

George J. Mitchell Oral History Project

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Leonard C. Mulligan
(Interviewer: *Andrea L'Hommedieu*)

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Andrea L'Hommedieu: This is an interview for the George J. Mitchell Oral History Project at Bowdoin College. The date is September 3, 2009, and I'm at the home of Leonard Mulligan in Bath, Maine, and this Andrea L'Hommedieu. Mr. Mulligan, could you start just by spelling your last name for me.

Leonard Mulligan: Spell my last name, M-U-L-L-I-G-A-N.

AL: And middle initial is C?

LM: C.

AL: And what does that stand for?

LM: Charles.

AL: And where and when were you born?

LM: I was born in North Andover, Massachusetts, in 1932.

AL: And did you grow up in that area?

LM: No, I moved to Maine when I was about seven years old, to Brunswick, Maine, where I stayed until I finished college at Bowdoin. Then I went into the army, and from there I came back and started graduate school in Springfield, Mass., worked there a couple years at Mass Mutual, then came back here to Bath, Maine.

AL: So growing up, well first of all, tell me about your parents a little bit, what were their names, your parents' names?

LM: My parents' names, my mother died when I was three years old, her name was Ruth, my father's name was Leonard Joseph Mulligan.

AL: And what did your dad do for work?

LM: My father worked at Bath Iron Works from the time he came here until the time that he retired.

AL: And talk about growing up in the Brunswick area. This was in the '40s and '50s?

LM: Yes, I think I came to Brunswick probably in 1939, when I was about seven years old. I went to school in Brunswick, grew up there. It was a very interesting time. I was too young to go into WWII, but I went to Brunswick High School and graduated in 1950. And from there I moved down the street, I was a townie, and I moved into Bowdoin College, where I graduated in 1954.

AL: What was Bowdoin like at that time?

LM: Bowdoin was a different school. Probably I would never even be able to look at Bowdoin now because it's so different. It's hard to believe that I went to Bowdoin on a scholarship, as well as working my way through, getting opportunities to work at the school, but it was like \$4200 a year, which is now \$42,000 a year.

AL: And talk to me about sort of, the professors you had.

LM: My fondest professor was a guy by the name of Nate Dane, who taught Latin. I had a choice when I was freshman, I thought I was very smart, which I really wasn't, but I went into math and I lasted approximately six weeks and had an average of about twenty, so I was given a choice, I either left school or I took Latin, so I became a very good friend of Nate Dane.

AL: And did you have him for more than one year?

LM: Oh yes, I ended up with a minor in Latin, and I enjoyed it very, very much.

AL: And what was your major?

LM: My major was economics. Probably the professor that I remember most there was [a professor] by the name of [Morgan B.] Cushing, whose house is now a bed-and-breakfast on the Brunswick Mall.

AL: So do you recall George Mitchell when you were at Bowdoin?

LM: Yes, but I was not close to George at that time, but we followed basketball games, all of us did, and he played basketball so I watched him there. But at that point in time he was just one of us.

AL: And what did you do for social activities on the weekends and things like that?

LM: Oh, we had parties that probably wouldn't exist now. My wife I met when I was a sophomore and so we connected, she went, she graduated from Smith College, and we would alternate weekends, we'd go down there and raise hell, or she'd come up here and stay at what was then called the Hotel Eagle. She was from Bath, and her father used to call her occasionally and say, "I'm spending all this money for you to be educated in Northampton, and you're spending a lot of your time in Brunswick." So that's the summation of my memories.

AL: And did you get to know Senator Mitchell later on?

LM: Yes.

AL: Tell me about what you did for a career, where did you go after Bowdoin and graduate school, and how did you reconnect with him later on?

LM: Well I came back to Bath, took over a family company, and part of my diversion was to get into housing development, several projects I had, and one of them George got involved in. This is back in the '70s, which is my story actually for you to carry on with. The project is really across the street. This house was owned by me then, in a different world it was called Sherred Corporation. Well, as my story unfolds, and it's a true story, we were dealing with a bank in Boston called New England Merchants, which is no longer in existence, and George became counsel to that bank with a law firm in Portland by the name of Jensen & Baird.

And I re-met with George during that time, because we had secured some of the loan for the housing project with different agreements. And I'll never forget we're sitting around a table in Portland, and George was then kind of between careers, he wasn't a senator then, he had come back to Maine to decide, I would trust to say, what to do. He was very close to Senator Muskie, and he became, during that time frame also, after my gig with him, he became a senator, thanks to Joe Brennan.

George is sitting on the other side of the table, smiling at us, and he had a great smile, and he moved a piece of paper across the table, and my signature was on the agreement, and my partner's signature was on the agreement. I'll never forget this – George looked at me and said, "Red," he said, "do you recognize your signature?" And I says, "Yes, I think I do, George." And he turns to my partner, and this is crazy, he looked at him and he said – and I'll use a name that's not his name – "John, do you recognize your signature?" And he looked at the paper, he looked up at George, and he said, "I'm not sure George, that I signed that paper or not." There was quite a bit of money involved. And George looked at him and smiled and said, "Well, do you think you might recognize your signature?" And John said, "Yes, I think I could probably recognize my signature." And he said to him, he said, "Well John, do you mind signing your name again to this paper just so I can give some authenticity to it?" And my partner said, "Yes, I think I can do that." And he signed his name again and George, with a big smile said, "Now would

you say that they're the same signature?" And my partner says, "You know George, I think you might be right, I think they're the same." And that's my story. That was in the '70s.

AL: And so, and that was probably between the time he ran for governor and the time he became senator, between '74 and '80?

LM: Yes, and I think Joe Brennan was governor then, and Brennan appointed George to replace Muskie who became secretary of state. So that was the way it flowed. And that's my remembrance of George, and this is all before all the stuff that he's done happened. And I was also blessed, my daughter became an intern in his office, and his personal secretary was a very, very dear friend of mine.

AL: Gayle.

LM: Gayle – Gayle Fitzgerald Cory.

AL: Can you talk about her, because we can't interview her and she's such an important part of both the Muskie and Mitchell legacy. What was she like?

LM: She was a crackerjack. I met Gayle when she was Gayle Fitzgerald and she was first Senator Muskie's personal secretary, and she really ran the show. And then when George came on board she flipped over, because Muskie went up, she traveled with Muskie a bit I believe, but she became George's personal secretary. I used to communicate with her when she worked for George.

Gayle though was interesting. And a sub-story to this that might fit in, back I would say in the '60s, yes, it would be the '60s I guess, I was putting together a group to buy Hyde School. We had Senator Muskie on that board, and Gayle was the point person for Ed Muskie to work with us, and we were trying to buy the school. And I'll never forget, Gayle called and said, "Can you guys come to Washington?" Guys being a couple buddies and I, we were trying to buy the thing with no money, because we didn't have any money. And we showed up and she says, "Now, you guys hang around today, because the senator's playing golf with the secretary of health and welfare" or something, I guess his name, I can remember his name being Stewart. And Gayle had worked the system so that by the end of the day we had purchased Hyde School.

AL: And so, wow, that's amazing.

LM: It's a beautiful story because we didn't have a clue what was going on, and we spent the day rumbling around Washington, three Mainiacs and didn't have a clue what we were doing, we're looking at the big buildings and very impressed, and none of us had money. I did have a check, and with that check we bought what was called the Hill Burton Funds, which was Hyde School, and that's my tale.

AL: And did you buy it and keep it Hyde School, or did you make into something, I mean it's Hyde School now, right?

LM: That is Hyde School.

AL: And did it have the same function then?

LM: Yes. On this desk (*he points to the desk; it is in the room where the interview is taking place*), I used to live in a house on Washington Street, on this desk you'll see scratches. The guy that became the headmaster, Joe Gauld, had no place to go so he used to come to my house and make phone calls. Great developer, and fundamentally was the key person, but he'd write down scratchings. My wife would give me hell because we'd get a phone bill, you know, it'd be like six hundred dollars and I would say, you know, where did it come from? She said, "You've got to talk to Joe, he's talking too much." But he did a great job, and Hyde School was what it is today. Senator Muskie was on the board, and Gayle was the point person behind it that coordinated the key buy.

AL: Do you have any idea how she did it?

LM: How she did it?

AL: Yeah.

LM: Well, we had put together some crazy numbers and in today's world you'd go to jail if it's found out, but we were able to prove that the value of what we were buying had decreased so much, which was 'funny money' – we bought the wing which tied up the whole school for less than thirteen thousand dollars. I signed a check on one of my companies, and the company had no money, I had to rush back and cover it. So it all came together, but she coordinated the golf match with the secretary of health and welfare, she had a gal by the name of, I'll never forget her, she had retired from the Army, her name was – I want to say Pope?

AL: Oh, Martha Pope?

LM: P-O-P-E?

AL: Yes.

LM: Yes, from down south someplace. She had organized with Gayle the day. It was just a, we went there in the morning, and I'll never forget, Stewart said, "You guys get the hell out of town," he said, "before someone changes their mind." But she, it was Gayle that obviously did the background stuff. And it was quite an achievement.

AL: And you knew her from here, from Bath?

LM: From here.

AL: Yes, and so did you know her before she went to work for Senator Muskie?

LM: No, no.

AL: Later, yeah.

LM: Her brother was a very dear friend of mine, Buzz Fitzgerald. In fact, we were neighbors and we used to travel together and do all that kind of stuff. Through Buzzy, I got to know Gayle quite well.

AL: Yes, a nice family, I understand.

LM: Yes, yeah. We're good buddies.

AL: I just want to, I mean Gayle was amazing. There are so many stories about the amazing things she did, and we try to figure out how she came to have all these incredible skills.

LM: She had, you know, it's a surprising power that they have. I'll never forget, I had lunch with Gayle, one of my housing projects, I would go to Washington occasionally, I don't know why, but we'd go out for lunch. And there was a place called Delmonico Club or something, some restaurant that was around the corner from where his office was. And she would walk in, and it was like the empress arriving. They would all turn, all get up and say hello, and I'm sure a lot of it had to do with her connection as being personal secretary to Senator Muskie, it had to be. But I mean I was over my head with that stuff, because I was just a guy from Maine.

But she was right down-to-earth, and we'd - I'll never forget, I was raising money for Bowdoin and George was on my list. And Gayle picks up the phone, she says, "I'll take care of it Red, don't worry." I have no idea what ever happened because, and how it evolved is, I think the president at that time was Roy [A. LeRoy] Greason, and he asked me, as a classmate of George's, would I call George. Well, I never spoke to George because Gayle took over. She ran the show.

AL: Yeah. And you referred to yourself as Red?

LM: Red, Red.

AL: Is that a nickname?

LM: Yes.

AL: How did you get the nickname?

LM: Because my hair was absolutely carrot-top. It was really, really red. And my three children, two of them had red hair. My youngest one who's, gosh, now forty-two I believe, still has red hair, and occasionally she'll look at her hair and look for a piece of white hair and pull it out. She doesn't want to admit it. But I will also say this, it was very nice because when Annie interned, I believe it was in her junior year of college when she interned, George made it sure that they had some secure house to go to, found a home for them while the kids interned there, which is very unique. It was just outside the Beltway someplace, I don't, I got lost looking. But Annie used to talk, you know, at least as parents we felt secure knowing that she was going to be okay. That's a big thing in Washington.

AL: Was it a summer internship?

LM: Yes.

AL: Did she take away memories from that, that she shared with you?

LM: Oh yes, matter of fact I have a flag that she brought back that flew over the Capitol, and I have, one of those things that, appreciation for, to Red Mulligan from George Mitchell, and still have it. I had the flag stolen twice, but that's okay, Annie would get me another flag.

AL: So you've had a few interactions with George Mitchell over the years, but you probably observed him as well in terms of, you know, what's your observation of George Mitchell from the time you knew him in college till now?

LM: Well I think, as I mentioned to you, my highlight was my little encounter and getting to really being more in tune with Gayle's position with George. I've followed his success, but never really reconnected personally, so I really couldn't go on telling you other stories that I wasn't a part of because that would not be fair.

AL: Right, right. And Buzz Fitzgerald had a relationship with Ed Muskie, didn't he?

LM: Buzz?

AL: Buzz, yeah, weren't they - ? Or maybe not.

LM: If he did, I don't know what it was. Ed Muskie was on our, [we] put Ed Muskie on the Hyde School board because we wanted that connection, but I think Buzz's relationships with Senator Muskie would be beyond my knowledge. It was primarily

Gayle. You know, Buzz and Gayle were very close, so I mean that would tie Buzzy into the senator.

AL: Is there anything that I haven't asked you that you think is important to add?

LM: Not really. After you called I was trying to think of what I would consider being a highlight of my relationship with him, and that would be it, of a personal nature. You know, I tracked him and followed him and supported him, but it would be like everyone else did. So that would not be unique.

AL: Have you ever been politically involved, or just on a -

LM: Always behind the scenes, I never ran from any office. I've served in a lot of different positions over the years, but most of them were by my choice. I supported a lot of guys that were politicians, but not me.

AL: Thank you so much.

LM: You're welcome.

End of Interview