

George J. Mitchell Oral History Project

Special Collections & Archives, Bowdoin College Library, 3000 College Sta., Brunswick, Maine 04011
© Bowdoin College

Ellyn C. “Lyn” Ballou
(Interviewer: *Michael Hastings*)

GMOH# 185
January 21, 2010

Mike Hastings: The following is a recorded interview for the Senator George J. Mitchell Oral History Project, an activity of Bowdoin College. The date is January 21, 2010, I’m Michael Hastings, the interviewer, the subject of our interview today is Lyn Ballou. We’re holding this interview at Mt. Ararat High School in Topsham, Maine, where Lyn teaches French. Welcome. Could you begin people by stating your full name and giving your date of birth.

Lyn Ballou: My full name is Ellyn, E-L-L-Y-N, Clemmer, C-L-E-M-M-E-R, Ballou, B-A-L-L-O-U, date of birth 12/8/44.

MH: Place of birth?

LB: Paterson, New Jersey.

MH: And your mother’s full name and your father’s full name.

LB: She was Hazel Hendrickson, no middle name.

MH: Would that be H-E-N-D-R-I-C-K-S-O-N?

LB: It would. And my father was John Gerhard Clemmer, Jr.

MH: Gerhard, could you spell that for me.

LB: G-E-R-H-A-R-D.

MH: And Clemmer is C-L-E-M-M-E-R.

LB: My middle name, which was my maiden name. And he was from Pennsylvania and she was from New Jersey.

MH: Tell me a little bit, can you give a little portrait of your mother and father? What did your father do, and what was his background?

LB: My father was a star academically, who became an engineer and spent his life working for the Philadelphia Electric Company in their construction division, a devoted family man,

although I am an only child. My mother was a poster housewife from the 1950s. She had studied to be a dietician at Drexel University, where they met, it was a five-year program, she met him during the fourth year, she got married after it and didn't finish.

MH: What kind of engineer was your father?

LB: I believe he trained as a civil engineer, but he would say he did mechanical engineering work.

MH: And for a private company?

LB: No, for Philadelphia Electric Company, so building -

MH: Which is a regulated utility.

LB: It is a regulated utility, and he helped in the construction of generation plants, including their first nuclear plant.

MH: So were your early years all spent in Pennsylvania?

LB: They were, and I was in public schools there until ninth grade, when I went away to a Quaker school about an hour from home, and then after that I went to college in Vermont, and I've lived in northern New England ever since.

MH: Tell me about growing up in Philadelphia, or was it a town outside of Philadelphia?

LB: It was in the Philadelphia suburbs. It's hard to give place names, Philadelphia and Pennsylvania are not organized by towns in the same way we are, but it was the western suburbs. And it was a time when rock 'n' roll was starting to happen, and schools were still pretty strict about what kind of clothing you wore, and you were expected to work seriously. Classes were huge, I think classes were thirty or thirty-five, so only those of us who were really interested in learning and probably for whom it was relatively easy, we were the ones that got the education I think. There were a lot of people who slipped through the cracks.

MH: Would this have been a diverse student body?

LB: In the Philadelphia suburbs it was public school, it was white, it might have been diverse from the standpoint of some different white ethnic backgrounds. There was one area in the township I lived in which had an African American population, because the rich people on the Main Line had employed African Americans on their estates, and so they had to live somewhat close to where they worked, and so there was one town that had a considerable African American population. We all came together in junior high and high school, in the same school, but there was not much social mixing.

MH: And when did you go to the Quaker school again?

LB: In ninth grade.

MH: Ninth grade, so all four years of high school were in a Quaker school.

LB: Yes.

MH: Was that a day school?

LB: Both day and boarding, I went as a boarder, it was about three-quarters boarding.

MH: And where was that located?

LB: It was in Bucks County, in Newtown, which is near New Hope, Pennsylvania, near Trenton, New Jersey, it's north of Philadelphia. And the boarding students were, some were from different countries, but most were from the Philadelphia area, the New York area.

MH: Coeducational?

LB: Yes.

MH: Is that standard in most Quaker schools, coeducation?

LB: I don't know a non-coeducational Quaker school.

MH: Now, were you a member of the Society of Friends when you were growing up?

LB: Yes.

MH: When you think of Quakers in the United States, you think of Pennsylvania. Do you have ancestors in Pennsylvania who were Quakers, or is it just because of that's where you lived and that's what they did?

LB: Well it happened for us because my mother had gone to George School as well, and when she and my father were looking for a place where they could go and bring me, we went to I think it was a Presbyterian church, because he had gone there, and I didn't like the Sunday school. So then they tried a Quaker place, because she had run into Quakerism at George School, and I did like that, and they ended up going there and liking it themselves. Then we found out later, she was actually a descendant of John Woolman, who is a famous Quaker abolitionist from New Jersey.

MH: Woolman, how would that be spelled, W-O-L-L-M-A-N?

LB: W-O-O-L-M-A-N. He has a famous diary that is often read in lit courses.

MH: So what was George School like, tell me about it.

LB: Oh, I loved it, I loved it. The education was very individualized and supportive, but rigorous, and I loved having roommates and the whole scene of getting along as a community. And the special angle that we had, I think, of being taught that we should care for others besides ourselves and grow up to do some good in the world, and be tolerant of others and all those things which I would like to think I've done since, but probably not always with the same degree of success. So I was sad to graduate, in a way, and college was a bit anticlimactic, but then I got over it and fun in college too.

MH: What interests did you develop when you were in high school?

LB: Oh boy. Well, I'd always been musical, I took piano lessons for a long time and that stayed with me. The girl who became my best friend, and I, loved classical music, played it in our room, tried to go to concerts when we could. And of course we liked all the things that teenage girls like, from clothing to guys to talking about other people, and trying to get out into the real world. We liked cities, we liked going to art museums. I wasn't particularly athletic but I did play sports, we all played sports and enjoyed them.

MH: Any particular teachers who stand out from when you were there?

LB: Lots. My favorite teacher was my French teacher, who's probably still a role model. She was a Russian who, I don't know why she ended up in this country and had to work in a boarding school, it probably wasn't a happy story, but she was very dynamic and fun to learn French from. And I had a math teacher who was experimenting with new ways to teach math, which have since I think, at least at some point they became the way most people taught math, and since then who would know, because I haven't taken math since high school. They've probably come up with even newer ways, but he was an experimenter and that was fun.

There was a history teacher who was Welsh, who opened us up to the world from the point of view of someone who was not American – wow – and he had been in Burma in WWII, he had some wild stories, which he had probably made up. And sometimes if we were really lucky, we got to get in his sports car and ride with him to his stone Pennsylvania farmhouse and spend time with him and his family. So those are the ones that I think of right now. I had an English teacher for several years who was devoted to us all, and excellent teacher, a woman who pretty much devoted her life to the school.

MH: What were your considerations when you were thinking about the next step after high school?

LB: Well, I loved languages, which I haven't mentioned yet, other than liking to take French. I had started with Latin, and after a couple of years I figured out that it was helpful to my English

but it wasn't going to lead me to work in the modern world. And I was thinking of a U.N. translator or some other way to use language, and so I started the French, and I hoped to learn Russian, which in the 1960s was a big deal, and I think someone started teaching Russian there but I didn't have a chance to take it. So I was very interested in Middlebury College because of its reputation for languages, and because my family vacationed in Vermont near Middlebury, and that was really an easy choice for me and I never considered anything else.

MH: So did you spend summers in Vermont when you were growing up?

LB: Yes.

MH: Did you have a lakeside place, or what kind of -?

LB: Yes, we stayed on Lake Dunmore, you may have heard the name in the news recently, some snowmobiles just went through the ice over there, they lost two people. It's in Salisbury, Vermont, which is just a little south of Middlebury, and we started going there when I was maybe ten.

MH: So did you end up in Middlebury?

LB: I did.

MH: Tell me about that. Did you go right from George School to, right to Middlebury?

LB: Yes, I went right to Middlebury. First of all, it was a heck of a lot colder than Pennsylvania, but I did start to learn how to ski, and I got into the life of the college, but always felt it was a little bit – I'm not thinking of vocabulary very easily today. I had been focused on the urban life of Philadelphia and New York and was very intrigued by them, and Middlebury was in the country, and a lot of the students were not very world educated, they were New England kids who had gone to school in New England, expected to stay in New England and didn't have much vision of the world, and I missed that aspect of George School a lot. And also, then it turned out that the reputation Middlebury had for languages at that time really came from their summer school.

MH: Bread Loaf?

LB: No, Bread Loaf is a writing school for English teachers and others, but the summer school in languages, which is pretty much on the campus, I think still is, was really where they had their reputation for immersion programs and excellence. The winter school just varied department to department, and the French department there was no better, or no worse probably, than at many other schools. It was okay. From what I know today of language teaching, they were still teaching French as if it were Latin. We were not speaking or hearing it very much. The era of language labs (do you remember those?) had just started coming in, and that was kind of it for trying to get us to understand or speak, and it was a very clumsy, off-putting way to do

it.

MH: So you were reading Simenon novels.

LB: You know, I'm not even sure we did that. I just remember we took a lot of grammar, and we heard them speak a lot of English, though it was French natives who were there to teach us. And I didn't really make a lot of progress until I did my junior year in Paris.

MH: Was that fun?

LB: It was great.

MH: Tell me about that.

LB: The bad part was that I had met my husband at the end of sophomore year, and so in some ways I didn't want to go. But the money had already been paid and so I went, and it was a great year in terms of really getting to see another country, really starting to see -

MH: A whole year, the whole academic year.

LB: Oh yes, I did the whole school year.

MH: So you didn't have, it wasn't just one semester.

LB: No, no, no, no, not in those days, you took a boat over, the boat took seven days, because it was a cheap boat, and we spent six weeks in Tours, which is provincial city in the chateaux country, it's a gentle place with the purest French where we could kind of get up to speed before we went off to the big city. Then we spent the whole school year there taking courses in various places. In fact, I took a course at the Institute of Political Science on Africa, and it was taught by some man who was involved advising the government, and sometimes he wouldn't be there because he was off in Africa doing something.

MH: So you weren't attached to any one French university.

LB: Well, in Tours we were attached to a branch of the Université de Poitiers; they happened to have a branch in Tours and they were kind of supervising what we were doing. And then in Paris we were supervised by the Sweet Briar plan, which is in Virginia, in the same building where there was also a Hamilton College plan, there was a Middlebury graduate school plan, various American supervisors of what we then chose to take at the University of Paris, which included the Sorbonne, it included Sciences Po, which is the political science. I took a music course, I took a theater course that they had arranged for privately – that was probably one of the best things, because we went to the theater all the time and then talked about it.

MH: Was your French ability by your junior year adequate so that you could really jump in

with both feet?

LB: It certainly wasn't when I first arrived, but by the end of the time in Tours I was competent to understand it and express myself, for what I needed. And then it just got better and better. And I remember taking midyear exams and I took one at the, it was some guy from the Political Science Institute, and he didn't think much of what I knew about Africa, but he turned to me and he said, "But boy, your French is really good." And that was after half a year. He was probably just trying to make me feel better. Fluency is a graduated thing, there's definitely levels. By the end of the year I was very fluent. Now, was I fluent enough to hold a philosophical discussion? Understand it, yes, but- But I could understand movies and TV and all those fast things.

MH: So any particular events during that year that you recall, a particularly special story that characterized it for you, your favorite story about the year in France?

LB: Oh well, just to perhaps put the era in perspective, of course my now husband and I were writing each other literally every day on those little airmail letters, little writing, and so I looked for a letter just about every day, and there was no other communication, of course no computers. There was the phone, but it was the Transatlantic Cable and prohibitively expensive, so our parents, as a Christmas present, gave us a call. And unfortunately, we didn't realize that three minutes or whatever that minimum price was, you really have to hold it to that or it goes up quickly. So we had this really nice call which was probably all of five minutes, and I think it cost something like sixty dollars, in 1964. So what is that today, six hundred dollars or whatever.

MH: So you come back and you finish, you have one more year at Middlebury. Were you in the same class, you and your husband?

LB: No, he had graduated; he was two years ahead of me so he was at graduate school in Brown that year. And during, I think, the spring of that year we decided that we would like to get married that summer, and had to get my parents' permission, both because in Pennsylvania I couldn't have gotten married without it, I was too young – we could have gone someplace else but we didn't want to, and because we wanted them to pay for my last year at Middlebury. My mother says it's the only time, when she got that letter, that she called my father at work and said, "Come home, you come home." But they agreed, and we got married that summer and he found a job in Middlebury while I was there to finish my senior year.

MH: Had he finished graduate school?

LB: He did one year in economics and decided that wasn't for him, and after one year in Middlebury, after I graduated, I found a job as a legal secretary and that sounded intriguing to him so he decided he wanted to go to law school, and we moved over here for that.

MH: And tell me, what's his background? We ought to actually add for those who are

listening or reading the transcript of this interview, Lyn's husband Peter was going to be with us but was unable to come, so, but what was his background, was he from Vermont or Maine?

LB: He's from Lexington, Massachusetts, and he's a great skier and that was a big attraction for him at Middlebury. He was an economics major, always been interested in politics. I think among the things that attracted us to each other were, we both had a commitment to the Civil Rights movement, a love of music, and general lack of direction about what kind of jobs to get.

MH: So tell me, so he comes over to Maine to go to law school.

LB: Right, at the time his choice was the University of Maine School of Law or Albany. Vermont did not have its law school yet. And we liked northern New England a lot, it sounded a lot better than upstate New York, and so we chose coming over here to down and out Portland, very down and out.

MH: Portland wasn't then what it is today.

LB: Indeed, it was pretty grim.

MH: Where did you live, where did you find an apartment?

LB: On the law school bulletin board he found an advertisement for one in South Freeport Village, which if you're acquainted with it at this point, a really great and coveted place to live. It's a Portland suburb, a Brunswick suburb, it's really a village, it was a village for people who built boats, even had some company houses. And the houses are attractive, it's right on Freeport's harbor, and at the time there was this little, it wasn't exactly a shack but it was a humble little cottage that someone once told us was a prefab from Montgomery Ward, that we rented as the down and out law student and the wife who was going to support him.

MH: And so did you stay on, you did legal secretary work here as well?

LB: I did. It turned out that whoever I was working for – we spent a year in Stowe, we went from Middlebury to Stowe to over here – and the lawyer I worked for in Stowe knew Gerry Amero, who is a lawyer at Pierce Atwood, who's from Rumford, and I think they were law school classmates or something. And he called Gerry and Gerry said it looked like they needed somebody at Pierce Atwood, so I came over and interviewed and got a job at Pierce Atwood.

MH: So take me from there to meeting George Mitchell, how did you get to know him and work near him or with him or whatever.

LB: All right, well when we arrived here it was '68, I remember packing and hearing of the invasion of Czechoslovakia, my husband started law school, I had this job at Pierce Atwood, and that's pretty much what we did for the next three years while he was in law school. He went to law school, I worked for Pierce Atwood. I wasn't very happy working there. The legal

community in Portland, at least at that law firm, was very different from the informality of lawyers in Vermont. The particular lawyer I worked for was, I'm sure he wanted to be a nice guy and a pleasant guy, but I didn't enjoy working for him and I couldn't wait to get out of there as soon as I didn't need to keep earning that salary, which wasn't particularly good. In fact, when I started, there weren't any benefits. And I'll say this for my boss, he at least, when he figured that out went and had them pay for my health insurance, because I had none otherwise, and I couldn't afford it. So he did that, which was kind.

So, I can't remember how I ended up working for Joe Brennan when he became county attorney. I think it was a connection through Gerry Petruccelli, who was a law school professor at the time, one of my husband's favorite professors, one of everybody's favorite professors, and we knew them socially, the Petruccellis, and Gerry must have known that Joe was looking for somebody and suggested me to Joe. I interviewed and got that job, which was one secretary in an office of, oh, five lawyers I think, some of them part-time, with really an awful lot of work to do directly for policemen coming in with complaints that needed typing, that kind of thing. But it was informal again, and a lot more fun than anything I had been doing for the last three years.

And one of the lawyers that worked there was George Mitchell, part-time, and I think, as was the case with Don Lowry, who was also working there, and Chuck Remmel, and David Pomeroy, they were all having a chance to learn how to do trial work by doing trials. So they would come in and be given a list of the cases to be heard that day. And some of them might get settled, some of them might get dismissed because witnesses weren't there, some of them might get plead to, who knows, but some might go to trial. And they would have a chance to do trials both in district court and superior court, maybe even with a jury.

MH: Would they have read the case files before that day?

LB: Good question. An awful lot of it was 'by the seat of the pants,' My memory, which I think Arthur Stilphen would be a lot sharper on the division of work there, my memory is that George Mitchell didn't have to do much of the 'seat of the pants' work, that he was probably assigned trials that they knew ahead were actually going to go to trial, something more major. He was probably at that point more experienced, or more able if there was, say, a financial crime which required some preparation and analysis that would be beyond the what happened in an assault kind of situation, that he might have been assigned to cases like that, where there'd be some preparation.

And that's probably why - I don't recall seeing as much of him as I did of the others, because he probably did that kind of preparation elsewhere. He couldn't get help from me, because I had no time whatsoever to help with the normal things a lawyer would expect from a secretary, like typing up instructions for the judge. I had no time for that, it was all I could do to keep up with the complaints coming in, the phone calls, fielding the witnesses. I think I had to subpoena the witnesses, I'm pretty sure I did. After I left that job they hired two people, and then pretty soon another. And I just went home without having done the job a lot of days, I mean things left undone.

MH: What was the place like, was it several rooms, or where was it located?

LB: It was in the back of the County Courthouse on the second floor, behind the really nice Superior Court room that has a wooden ceiling that looks kind of like a parquet ceiling. We had the office where there was room for two secretaries, where you would come in the door, Joe's office was between there and a window, then there was another office next to that where Arthur Stilphen did the scheduling and planning, and I think there was a second desk in that room where a lawyer could talk to a witness or interview somebody. And then there was third small office, and then I think there was like a small kitchen or bathroom where the coffee was.

MH: Was Arthur Stilphen a lawyer?

LB: Yes, Arthur Stilphen was in my husband's class in law school, and by then I think he had graduated, just graduated. He might have worked there during summers while he was in law school. I don't know if he campaigned for Joe for that office, I don't think so, but after that he was very involved in Joe's campaigns.

MH: I mean, I recall that he eventually was the commissioner of Public Safety, as I recall.

LB: Yes, appointed by Joe.

MH: Right. Were most of the people that you worked with full-timers, or was there a mix of full and part-timers?

LB: Arthur was full time; I don't think that any of the other lawyers were. Joe theoretically was, and Joe did do some of the trials, and he did the grand jury, I'm almost sure. But he had a lot of important things to do in terms of community relations. Talking to people about how their case was being handled maybe, or talking to other lawyers who insisted on seeing him because they weren't happy with the way one of his assistants had already started to handle the case and thought they had some personal influence with Joe. And then I'm sure some of the people involved in politics, in Democratic politics that Joe had known, I think he'd already been in the legislature, would come in, Harold Pachios would be in there. I'm trying to think who else at that era.

Joe used to joke about George, and you've probably heard this, that he was the best, was it second assistant or third assistant district attorney he had. Because he was not the first, Don Lowry was the first assistant, and I can't remember George's title for sure. And I believe that David Pomeroy and Chuck Rimmel were part of a federal grant, so they were separate. I think Joe had, he was the head honcho, and he had two assistants, Don was number one and George was number two, I think.

MH: How long did you work there?

LB: I worked there until I went to law school, duh, I finally figured out, hey, I was the legal secretary who thought this was an interesting area, maybe I should go. I went after three years I think, I think I was there three years. And George wasn't there that whole time. George was from Jensen Baird, which was a firm kind of like Pierce Atwood. In fact, I can remember him saying when he met me and heard that I had worked there, "Oh, they're such a nice bunch of guys." And I remember thinking, 'Yes? You should try being a secretary there.' Not the same lens that I had. That's fair enough; what would he know about that?

MH: And so you went off to law school after three years.

LB: Yes.

MH: Did you go full time?

LB: Yes, that's the only way you could go there.

MH: And did you get your law degree?

LB: Yup.

MH: And so how many French teachers in the state of Maine have law degrees?

LB: I don't know, but there's an awful lot of teachers who have been lawyers, and a lot of other professions who have been lawyers. And I stayed at it for a long time, I made a lot of good friends. Some of the work I did was really worthwhile, and some of it was very frustrating.

MH: How long did you practice after you got your degree?

LB: Well, the first year I wasn't practicing in the usual sense. I clerked for Sidney Wernick, who was a judge for the Maine Supreme Court at the time, some considered [him] the smartest we ever had. It was like another year of law school, even better, because you see, if you're going to analyze law and put on a case, the end point is, if it were appealed, what's going to happen. And so I was getting that, I was at that end of cases, seeing what judges on the high court are looking at, so: what you need to be careful of and prepared about when you're doing cases.

MH: So his chambers were in the County Courthouse as well?

LB: Yes, he was on the third floor, in front. A wonderful man, a Renaissance man; that was one of the favorite times of my life, the year I had working for him. And I had a summer, too, I think I worked one summer between second and third year in law school maybe for him, and then afterwards was his, they had clerks for a year is how it worked. And then after that I went to Murray Plumb & Murray.

MH: Yes, I know that firm, I know the firm.

LB: And I was there ten years, five of which, the last five of which as a partner.

MH: Let me just, I want to ask a general question. There were female lawyers in the '60s, but there weren't many of them as a percentage of the whole. What was it like to be a, I mean was it difficult being a female lawyer in what had traditionally been a profession dominated by men?

LB: It was the beginning of women being able to be lawyers in the normal sense. It was very controversial. My law school class was the first one with any numbers of women, and I think there were maybe ten or fifteen of us out of seventy. Those are very rough numbers, easily checked, I could be way off. And there were feminists in my class who felt very strongly how we needed to fight to be treated equally, and were offended at all of the male trappings of the profession, calling each other brother in court, how all the judges were men. You go in courthouses and behind the bench you will find the lawyers' room and the lawyers' toilet, singular, and it's often a urinal.

So it was a tough era, and as we were graduating there was huge controversy in Portland about, could they hire someone like me, who was married to another lawyer, without having a conflict of interest all the time with whatever entity my spouse was involved with? And this was taken very seriously, and was thought to probably prevent the hiring of many of us by the big firms. At which point I think people like Judge Wernick got involved and said, "This is ridiculous," and some of the people with that opinion backed down and we did start to get hired.

Murray Plumb & Murray was not as stuffy as some of them would have been about that, they considered themselves forward looking guys, they were young, they started that firm in their thirties, and they had some pretty go-go clients and so I don't think it bothered them at all. In fact, they probably welcomed taking on a woman as a cool thing to do.

MH: Did Murray Plumb & Murray focus on one, I mean I'll preface this by saying that when I think of Pierce Atwood I think of lawyers representing large Maine corporations, a lot of paper companies, a lot of paper land holding interests, doing a lot of workmen's comp law on the side of the corporations as opposed to the employee. Did Murray Plumb & Murray have a niche that they focused on, municipal law or anything like that?

LB: I don't think you could say they had a niche, because the three senior partners all had some areas of specialty. Steve Murray came from having worked in the Department of Environmental Protection, so on land use, he was able to represent developers pretty effectively. And Peter Murray had a varied background. He, I remember, was involved with the ferry service, Casco Bay Lines, helping get that set up and financed properly, he was into, he did some education law and had some pretty controversial cases because of one client about that. Peter [Plumb] did a lot of real estate law. But all of them were interested in taking cases from little people, also taking cases from any corporation if they could, in terms of paying the bills, but I'm not going to say they really had a reputation in any particular area that I recall.

MH: Were you still practicing law at Murray Plumb & Murray when President Carter came into office and George Mitchell became U.S. attorney, in '76?

LB: Yes, and actually, just to follow up briefly on the question of women as lawyers, even though the treatment got better in terms of the lawyers themselves, you still had a lot of issues with clients who were not comfortable with a woman lawyer, and that's probably still true today.

MH: I've heard, let me just interrupt, I've heard that women often get, women who are lawyers often get pushed into family law issues and things like that. Was that something that you found?

LB: That happened to me toward the end of my time there, because that was an area I could get clients easily. And getting clients is the name of the game in private practice, you can't just keep doing the work that another lawyer has attracted if you're going to be of much use, or at least you have to be able to attract some on your own and that seemed to be an area where I could attract it. And then doing that kind of work was very, I'm not going to say demoralizing, but you burn out to some extent with it, and that was why I was very happy to do something more constructive, like go and train to be a teacher. But that was many years later.

When George became U.S. attorney, who appointed him for that, Carter?

MH: In early 1977, I think it was January or -

LB: I did some defense work in federal court, as pro bono work, or you would get appointed, Judge Gignoux would be looking for people to appoint, and Peter Murray had been Judge Gignoux's clerk, I think maybe Peter Plumb had also, I'm not sure. But we had that connection with Judge Gignoux so we tried to do our bit. And I don't even remember the name of the case or what it was about, but there was some case where I made a motion and George came in and made short work of that. He was very effective, he was absolutely right, and it's fairly typical of doing defense work that most things that you try to do are a long shot, so he was very competent and business like in that particular contact, that I recall.

Before that, though, I think it would be before that, when he and Joe Brennan ran against each other in the primary for governor – that was before Carter, wasn't it, or was it after?

MH: That was, it was in, the gubernatorial primary was in June of 1974, and so that's two years before President Carter came in.

LB: If my husband were here, he's usually good on those dates and memory things that I have to -

MH: So we were kind of going from Nixon to Ford, and Watergate was in, most of the hearings were in '74, that's when Nixon resigned.

LB: And of course that was the election where Longley actually got elected, so the winner of the Democratic primary lost, and that winner was George, and that was after George was no longer at the County Attorney's Office, I'm sure. And coincidentally Peter and I were in Ogunquit; remember, you used to have to go to Ogunquit for a good meal out, because Portland had nothing. So we were down there at l'Hotel Hibou, that Owl Hotel, and he and his first wife, Sally, right, were there at another table. And he got up and came over and asked for our support in the primary, at which point we had to say we were sorry but we had already agreed to support Joe. And we chatted a bit, and that was the only contact I remember, other than in the County Attorney's Office before that, seeing him as a U.S. attorney. I don't think I ever ran into him as a federal judge. I might have, but he wasn't a federal judge very long before Joe appointed him.

MH: It was under a year, and that was in 1979 to '80.

LB: Right. I remember, and when the Irish American Heritage Center last year honored Joe, and George sent a video, and I was struck with what George said, that Joe had called him up and asked him to do it, and hadn't asked him anything else other than to do his best for the people of Maine. No favors, nothing. Would that happen today?

MH: Let me ask you, do you have recollections of him as a gubernatorial candidate, I mean other than this incident in Ogunquit, do you remember anything about that campaign?

LB: I remember Longley with the pencil, what he was going to do with that budget. Well, I'm sure we supported George at that point and voted for him, but no, I have no memories.

MH: Were you and your husband active in Democratic Party matters at all?

LB: Not really, like we did work, when Joe was running for things we would go to fund raisers, we would help distribute brochures, things like that, but that's the only things we've really ever done that I can recall.

MH: Now, your husband during this time, was he in private practice as well, or was he working for government agencies?

LB: He worked for the County Attorney's Office. Actually, we overlapped there a little bit, and that was when Henry Berry then became county attorney. It might have even been Henry who hired him, I can't remember. And so he did that for a while and then – I know what happened, Henry got defeated, and so Peter looked for another job and he got the job at the Public Utilities Commission, which really interested him because it allowed him to go back and use those economic, he had been an economics major in college, allowed him to use those financial and economic skills, what he had left, and develop them, which actually in his work I think they needed two or three years before they're worth much. It's very difficult work, regulation. Of course now we're deregulated to a large extent, and he's dealing with Fairpoint.

MH: All these years, you're still in Freeport, you have lived in Freeport the entire time?

LB: We're not in the same house, we're on the same street. We bought a house down the street before I went to law school, or about the same time, so '73 I think.

MH: So what finally broke the camel's back and took you from law to teaching?

LB: I was tired of doing family law. I had been part-time for a long time, because I wanted to be home with my children.

MH: How many children do you have?

LB: We have two. And because of the children, I had been in school volunteering and seeing what teachers do in classroom[s] and gaining a lot of respect for it, and thinking well, maybe I'd like to do that, and then hearing there was a need for language teachers, hadn't used my French really at all, other than for traveling a little bit, and thought, 'ooh, I could get back into that.' So I did. It was a lot of work to get back into it.

MH: Did you go to the University of Southern Maine?

LB: Yes, the ETEP program, are you familiar with that?

MH: I'm not familiar with it, no.

LB: Extended Teacher Education Program, it's training for people with midlife crisis who want to become teachers, and you do it in about eight months. Very intensive, mentor teachers' work in the classes, late afternoon, evening.

MH: And your first teaching assignment was where?

LB: Well in the actual ETEP preparation I interned in an elementary school in Falmouth, and then at Freeport Middle School, thought I was going to be teaching little kids French, and then started to realize that those were the jobs they cut first, I better try high school. And then I did a long term sub at Wiscasset High School, and then I finally got this job.

MH: So how long have you been at Mt. Ararat?

LB: This is my seventh year, and it may get cut next year.

MH: Oh dear, my gracious, I mean how many French teachers do they have? Or they may cut French out altogether, do you think?

LB: No, it's a question of in the department, who is most junior. So even though I'm old, I'm junior, which would be too bad, I really enjoy it, I love the language, I love working with kids this age. It was just like going to France, or traveling from France to Belgium or Spain and

learning about people in other areas, it's another group of people to learn about. How many people will say to me, 'oh, how do you like working with today's teenagers?' Well, I love it, but that's because I spend time with them and have figured out a little bit who they are. It's different, they're different.

MH: Now, I assume that this high school, like other Maine high schools, they get George Mitchell scholars, right?

LB: Well, that's a wonderful devotion he has to education, the funding that he's done for that, the institute in Portland. What else has he done, a lot, right?

MH: Well it's mostly through that institute, but he has not only the scholarships for Maine high school students, but he also has, there are graduate opportunities, there are opportunities for people to, who are in college to go to Ireland, for example, they've broadened it somewhat, and they do a lot of studies, I understand, about aspirations of high school students and what motivates them.

LB: Yes, because the big push is: why do so few, I mean why do so many not finish high school, why do so many who do finish then not get anything further that they really need to get for the work that they could do, and just that whole cycle of trying to break that. He's been out there, and that's great. And not seeing George Mitchell again really since that time, it has been fascinating to watch someone go from Portland, Maine, to become the majority leader of the Senate, and then pull off that work in Ireland the way he did, and now know that he's making that effort in the Middle East. Wow, that is wonderful work. But I guess he has a light side with baseball, right? That's fair.

MH: Well, thank you very much for this, this has been very nice, and if you happen to, sometimes when we do these interviews people begin to kind of think back on these things and they'll think, tonight, you know, after dinner you might think of some story that you might like to share, please get back to me if there's some additional thought that you have, or something you think might be useful to have in the library.

LB: Okay, I will.

MH: I do appreciate it, and thank you for taking this time.

LB: Okay, my pleasure.

End of Interview