn't say it's over. I think we never called ourselves conservative. Middle of the road, centrist Democrats, we never said, 'oh, we're conservative,' because we didn't want to do that, unless we were in a Republican conservative environment, [then] maybe we would.

BW: Were you ever invited to join the Republican Party?

DD: Oh yeah, I was, by Strom Thurmond, and Bob Dole just mentioned it to me, that he understood that Thurmond had talked to me about it, and I told Thurmond, I said, "I couldn't possibly do that." And he said, "I promise you, you'll have the same committee, the same staff, the same offices, everything," he says, "you won't lose [anything]." And Thad Strom out here is his nephew, and worked for him for a long time. And Strom liked me, I liked him too, we used to get along quite well, and I told him, I think I put that in my book too that my dad is a Democrat and he would never forgive me, he's a conservative Democrat and he'd never forgive me. And he said, "Yes he will." He says, "I was a Democrat and I changed, they forgave me, my parents forgave me, my family forgave me," he said, "then after forgiving me, they supported me."

But I never gave it any real thought, I was just raised that way, and I believed in I guess I like to think the core principles of where I believe the Democratic Party is, and that it's more for the middle-of-the-roaders and the working people, not that that's always the case, but I just was raised that way by a conservative Democrat.

BW: When you announced that you were not running again, were you pretty certain that Jon Kyl would succeed you?

DD: Oh yes, I knew he was, and it would have been a very tough race, but I actually like campaigning, and I'd already raised, I don't know, close to eight hundred thousand dollars, and I knew it would be probably my toughest race after my first one. And he had taken Keating money as I had, he hadn't gone through the same rigmarole and public hearing that I had, but he had taken money and failed to [report it timely] – we'd already done research on him, we'd hired a research firm for Kyl, and we already had all the stuff on Kyl, his avoiding the draft and all the nasty things you can come up with, including Keating, and supposedly visits he had with Keating and all that kind of stuff, so I was prepared for Kyl – I would have been prepared for Kyl.

BW: Did you play a role in the election of '94?

DD: Big time. It didn't succeed. A guy announced against me, and his family, his father Bill Mahoney was a long time friend of my dad's, contemporaries forever, and he'd been ambassador for, I can't remember where, Ghana I think, and just a great guy, he supported me when I ran, there were other Democrats running, my first race. His son announced – first of all, his son and I

met, and his son was a friend of mine and said he wouldn't run if I ran, and I had some witnesses there, staffers, but he says, "If you don't run, I'm going to run." So then when the Keating thing came along, he announced he's going to run. So I was determined I was still running then, I said, no, I'm going to beat him but it's going to really be not only expensive, because I'll get hurt in the primary, and then I'll have to face Kyl.

So people went to him on my behalf saying, "Dick, you said you wouldn't run, and you can't do this to DeConcini," and he hemmed and hawed but he was still out there for it. So when I announced, I made sure I had a candidate, and I had a one-term congressman who I brought over to the Senate a couple of times, and got Kennedy to talk to him, got Mitchell to talk to him, and he was my candidate and I worked hard for him, raised money for him, and Kyl beat him pretty bad.

BW: So he actually won the primary.

DD: He won the primary, and I really worked hard for him, yeah. We beat Mahoney, [but] had he known [] that I wasn't going to run, and waited, he would have been the nominee. And I don't know that he could have beaten Kyl, but he would have been a good candidate. He'd been secretary of state, and he was a very liberal guy, he really [was], and he kind of wore it on his sleeve, but he was a reformist.

BW: And so your man beat him.

DD: My man beat him, and his [Mahoney's] sister worked for me, which was very embarrassing for his sister, and she was such a nice gal. And so I got her a job at ATF, when he announced I called the director at ATF, who I'd worked very closely with, and asked him if he'd help me. He said, "Sure, sure," he hired her. I think she's just retired from there.

BW: How much did Keating have bearing on your decision not to run again?

DD: In retrospect, probably more than I realized. When the Keating thing first started, I actually thought about just resigning. I'm no different than anybody else, I love the attention and the glory or whatever you want to call it, and the success, but I didn't really get into it for that and I just was so taken aback [at] the press reaction to this, as to all of us, not just me, I just couldn't believe this. So after I got over that, then I had a spirit, no, yeah, I'm going to overcome it, I'm just going to run and I'm going to show them. I know how to campaign, I know how to raise money, and the Senate didn't condemn us or sanction us, though it was just as bad with twenty-three days of public hearings and bad press. So I was really quite determined to do that.

And I had a lot of personal problems in my life, my wife and I and what have you. And I remember so well deciding, I was sitting on the couch looking at my schedule in '93, the autumn of '93, looking at all the fund raisers I had to go to. I had this great fund raiser, just [a] fantastic guy, and I looked at that, and I think it was September of '93, I said, "I don't want to do this."

And I had all the reasons to back that up, after I had talked myself into, ‘you’re going to do it and you’re going to win.’

And when I ran for office people asked me, young people come and ask you, ‘Should I run, and how do I prepare myself?’ I said “Well, I can only tell you what I do. Every time I run for office, I psychologically prepare myself: can you take a defeat, can you really take it?” Financially, the answer was ‘yes.’ But emotionally, can you [] really take it? I used to weigh that very heavy every time I ran, except when I knew, I was in the Senate, I was going to beat these guys that ran against me, I didn’t worry about that. The first time I ran, when I ran for county attorney, and when I ran the last time, [it] really came down to that. I meditated about it, I believe in prayer, and I asked for help. And I came to the decision, yeah, I can take it. If Kyl beats me, I can live with that, [I had] served eighteen years, yada-yada-yada.

So when I changed my mind, what I remember – and how much Keating had to do with it, it’s hard to say – what I remember was the challenge of raising, at that time I think my fund raiser said I had to have three-and-a-half, four million bucks. And we’d already raised over seven hundred, eight hundred [thousand], and we had enough fund raisers out there for two or three million. But I just [] didn’t really like fund-raising, even though I was good at it, [because] I had to turn on a different mind set. And [my fund raiser] was so good, because he’d help me turn it on, and give me the script and who to talk to and how their kid was in college and everything, so I was good at it but I didn’t like it. And that was a telling moment.

And so to answer your question, how much latent Keating effect was, it’s hard for me to be objective because I don’t know. Because I think I had gotten over the disappointment and the damage to me personally that was caused by Keating.

BW: When the Keating story broke, and through the whole process, what was the role of the Democratic Party in terms of support or non-support, and did George Mitchell play a role?

DD: No, [he did not get involved, that I am aware of]. I went to George. Because – I’m trying to think who told me, some Republican senator told me, I don’t think I put it in the book. Anyway, told me that McCain had gone to Dole and asked Dole to put pressure on the committee to get him out, to get Bennett to drop him and to get the three Republican members to press to get McCain out. I don’t know if that’s true or not, but that’s what I was told. And so I tried to verify that the best I could and I got a couple of people [who] said ‘yes,’ and I remember asking Dole and he said, “Yeah, I’ve talked to John,” that’s all, and he says, “I can’t tell you anything about it.” So I don’t know, but -

So, I had not talked to George Mitchell, so I went to see George and talked to him, and I wanted him to intervene for me, and he said no, he couldn’t do it. He said, “Dennis, I don’t think you’re going to get hurt by this, and I know you didn’t do anything wrong,” but he wouldn’t intervene, which was probably the correct ethical thing to do [p/o].

BW: Why was it correct and ethical for him not to -?

DD: Well, from his perspective it was. From his perspective, because the Ethics Committee was to sort this through, and that's why we had an ethics committee and that's why you had three Republicans, three Democrats, so it was not lopsided for one side or the other, and you had a former [state] Supreme Court judge who was the chairman of it, and this was what he believed, and I firmly believe [in] it and I respect that. I just felt like, you're grasping for a lot of lifelines when you're up there and they're accusing you of something and you don't think you did anything wrong.

BW: So any subsequent discussion of the Keating episode with him?

DD: Well yes, because afterwards there was a lot of stuff leaked during that time, and I went to Mitchell, and people went to Dole, and they agreed that it was egregious that during that hearing so much stuff was leaked, and the press loves that, as you know. And so they appointed a guy, a New York lawyer, to come down and investigate that [] -

BW: Fleming.

DD: Fleming, thank you. Boy, you have a good memory! Fleming, and I remember talking to him at great length. And I thanked George for doing that, but his conclusion was nothing that George could hang his hat on, or Dole.

BW: Is there life after the Senate?

DD: Oh yeah, I talk about it all the time, it was the best job I ever had in all my life. I don't want anybody to ever feel sorry for me, but I never worked harder in my life, never. And I was a workaholic, [but I] never worked harder. But I enjoyed, I wouldn't say every minute of it, but I enjoyed it, [there] was such a diversity [of issues]. And when I left, it took me a while to, yeah, how do you say it, come down to earth, or get back to who you are.

I came from a father and mother that always kept your ego expectations down, they supported you and encouraged you, but—'don't get carried away with yourself.' [p/o] And it took me more than a year before I finally realized, it's over. And there wasn't anything I was trying to do, except every time I'd read the paper and every time I'd see a former constituent that would have a complaint, I wanted to go help him. And I couldn't do anything for him, I'd tell him how to go do it, but I would read the paper and I'd see some egregious thing and I'd go introduce a resolution two days later, doing something about it. Or some constituent would meet me at a county fair, talk to my staff, within a week we'd be on top of the case. And I liked that, and that's what I missed because nobody calls you. They do call you, for the press, just for, but not like when you're in the midst of the game, so to speak. And that took over a year before I finally let loose.

And when I came to work here, my mother said, don't be a lobbyist, God, whatever you do, don't be a lobbyist. And this good friend of mine, a Republican judge that I had put on the court

my first term, but he's a dear friend of mine and I got a lot of heat from Democrats for putting him on, p/o] and he said, "Dennis, you don't want to be a lobbyist. Go start a foundation, or go join the Foreign Relations Club and be the chairman of that in a couple of years in New York, or go with somebody who's not lobbying, be a teacher, be a professor."

So I thought about that, although I had already started here, I did go teach at the University of Arizona, and I found that to be really hard work. Really hard work. I liked it, but it was hard work. And I actually got paid for it. And when I came here, knowing these people that I work with, it was such a easy going place it was like a—I can't say a vacation—but it was so nice to go to work. There was no stress. I made appointments, I could get in to see people, I had to wait a year, and once in a while I didn't get what I needed but it was no stress, and then clients were coming in, I was bringing clients in, I was starting to make really good money, I still traveled all the time, I've gotten my personal life taken care of. And so, it's just a great life after the Senate, just a great life.

And I've thought back about it. Assuming you could have gotten reelected, how many more terms would you have run. I've asked myself that so many times, and I say well, I would have run one more term because I would have been sixty-six, or sixty-five or sixty-four or something like that. But I've seen so many people get stuck, and I've found many times that, "Dennis, think you would have become a Joe Biden or Pat Leahy or Orrin Hatch?" or people that I really like and that I call them friends, though I don't see much of them anymore, and just stuck in the Senate, which is not something I would want to do. So I'm very comfortable with where I am, because I'm having a great life and I'm making more money than I probably am worth.

BW: Have you had any contacts with Mitchell since the Senate?

DD: I've seen him a couple times. I called him when Clinton, after I left the Senate, I called him when he was majority leader, to help me to become ambassador to Italy, which he responded very nicely. We both left the Senate, I called, he said he'd called the White House and he'd talk to Pat [Griffin], oh gosh, the guy who was the floor leader, staff leader who worked for Mitchell, was down there doing government relations. And Mitchell called me back, he said, "Dennis, I think you're going to get it," he said, "they were very positive down there." And I said, "Gee, thanks George," because I wasn't sure he'd want to go out on that thing, but he couldn't have been nicer about it. He said, "Oh, you'd be a perfect ambassador to Italy, perfect, yeah, I'm glad you called me." And he made that call and he called me back.

And after that I called him once regarding the NFL. He was doing some investigation of the NFL – or maybe it was the baseball, he was doing something -

BW: Baseball, steroids.

DD: Yeah, baseball, he was doing something on steroids, []. And Segal [*sic*: Selig], [] was a guy I had dealt with on sports, because I [was chair of] the Patent Subcommittee and Copyright Subcommittee and [*substantial revision*:) I'd done work with the NFL and the American

Baseball League—I don't remember what it was, can't remember. I think it had to do with the Players' Sssociation, which I had some relations with.]

BW: Bud Selig.

DD: Selig, Bud Selig, thank you, used to own the Minneapolis Twins [*sic*: Milwaukee Brewers].

BW: I think he still does.

DD: Does he still? Yes, [he] sold it to his daughter or something like that. But anyway, and I talked to Mitchell about the sports thing, and I don't know if I just said how are you doing or, I didn't have any axe to grind, but I remember talking to him about it. I don't know if he would even remember. And then I've seen him once in a while at an event, the convention and that sort of thing.

BW: Do you have any inkling why you didn't get the ambassadorship?

DD: Oh, I know exactly why, yeah. I know exactly why. There was a guy named [Thomas M.] Foglietta, a congressman from Pennsylvania, from Philadelphia, who I knew, and Rendell was mayor of Philadelphia, and he had a big falling out with the public employees, and this is when he was mayor. And he wanted to, now he was getting ready to run for, he was chairman of the Democratic Party, getting ready to run for governor, he wanted to get the seat that he could give and have some influence to give to a[n] African American [], because it was an African American district, and he pushed the White House big time. And I had a couple of confirmations from people, finally one person who used to work for me down there confirmed it for me (she was a staffer on my Judiciary Committee) that he went to the president and convinced him that this would help him. And of course Foglietta got the [position]. They had a primary [in the district], and a white guy was elected, just like Foglietta. [They] would run three or four blacks, or two or three African Americans, to split the votes, that were friends of his. And this would happen, that's the first time.

BW: I was struck in the [] chapter in your book where you mention a lot of your colleagues, and George Mitchell was not among them, and I was just wondering what -

DD: The only reason is because I think I talked about him, I know I did, about his leadership under "Operations" so, when you write these books, and you've probably been involved in them, I wanted a five-hundred- or six-hundred-page book, but the publisher and the guy that was a historian [and coauthor who] helped verify and edited what I wrote said, "You can't do more than three hundred pages, that's it." And I would have much liked to have gone into many more of the personalities of people, and more of the foreign travel, because I had such experiences with Mrs. Gandhi and with her son, and with people all over the world that I had an opportunity to meet that I didn't get into the book. And that was the only reason George Mitchell wasn't in [that section], because I'd already talked about him.

BW: I know you've already said this in several ways, but how do you think George Mitchell ought to be remembered?

DD: Since his tremendous success internationally, even if he doesn't put it together in the Middle East, that to me is a gift that Mitchell has left all of us. Bringing peace to Northern Ireland, as close as that country is, and the U.K., with the United States is something that will be remembered historically. And to me, he did a lot of other wonderful things, including being a [great] judge. I read some of his cases, when he was a judge, just out of curiosity. He was a great writer, I thought. And my father was a judge so I had a little bit of comparison.

But what he did [in Northern Ireland] was something that I didn't think could be done, and he told me, I talked to him after it, that he wasn't sure it could be done and had many misgivings, and the books and things that I've read about it, it was a masterful. So if it's any one thing, then that would be what I would think. And I have a glimmer of hope he might do something in the Middle East. He's a talented, talented guy, he is just, really is a talented fellow. He's not just smart here, but people smart, he's just really good.

BW: Anything left unsaid today?

DD: No, sir, thank you. Probably took longer than you want.

BW: No, no, not at all, thanks very much.

DD: I'm glad, thank you for asking me, because I never was one of his close friends, but I like the guy so much, I just admire him so much.

BW: Thank you, Senator.

DD: You're welcome.

End of Interview