

George J. Mitchell Oral History Project

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Laurence E. Pope

(Interviewer: Andrea L'Hommedieu)

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Andrea L'Hommedieu: This is an interview for George J. Mitchell Oral History Project. The date is May 15, 2008. I'm here at the Hawthorne-Longfellow Library at Bowdoin College with Laurence "Larry" Pope. This is Andrea L'Hommedieu. Could you start, Mr. Pope, just by giving me your full name?

Laurence Pope: Yes, my name is Laurence Pope, and Laurence Everett Pope is the middle initial.

AL: And where and when were you born?

LP: I was born in New Haven, Connecticut, on September 24, 1945.

AL: Is that the area in which you grew up?

LP: No, my father was studying Japanese at Yale University at the time, and so that's why we were there. But I grew up around Boston mainly, Braintree, Massachusetts.

AL: And what was Boston like in those years that you were growing up, in the '50s?

LP: Yes, this is growing up in the '50s, and we lived in the suburbs in Braintree, in a tract house, and everybody had two children and one dog and one cat, and preferably one girl and one boy, that was sort of the standard issue. And everybody was white and mostly Anglo-Saxon Protestants and – there was a great sameness, it was the 1950s in America.

AL: Where did you get your feelings about going into the Foreign Service? Was part of that growing up wanting to learn more about the rest of the world, in terms of the small vision that you had?

LP: I don't know, perhaps. Maybe it was something. I went to Bowdoin College here, this fine institution, as an undergraduate, and I graduated in 1967, and when I graduated I couldn't think of anything else to do really, so I took the Foreign Service examination, which then and now was a written and an oral examination, and for some reason passed it and so decided to go into the Foreign Service.

It was 1967, though, and people like me were being drafted into the Vietnam War, and I didn't

particularly care for, I didn't like that prospect, so rather than waiting around to be appointed to the Foreign Service, I went into the Peace Corps and I spent a couple of years doing that, and at the conclusion of that couple of years joined the Foreign Service. It was in the end of 1969.

AL: What were your experiences like at Bowdoin, in terms of were there professors that really influenced you, or were you a good student?

LP: I was a mediocre student, and I, it was, you know, it was a time in America when it was, and Bowdoin was a very different place then than it is today, of course, all men, dominated by the fraternity system, and I fell into that sort of situation quite easily.

But I went off in my junior year to France, which was not something that most people did in those days, I think there was one other person in my Bowdoin class of 1967 who left the college. So that got me out of Brunswick and it gave me a little bit of a, I was delighted to get out of Brunswick and delighted to get away from Bowdoin and happy to be in Paris for that year.

Came back my senior year and I was really quite, really quite disaffected, I would say. Angry about the world, angry about the state of things, and happy to find somebody who would hire me in the Foreign Service.

AL: Now, the Foreign Service, you began that in 1970?

LP: Yeah, at the end of 1967, '69 rather, because you know, I'd done the Peace Corps, a couple of years in the Peace Corps, and then joined the Foreign Service. And so, oh, I can't remember when, in September, October, something like that, maybe in August of 1969, right when I came back from the Peace Corps. I went down to Washington and took the training program, and ended up in Vietnam as a consular officer.

AL: And what sort of languages did you have to study or be -?

LP: Well, I had French at that time because I'd been in France of course, and that was about it.

AL: Now, I've read that you spent thirty-one years as a diplomat between D.C. and the Middle East.

LP: Yes, about ten years in Washington and another, most, about half and half I suppose, overseas and in Washington. After my first assignment in Saigon I came back, studied Arabic, and the remainder of my career was spent most of the time dealing with issues involving Arabs in the Middle East.

And I'd like just to finish that, I can finish that up quickly and bring us to the present, bring us to 2000 when I, 2001. But I had been ambassador in Chad, having been, having worked on counterterrorism in the State Department, and then Iran and Iraq, those two countries. And my

last job was working for a guy named Tony Zinni, General Tony Zinni who was then the commander in chief down at CENTCOM, the regional commander, based in Tampa, Florida, and I worked for him for three years as his political advisor.

And at the end of those three years, I was nominated by President Clinton to be ambassador to Kuwait. But, the Senate Foreign Relations Committee at that time, which was chaired by a fellow named Jesse Helms, a curmudgeonly old gentleman who really detested the State Department and all of its works, and Trent Lott, who was the majority leader of the Senate, those two folks were very angry at General Zinni, because General Zinni had taken issue with a piece of legislation called the Iraq Liberation Act.

Now, that was adopted in 1998 and it was, the premise of it was that if we just gave some money to a fellow named Ahmed Chalabi, that he would be able to liberate Iraq all by himself – we might have to provide some air cover and that sort of thing. And so this act of Congress, which passed virtually unanimously in the Senate and with an overwhelming majority in the House, was an absurd piece of legislation, which directed us, that is the United States government, to provide something like a hundred million dollars, in excess defense articles, surplus property, non-lethal property, to Chalabi and his fellows. And in addition, some money was supposed to be directed to this organization which was called the Iraqi National Congress, or the INC.

But Zinni, who was the commander in chief of the area, took a very dim view of this legislation. And when he was asked his view of it he said, “Well, it’s the law, but I think it’s a lousy law.” So the sponsors of the legislation, who included Senators Helms and Lott, were furious at Zinni. They couldn’t quite fire him, they couldn’t take him on; they couldn’t get at him. So when my name came before them for a confirmation hearing, they were happy to retaliate. And they did so – and if anybody’s interested at this late date, there’s an article in the *Washington Post* of October 1st, I think, by a man named John Lancaster, which was about all of this. Because I left Washington in a sort of a high dudgeon after the Senate Foreign Relations Committee staff told me that they wouldn’t hold a hearing, but if I came back, if I waited around until next year they’d confirm me for something else.

And I thought that was pretty bad stuff, so I quit. I quit, or I retired, which is another way to put it, because I had been in the Foreign Service for thirty-one years, and my wife Betsy and I came up to, drove up to Maine, where we’ve stayed more or less ever since. And it’s at that point that the State Department recommended me to Senator Mitchell as a possible staff director for the committee, the Sharm el-Sheikh Fact-Finding, International Fact-Finding Commission, to give its full name, which he had agreed to, which he had agreed with President Clinton that he would chair.

AL: Now, is this the first time where you’ve had interaction with Senator Mitchell?

LP: Yes, it was, it was the first time. And I remember he called me at my house in Portland and asked me if I would do this, and I’d be the one that he would call of course, and I said, “Yes, I’d be happy to.” It gave me something to do.

AL: Yes. Now Clinton, President Clinton was the one who also nominated you as ambassador to Chad in '93.

LP: That's correct, that's correct.

AL: So did you have a relationship with President Clinton?

LP: No, I didn't. Both Chad and Kuwait, for that matter, he nominated me twice. No, not at all. It was, you know, the way it works is that perhaps sixty or sixty-five percent of our ambassadors are career Foreign Service officers, and the other thirty or thirty-five are people who are known to the president in one way or another. And I was in the former category, and so typically the White House will reserve, there's a conversation between the White House and the State Department, and the White House says, the State Department says to the White House – typically this is the way it works – 'Do you want to reserve this country, country X, for a friend of the president's?' And the White House says, 'No, that one is, you can keep that one, that one can go to one of yours.' The State Department then draws up a list and sends it to the White House, and the White House chooses the State Department's nominee for those jobs.

Chad was not, you won't be surprised to hear, on the top of the list that the White House wanted to reserve for political appointees, so that's the way that appointment got made; same with Kuwait later on.

AL: Now, we're in 2001, and Senator Mitchell has called you. And what became your role on that commission?

LP: Well, Senator Mitchell was busy, a busy man, obviously. You will recall that the principals – first of all, let's go back a little bit and talk about why the Sharm el-Sheikh Committee was formed in the first place.

There had been the uprising in the territories, the West Bank and Gaza which, it was known as the intifada, after the Arabic term which means sort of an outpouring of unhappiness. The intifada had been going on for a couple of years, and there was an international effort to bring things under control in the West Bank and Gaza so that a negotiation could go forward.

Israel objected to any idea of an international body sponsored by the United Nations, taking the view that the U.N. was prejudiced in favor of the Arabs. So a compromise was struck at the Sharm el-Sheikh Summit in, I think, August of that year. My dates aren't, you have to check my dates.

AL: Oh, the date's fine, estimates are fine.

LP: Good, because they'll have to be. In July or August of that year there was a summit meeting at the town of Sharm el-Sheikh on the Red Sea in Egypt, involving President Clinton

and President Hosni Mubarak, president of Egypt, the king of Jordan, King Hussein at that time, and a number of other chiefs of state.

And it was agreed, after consultations both with the Palestinian side and with the Israeli side, that rather than setting up a U.N. commission to conduct an inquiry, which is what the Palestinians wanted, into the Palestinian intifada and the circumstances surrounding it, that – and to make recommendations on how the peace process, to use that term, could go forward – instead of doing that, there would be an international body not sponsored by the United Nations, and its components would be two Americans reflecting the American role, it would be bipartisan so one would be a Democrat, Senator Mitchell, chair it, and there would be a Republican, Senator Warren Rudman, former Senator Warren Rudman. And the other members were the foreign minister of Norway, because Norway had taken a prominent role in the Oslo Peace Talks, the secret peace talks that the Palestinians, PLO, and Israel, had conducted for several years which resulted in the Oslo Agreements, that preceded the intifada; a former president of Turkey, because of Turkey's role as a friend of Israel in the area; and a representative of the European Union, who was at that time Javier Solana, who is still now today the, effectively the foreign minister of the European Union.

So that was the committee, Fact-Finding Commission. Now, these gentlemen lived in various places, and Senator Mitchell was working and had a limited amount of time to spare, and Senator Rudman, so they needed a staff on the ground and that, my role was to serve as the director of that staff. It included perhaps ten or fifteen people, it was a former Norwegian ambassador named Eide. Eide worked in the, K-A-I E-D-D-E (*sic* E-I-D-E), recently appointed as the principle international civil servant in Afghanistan, remarkably, over the last couple of months, a French diplomat, a British diplomat, and a variety of Americans, and a former Turkish ambassador. So that was the group. And I, one of the few intelligent things I did when I was in charge of that staff was to hire as my deputy and experienced Middle East hand, a former military officer named Fred Hof to be my deputy.

I came down to Washington to meet the Senator and talk to the State Department about all of this, although it wasn't obviously a State Department operation, it was an independent operation, so it was a peculiar kind of a hybrid, this committee, from the beginning, and the staff reflected that. Not a U.N. operation, but an international operation.

AL: And it was asked for by the Bush administration?

LP: Well, that was the tricky part, you see. It reflected the Clinton administration's approach to the Middle East. So it had to transition across two administrations, from Clinton to Bush. Senator Mitchell had agreed to President Clinton's request to take it on, as had these other international figures, but it would obviously have to continue its operations into the new administration and the taking of office, you know, the transition in the United States.

So Senator Mitchell and all of us were very well aware that this was a dicey business, to take what was essentially the policy of one administration and continue it on into the next. We all

knew, Senator Mitchell better than any of us, that the Bush administration had a sort of hostility to the sorts of Arab-Israeli peacekeeping that the Clinton administration had engaged in. So it was a difficult, but it was in theory a bipartisan operation, though chaired by Senator Mitchell, it also included former Senator Warren Rudman, a moderate Republican from New Hampshire. So it was a difficult business.

Anyway, I came down, I can't remember exactly when it was, October, November of that year, and met with the Senator; we sat around a conference room at his law firm. Dennis Ross was there, the former negotiator for President Clinton, and a couple of other folks whose names I can't remember from the State Department, and we chatted about all of this. And I spent a couple of weeks in Washington putting together the staff, preparing to go out, have the staff go on the ground, and put together a sort of fact-finding operation as the staff for these gentlemen who were the members of the committee, the principles of the committee.

Senator Mitchell had secured an airplane from the White House so we flew out, with Senator Rudman, and conducted an initial, he conducted an initial series of discussions with – I can't remember the dates of this, you'd have to look at that, the Sharm el-Sheikh Fact-Finding Report that, you know, Fred Hof essentially put together for the Senator, will give you the dates, you've got that somewhere, I'm sure, yeah – initial meetings with Ehud Barak, the prime minister then of Israel, Yasser Arafat, the chairman of the Palestinian Liberation Organization down in Gaza, we had a meeting, we had meetings with a variety of personalities.

The Palestinians had convoked perhaps fifty or a hundred people down in Gaza. It was Ramadan, I remember, and we were driving through those streets, going down to that meeting, and the idea was that Senator Mitchell and his colleagues would have a chance to hear firsthand the grievances of the Palestinian people.

From the beginning the Israeli attitude towards the operations of the committee and the Palestinian operations, the Palestinian attitudes were quite different. Broadly, the Palestinians welcomed the committee, they wanted fact-finding done, they wanted an investigation, if you will, into the situation in the occupied territories. They took the position that the causes of the Palestinian intifada and the violence were entirely due to Israeli occupation of their land, and in particular to a visit that Ariel Sharon, who was then the defense minister of Israel, had made to the Temple Mount, the Haram esh-Sharif, a provocative visit in which he was accompanied by hundreds if not thousands of armed Israeli security personnel, which was designed to assert Israeli sovereignty over that particular place. So that was the Palestinian position.

The Israeli position was, well, you know, if we have to have this damn thing going on, it's fine I guess, we really will put all of our trust in the new administration to ensure that our interests are protected. We're not entirely sure about this group of international statesmen. We think Senator Mitchell's probably all right, but we're going to make every effort to ensure that this rather peculiar international body is kept under control. And control was really the Israeli watchword from the beginning with regard to the operations of the staff, which I headed on the ground.

We went out to, we set up shop at the, in Jerusalem, at the Hilton, which was a comfortable place to do business. We established sort of relations with the American consulate general, which was headed by an old friend of mine named Ron Schlicker, and we began our fact-finding operations.

From the beginning – this is just the staff, following this initial trip by the Senator and Senator Rudman – and it was just Senators Mitchell and Rudman in that initial foray, it was not anybody else. In other words, the former prime minister of Turkey, the Norwegian foreign minister, Javier Solana was there as well, joined as well, so it was Solana, Mitchell, and Rudman were the three on the initial trip.

So anyway, they staff went out, ten or fifteen people, set up shop, security officer, and then we hired somebody to keep the sort of administrative side of things going. And we began our fact-finding operations in preparation for the next visit that the Senator would be able to make, and other members of the committee.

AL: And so when you say you began your fact-finding, what did that entail? Did you go out into the city?

LP: We went out and talked, we talked, we went out into the West Bank and Gaza, we talked to Palestinians, we went to Bethlehem, we went down to Gaza, we went out to Ramallah to talk to the PLO, we talked to Israeli human rights organizations, Palestinian human rights organizations, that sort of thing. That was on the Palestinian side.

On the Israeli side, however, we ran into a brick wall, it was sort of a brick wall. We had been given as a point of contact – although the Israelis had said all the right things to Senator Mitchell when he came out, about their willingness to cooperate with the commission, in fact, their effort was, as I said, to try to control, to the maximum extent possible, the operations of this group of people, loose cannons from their perspective.

And so there was an official of the Ministry of Defense whose name was Moshe Kochanovsky, who was a senior official of the Ministry of Defense, who was appointed to kind of be our minder. And we had a series of meetings with Moshe, each of which was more difficult than the last.

Moshe took the view that we should not interview anybody without Israelis present, so that if we were going to talk to Palestinians we would have to have an Israeli with us to ensure that whatever we heard was corrected immediately by an Israeli. And other sorts, those sorts of things. We told him that was pretty silly, that we would, when, if Israel insisted that whenever we met with Israeli officials or military officers, we would be happy to have an Israeli present, from the Ministry of Defense, but we couldn't allow our operations to be hamstrung by the insistence that wherever we went and whomever we talked to, we had to have a minder from the government of Israel. That would prejudice the conduct of our operations as a fact-finding staff on the ground for the Senator.

Moshe had made an attempt to draft a memorandum of understanding, which enshrined the Israeli view of how we would conduct our operations, which reflected again the requirement that we always have an Israeli with us and we go nowhere without Israeli accompaniment. And we didn't agree to that, and so we were sort of going back and forth on all of this.

And I think we'd been out there maybe five or six weeks, as I recall – it may not have been that long – when I decided I really needed to go back to talk to the Senator about all of these matters and make sure that I got his guidance with regard to how we would go forward. So I did so, but not before, with the staff, I agreed that one thing we would need to do to establish our independence of action, given these – and our credibility, frankly – given these attempts by Israel to place strictures on our operations, one of the things we would want to do would be to go to visit the Haram esh-Sharif, the Temple Mount, in Jerusalem, which was, you know, just a, within walking distance of our hotel of course, in order to see the place where, from the Palestinian perspective at least, the entire business had started, the intifada had started, following the visit of Defense Minister Sharon.

Now this was a difficult business, because you have rival claims of sovereignty to that place. However, the Jordanian Ministry of Religious Affairs maintains personnel up there who are generally recognized by both sides as having control over the mosque there and the Haram esh-Sharif. So very quietly, we contacted the Jordanian (*unintelligible*) people and we said, we want to make a very private visit, no publicity whatsoever, to walk the ground up there where all of this has started and to see how it arose, or to investigate the circumstances of the Sharon visit, I suppose.

While we were making these preparations, and I was preparing to fly back to Manhattan to see the Senator to sort of consult with him, the Israelis got wind of these contacts that we had made with the Jordanians. And one can imagine how, presumably by tapping telephones and that sort of thing, which one assumes is normally done. And they went through the roof, Moshe Kochanovsky called me up and said that we shouldn't go up there, and I said, "Moshe, we have to retain our freedom of operation here." And I remember that I was called by a television station in Israel, because the Israelis had wanted to sort of, the Israelis wanted to send armed personnel up there with us in order, again, to assert their sovereignty over the area, just as Sharon had done when he went up in the initial foray, which was sort of what the Palestinian side would argue touched off the intifada.

So, I couldn't agree to that. I flew back to see the Senator, sort of told Kochanovsky that we would have to agree to disagree, I think those were my precise words to him: we'd have to agree to disagree about this. I had a talk with the Senator back in Manhattan, in his apartment, we chatted a little bit, I briefed him on the situation, including our intention to go up to the Haram esh-Sharif. And as I recall he sort of said something like, "Well, if you think you have to do that, fine."

While I was in New York, the staff went up, had a completely unexceptional visit to the area, to the Haram esh-Sharif, to the Temple Mount, and came back down again. The Israelis were

furious when they found out afterwards, called me on the carpet – I had just come back down – and asked me to account for this terrible breach of trust which I had committed by doing this. I said, “Look, I told you that we would have to agree to disagree, I never told you that we wouldn’t do this, I can’t accept Israeli sort of control of this, the operations of the staff.”

We had one of the more frigid meetings between two staffs at the Foreign Ministry, which is in Jerusalem, the Defense Ministry’s back in Tel Aviv, but the Foreign Ministry’s in Jerusalem. And I, I’ll always remember that, you know, normally speaking there’s this certain protocol in diplomatic business where you go to call on somebody at their office at the Foreign Ministry, they have somebody waiting for you and you’re escorted in to have a chat, even if you’re mad at each other. I’ll always remember, nobody was there to meet us. We came, we arrived in a van, we were kept cooling our heels for fifteen minutes or so, and I was really furious. We then had a talk with the senior officials of the Israeli Foreign Ministry, and they yelled at me for a while and I yelled back at them a while.

We came back, and at that point a sort of a press campaign started on the Israeli side. This former ambassador to Chad, as they insisted on referring to me, had done this terrible thing, you know, compromised the Israeli sovereignty over the Temple Mount, and it was just awful. And it kept on, it went on for several days, if not weeks.

At that point I contacted the Senator and I said, “Look, I think that, because they’re blaming me personally for all of this, that really, I don’t want to be an impediment to the operations of this, of the Sharm el-Sheikh Committee. I shouldn’t be, my, me, I personally should not be an issue here, so I would like to resign.” And the Senator said, “Well I don’t think you should do that.” And then he tried to talk me out of it a little bit, but not too hard. And I said, “No, Senator, I really think I need to resign, and you’ve got a perfectly good guy here to run the staff and to take this thing forward and to draft a report for you in Fred Hof, and I’m sure you’ll find that.” And so finally he said, “Well all right, if you think you have to do that.” And so I wrote him a letter resigning, and turning the operation over to Fred. And that was the end of my involvement. He wrote me a nice letter back saying, “Thank you very much.” And that’s about it.

Fred then took the operation, and you should talk to him about it, over the next month or two, including a second visit by the Senator to Israel and Palestine. They drafted an even-handed report, which nobody liked very much, calling for a settlements freeze by Israel and an end to violence by the Palestinians; nobody paid the slightest attention to it. For a few months it was a sort of mantra that the Bush administration would voice, without the slightest conviction and support for the recommendations of the Mitchell Committee. They didn’t mean it for a second, and everybody knew that, and so the report was essentially a dead letter as soon as it was drafted.

AL: So in the years following, it hasn’t gone -.

LP: No, it hasn’t gone anywhere. Remember, as you noted, Senator Mitchell was a Democrat, and certainly not trusted by, who had been a thorn in the side of President George W. Bush’s father, and so he wasn’t trusted as far as they could throw him. Nor did they agree with

the fundamental approach in that report, which was both sides need to cool it, and Israel needs to end the settlements and the Palestinians need to cut the violence out, they didn't agree to that sort of even handed approach. The Bush administration's fundamental instincts were far different, as we saw in the subsequent six or seven years of their outrageous neglect of the peace process, with the results that we have today with the president [President George W. Bush] in Israel today making a fool of himself yet again, by promising a, you know, two-states solution before the end of his term, which is absurd. I mean, he completely neglected the problem.

But, you know, if I had to reflect back on that period, the senators involved and the rest of it, I would say it was never – because it didn't enjoy the support, anything but the lip service support of the incoming administration, it was essentially doomed as a basis from which to take, to bring about a negotiation. It was always going to be critical of Israel, Israeli settlements, any international report, even one dominated by people as well disposed towards Israel as the people who had been selected to do this, that is, the European Union, the United States in the form of two former senators, distinguished former senators, Norway and Turkey. The committee was stacked in favor of Israel, but the dynamics of the situation meant that Israel would always resent any sort of international fact-finding, any sort of international investigation, whereas the Palestinians looked to the outside world to remedy that imbalance of power that exists fundamentally between them and Israel. So that's the basis of it.

Senator Mitchell's involvement was, I would say, and he would be better placed to speak to this obviously than I am, not, reflected a certain I would say private skepticism about what might be able to achieve, what could be achieved, with the Bush administration. He devoted a fairly limited amount of time to the effort, which doesn't mean that he didn't do a serious job of trying to put together a good, balanced report. He certainly did. With regard to the drafting of the report, again, I was not involved, so you'd have to talk to Fred Hof. But it was a very limited role, compared to the role that he had taken in the Northern Ireland negotiations, which was hands on, very labor intensive, present there, many trips. His role with this Sharm el-Sheikh Fact-Finding Committee was somewhat less involved, somewhat less direct, perhaps because he had an accurate and sort of informed sense of what could be achieved.

AL: You mentioned Jim Pickup, now what was his role?

LP: Well, Jim was just a member of the staff. Jim was there, you know, kind of as the Senator's eyes and ears I guess, in some ways.

AL: So he was close to the Senator and did a lot of communicating?

LP: I guess, not too much, I don't think, I don't recall - very much. I should say one thing, however, about my own approach to this thing and why I selected Fred Hof to be the deputy.

I had very much in mind that we were moving from one administration to another, and Fred had been a partner of Rich [Dick] Armitage, who had become the deputy secretary of state to Colin Powell. So Fred was somebody who knew Rich very well, and I thought that Fred could serve as

a very useful channel to the incoming people, that is the Bush administration, because of his relationship with Armitage, Deputy Secretary of State Armitage, and that indeed proved to be the case. Fred was often on the phone with Rich Armitage while we were out there, making sure that the State Department, at that senior level – Armitage and Secretary of State Colin Powell were the closest of friends – that the State Department was kept informed as to our operations.

Of course the difficulty there was the State Department wasn't trusted at the White House, so that only went so far. But that was my approach, that's why – apart from the fact that Fred is a great guy – that's why I thought Fred would be a useful kind of deputy to have, because he could maintain that channel to the State Department and Colin Powell and Rich Armitage, which he did.

AL: Do you have any anecdotes or stories about your time during that planning committee tour?

LP: I'll tell you one or two real quick. I enjoyed, when flying over, flying over, I enjoyed talking to Warren Rudman very much, and to the Senator, but also Warren Rudman, I find him extraordinary, an extraordinary guy. And he told some wonderful stories. We were coming back from the trip – and this dates the trip if we – at the time that the Supreme Court was handing down its final ruling on the Florida primary, Bush vs Gore. And Senator Rudman took – lawyer himself, and a distinguished one – took an interest in all of this, a Republican clearly. And I remember coming down, and Senator Mitchell on the way back left, because there was a, President Clinton was visiting Northern Ireland and so Senator Mitchell broke off from the group on the way, on the return flight and headed to join the president in their sort of triumphal tour of Northern Ireland. President Clinton was the uncrowned king of Ireland at that time, and Senator Mitchell wasn't too far behind.

Anyway, so Senator Mitchell had left, and that left me and a few others with Senator Rudman. And we were flying back, and we were at, we'd stopped at Shannon I believe on the way back down, and we'd gone over to Cork to stay the night and we were heading back to Shannon, and the airport, to fly back. And I came down to breakfast and joined Senator Rudman for breakfast, and the ruling in the Supreme Court case, Bush v. Gore had just come down, which essentially awarded the presidency to Bush, and it was a foregone conclusion, perhaps, but it was this final seal on the decision.

And I said to, and Al Gore had graciously accepted the will of, they said, you know, that he had accepted the decision; he said that he wouldn't contest it and he was being sort of a statesman about it all. And I said something to that effect to Senator Rudman, and Senator Rudman looked at me and he said, "He got screwed." Which coming from a Republican, though a moderate one, illustrated his view of the situation.

He was very proud – I remember talking to him, he had wonderful stories – but he was very proud of his role in the appointment of David Souter to the Supreme Court, from New Hampshire, very proud indeed. I think if you asked a conservative Republican what he thought

of Justice Souter, he would be horrified at the notion that any Republican would take credit for appointing this deadly moderate to the Supreme Court. But Senator Rudman was very proud of his role in that, as well he might be.

AL: Is there anything else that I haven't asked you?

LP: No Andrea, I think that's about it. I could tell you some other stories but I'm not sure that they'd add very much to the historical record. I will say one thing, I will say one thing because this may be someday (*unintelligible*), we had a wonderful group on that staff, everybody, the Turkish ambassador who assured me constantly that he was at my service, the Americans did a great job, all of them, the French diplomat who was on the staff was a terrific guy. I'll tell you one quick story about that.

We were traveling down to Bethlehem and meeting with a human rights organization down there, and one of the women, one of the Christian Palestinian women, was a contact of this French diplomat's, who had been stationed in Jerusalem. And we went to talk to her, chatting for a while, and he was talking to her, they were old friends, and as he was leaving her – I'll tell you two stories about this and then leave – as he was leaving, she said goodbye to him and he said, "Well I hope things improve," or something in French. And she said back to him, "All I want to do is to get out of this *pays de merde*," this shitty country.

The other story I'll tell you is, during that same visit we went up to a little town outside of Bethlehem, from which you could see across the valley the town of Abu Dis, the Israeli town of Abu Dis, the Israeli settlement. And I spoke to, there had been firing coming from that place, I mean Palestinians had been shooting at the Israelis, the settlement had been responding with heavy weapons back against the Palestinian positions. Everything was knocked down; it was a mess up there.

And I talked to one of the Palestinian gunmen in Arabic up there, and since I spoke Arabic to him he sort of assumed that I was on his side and he said, you know, I said to him, you know, "Why do you do this stuff? You shoot with small weapons, over across the valley, you don't do any damage, you make the Israelis furious, they come back and demolish all of these houses here. I mean it's just crazy." And he said to me, "You are so right," he said, "we need heavy weapons. Where do you think I can get heavy weapons?"

The last thing I'll tell you about, which sort of illustrates the problems, the last thing I'll tell you about that, I was talking about the staff, everybody worked very well together, it was wonderfully harmonious, great group. I mean for a pick-up squad of, you know, maybe fifteen international civil servants and the rest of it, including Norwegians and French and Brits, we worked out, we worked very well together during the time that I was there, and I think subsequently.

But there was one exception, and that was this Norwegian diplomat, whose name was Kai Eide, who has in the last month or so been appointed the czar of all international reconstruction efforts

in Afghanistan, to my astonishment and shock. Kai was a jerk. He was self-righteous in the way that Scandinavians can sometimes be, suspicious, difficult. He'd been in Bosnia, where the United Nations – and had a role there – where the United Nations really was a sovereign power running that province of the former Yugoslavia.

And he thought he could transfer that sort of operation, that sort of attitude to Israel and Palestine. Took a very sort of supercilious approach to the whole business, and I find him extremely difficult. He was persuaded that I would be, you know, the Americans on the staff would be entirely too pro-Israel. And so I found him extremely difficult, and we had a lot of trouble with him throughout. And I believe that that continued, I know that that continued after I left and Fred Hof continued with him. So it was with a sense of horror that I saw that Kai had been appointed to be the senior civilian in Afghanistan, a job which was supposed to have gone to Paddy Ashdown. Anyway, that's a long story.

So there you go, Andrea, that's the story of my brief and highly unsuccessful involvement with the Sharm el-Sheikh Fact-Finding Committee. But I, you know, the Senator was perfectly correct in all of his dealings with me, and I admired his remarkable sort of judicial temperament in approaching that problem.

AL: Great, thank you very much.

LP: You're most welcome.

End of Interview