

George J. Mitchell Oral History Project

Bowdoin College Library, 3000 College Sta., Brunswick, Maine 04011

© Bowdoin College

Heather Mitchell (1)

(Interviewer: Brien Williams)

GMOH# 191

February 5, 2010

Brien Williams: This is an oral history interview for the George J. Mitchell Oral History Project at Bowdoin College with Heather (McLachlan) Mitchell. We are in the Mitchell residence in New York City, today is Friday, February 5, 2010, and I am Brien Williams. Okay.

Heather McLachlan Mitchell: Well, I was born and raised in Montreal, and went to Paris on a two-week vacation when I was, just after school, and I didn't expect to stay, and I ended up staying fifteen years. I started working in professional tennis, representing male professional tennis players. I worked for the Association of Tennis Professionals and then various other agencies, based in Paris. And I traveled the world pretty much on the tennis tour about forty-five weeks a year.

BW: Were you a tennis player yourself?

HM: I was not a professional player, no. I think I was lucky to get the break because I spoke French, and I was a sort of a temporary replacement for the assistant to the executive director of the ATP, the Association of Tennis Professionals, and just a lucky break that I think probably wouldn't happen today. So I was in the right place at the right time basically, and got my first lucky break. And from there, it's a very small business, I was fortunate to start when it was making the transition from sport to really big business, 1979. And I loved it. I traveled and worked, and I worked for first the players union and then for the sponsor of the men's tour, and then I became an agent of professional tennis players.

And much as I loved Paris and I loved living in Paris, and I had a stint in London and we had an office in a base in Monaco, I knew that I would like to come to New York, I just love New York and I just felt that I would like to, when I retired from tennis, that I would want to come to New York. And I did. I started working from New York, even though my clients were in Europe and most of the tournaments were in Europe. And it was at the U.S. Open in New York, in 1993, that I met my husband and my life changed.

BW: Not at the U.S. Open, or did it, right from the very start?

HM: Right from the very start. Well, a week later. We were introduced by mutual friends, like that, just at a hospitality suite, and I had arranged some tickets for him, additional tickets at the last minute and he was very appreciative of the ticket, me being able to find these last minute tickets to the final. And ever the gentleman, said, "I'd like to reciprocate the hospitality. If ever you're in D.C. I'd like to give you a tour of the, arrange a tour of the Senate, of the Capitol."

And I said, “Well as a matter of fact I’m going to be there next week,” which I was, I was doing some business in D.C. with a sports agency. And so we agreed to meet for lunch, and then we met for dinner, and it was after really just one dinner I thought, “Wow, this man’s very special.” And we were married a year later.

BW: Now, you had had a lot of experience with some pretty big egos and so forth in the sports scene, and pretty powerful people I would imagine. What was it like sort of transitioning from the sports world to the political world?

HM: Well, I’d never worked in the political world, so my experience really is just through George, who is not, I don’t see him as George Mitchell the politician, he became my husband quite quickly and his ego is pretty much in check, I have to say, and I think that’s what makes him so special is that there’s a sincerity and a moderation and a sense of humbleness that you don’t find really in many people anywhere, especially those in positions of power and that have achieved a level of success. And that’s what struck me immediately, that is quite unusual, and he is very consistent, I mean the man you see is the man you get, there’s really nothing very hidden about him.

BW: I want you to clarify one thing in my mind. I read in a lot of places, he has sort of apologized for being the un-athletic Mitchell brother, but I’ve also heard he’s a darn good tennis player, is that correct?

HM: Well there’s an example of how humble he really is, because he’s a very good athlete. I certainly wasn’t around those early years when he was playing basketball with his brothers, so I can’t pass judgment on those years. But he’s a very, very good, unassuming tennis player. He started very late in life, he didn’t pick up a racket until he was forty, so his form is perhaps not the best, but he has an incredible focus, and he’s smart, and those are things that you really need in tennis. You have to strategize and you have to always, never look back, never worry about the point that you missed, and to try and keep your cool and to just persevere, one point at a time. And so as a result, he’s an incredible tennis player. And again, very unassuming.

People have seen him play and they think, ‘oh well, this guy I’m sure can’t play,’ and he plays with guys half his age and he’s the reigning club champion at our little club in Maine. He’s a very good tennis player—[he] will say that he’s not. And I think he was a good athlete, because he’s just received an award from the NCAA, just I think last week, that they award to people that have had relative success in other areas of their lives but were primarily really good athletes, so I think he’s being modest.

BW: Your courtship, did that take place mainly in Washington, or up here?

HM: No, between here and D.C. He was in the Senate, majority leader at that time, so he had a very busy job, and I was working and traveling around the world, so we spent a lot of time on the telephone, the way many do with long distance courtships, and then we would see each other in D.C. and in New York.

BW: And as you tell it, it was pretty quick that you became very serious.

HM: Yes, very, very quick. As a matter of fact, so quickly that we were a little apprehensive to make an announcement, because it was so quick. And so we didn't make the announcement until the following spring. We met in September, and it would have been the following spring that we actually made the announcement, although we'd made the decision together much, much earlier, and we were married the following December, so a little more than a year after we had actually met.

BW: And where did your decision to get married come about, and his decision to retire from the Senate, what was the sequence?

HM: My decision to get married, or our decision to get married?

BW: Your decision to get married, yes.

HM: Well I had never been married, I was thirty-five, or thirty-four, I can't quite remember now, when we met, and it was never a burning desire of mine to get married. I wasn't opposed to it, but I just hadn't met the right man. And I loved my life, traveling around the world on the tennis circuit, and I was quite surprised that I felt as I did when I met him. And I think he, although his circumstance was very different, had been married once before but had been divorced for many, many years. And of course there's an age difference between the two of us. But it fit, it was natural and we both felt that it was a perfect thing to do.

BW: I guess one thing I'm getting at here is, did your getting married have anything to do with his deciding that he would not run for reelection?

HM: Well, many people made that assumption, that suddenly, after all these years in a position of great power, as a majority leader up for reelection, would have easily been reelected I think, given the polls, that suddenly he announced that he wanted to retire. And when we decided to get married, he was not sure what he wanted to do, whether he wanted to stay, whether he wanted to run for reelection, whether he wanted to take another position. But I think that had obviously a little bit to do with me, I think he—this you'll have to ask him himself—but I think he recognized that married life is strained when you are a public official, and with the pressure and the strains of the job, and I think it had affected his first marriage as a result. And he was very committed to this marriage, wanting it to work.

And I was very encouraging of whatever he wanted to do. If you want to run and stay, that's great, I'll travel less and get a job where I'm based either in D.C. or New York. If you want to leave, that's fine, if you want to take something else, I mean there was obviously some discussion that he would perhaps consider a seat on the Supreme Court. So I was really open and flexible to whatever it looked like we did. I assumed we would go to D.C., and I was fine with that, and I was also very happy to stay here in New York as well. We didn't really know

what it was going to look like, and neither did he, really, but he came to that decision on his own pretty much.

BW: And when he made that decision, was it one that he found very easy to live with?

HM: Well, it's obviously very hard for anyone to, change is hard, always very hard, we're wired so that we naturally resist change, or most people do. He thinks very carefully about every decision that he makes, very, very carefully, methodically, very carefully. And he felt it was, for a number of reasons, the right thing to do. And although the actual announcement was rather difficult, I think he felt immediately that it was the right thing to do.

And one thing about George, I've learned much from him, and continue to because it's rather unnatural for me, I'm the type, as many are, always second-guessing my decisions, well, shoulda-coulda-woulda kind of thing. Often, I second-guess. And he never looks back, and always says this, "Once you make a decision, never look back because it just is wasted energy. You made the right decision, given the circumstances at that time, and don't look back." I really believe that that's a big ingredient in his success in life, that he just doesn't expend the energy looking back. And I don't think he has looked back.

Clearly there are some days where I think he would see things going on in the Senate and thought, 'well maybe I could have really made a difference.' But really, as it turned out, if he had stayed in the Senate he would never have gone to Northern Ireland, and I really think that he was destined to do that, and he would not have had that experience, clearly. So it was the right decision, it was the right decision I think for him professionally, and it was the right decision for him personally.

BW: And what decisions did you make in terms of your own professional path at that point?

HM: Well, I knew that I did not want to be globetrotting around the world to tennis tournaments; I didn't think that that was very good for a marriage, and I was ready to stop traveling. Around the time of our marriage I was being considered, seriously considered for a position in women's tennis, sort of a new position that was being created as a commissioner of women's tennis, they had not had a commissioner, and still to this day do not have a chief executive [*sic*: they do have a CEO, but not a commissioner]. But at that time I was considering that, that would have been a little more, that would have been based in New York, it would have been a lot easier. But even that, I felt, required quite a bit of travel. Less travel than I had been doing, but still a lot of travel. And although George did encourage me to take it, or to really consider it, strongly consider it—he was being considered at the same time for commissioner of baseball, ironically—but I just felt that if he were to do that and I was to be, you know, he's at Fenway Park and I'm at the Melbourne Australian Open, it really wasn't the best way to start a fully committed marriage.

So I left the agency that I had been working with, and I worked independently as tournament director of a few events where I could control the travel a little bit. And I did that for a number

of years, until I became pregnant with our son. And at that point I realized that I really did not want to work, and I wanted to be home with our baby. George was in, that was when he was deep in Northern Ireland, and I wanted to be home. And I don't regret a minute of it; it was wonderful, those early years. And then our daughter came along just three years later. Our son came, our son was born three years after we were married, so we had a nice long, extended honeymoon, and our daughter arrived three years after that, so I spent those early years home.

BW: While we're on that, let's just follow that track out. What has your subsequent professional life been?

HM: Well, I decided that once our youngest child was in school, in nursery school but at school pretty much all day, that I would want to go back to work in some way or another, but suddenly your needs do change. I wanted to go back to work but I didn't want to travel, and I didn't want to work sixty hours a week, and I wanted to take pretty much most of the summer off so that I could be at our home in Seal Harbor (Me.), and I wanted to take the holidays with the children, and there are not too many of those jobs out there.

But I realized that what I really missed was the agenting part of my professional life, the representation of talent, and doing a little bit of negotiation, doing a fair amount, quite a bit, that's really what an agent does, negotiating contracts. So they're busy, but also the strategizing of a client's profession. And I did miss it, but I knew that I did not want to go back into the sports world. I'd sort of been there, done that. And my great love since childhood has been books, and I have followed the publishing world the way many people follow the sports world. That's the first thing that I jump at in the newspaper, other than the sports page, is the business section to check out the publishing, and had followed the industry as a business, and also was a voracious reader. And I thought to myself, 'why couldn't I translate these skills and work as a literary agent?' I mean, it's the representation of talent, the product is different but it's basically the same.

So I set out to see if I could find an agency that would hire a former professional sports agent, and I wasn't sure if I would be able to find anyone, but I very, very quickly found the perfect agency for me that immediately after I spoke with them said, "When can you start?" And I said, "Whoa-whoa, wait a minute, I'm on my way to Maine for the summer, I don't know if I can start right away." "Well, you start when you come back." And so it's been perfect for me, because I made the transition quite easily, and like in any new business, there still is pretty much a learning curve, but I'm doing what I love, and I'm doing it really for the love of books and the thrill of doing a little business, but I do it on my own terms and it's really great. Someone asked me recently, "Well, what do you do for fun?" And I said, "Well, I work." For me it's fun.

BW: And I assume you stayed with the same agency, do you care to mention that?

HM: Yes, yes, they're great. The agency is called Gelfman Schneider, it's based here in New York, it's a thriving agency, been in the business about thirty years, on 57th Street where all the publishing world is located, two women that started this business, as I said, about thirty years

ago. And there's a couple of very large agencies that represent not only authors but actors and directors and screen writers and film and so on and so forth. And there's a few of them, two or three of them, I knew early on that I did not want that, I think if I was just starting out, that's exactly where I would want to be. But I wanted a small, thriving, respectable, established agency, and that's what I found.

When I was in the sports world, when I started as an agent, I was one of seven agents. There were very few agents, and I was the only agent in fact, female agent, of male professional tennis players. So I was kind of taken aback to see in the literary world that there are literally hundreds of agents, there are just hundreds. There are lots of books that are published, and each book is represented by an agent.

BW: Did they ask you to represent sports writers in particular?

HM: No, they said to me, go after whatever you want, fiction, nonfiction, any kind of nonfiction, any kind of fiction, whatever it is that you are really passionate about. It's hard, the publishing world is increasingly more difficult to sell, I mean we could talk about that for an hour, I won't get into that, so you really have to take on properties that you just love.

BW: I would love to pursue, but we need to get back on track here. You mentioned Northern Ireland, what are the words that sort of first come to mind about that experience from your point of view?

HM: Well, it was a success. There have been bumps in the road since then, clearly, but he persevered, and I remember early on he would go over, and they're so friendly in Ireland and Northern Ireland, and people would stop him on the street and say, "Oh Senator, this is so great, we're so glad you're here. Thank you so much for doing this, but you're wasting your time, this is never going to work. We've been fighting for hundreds of years, and it's just never going to work, you're wasting your time, go back to your young family." And he would hear this over and over again, and I think that really was for many people an impossible mission. And there were many, many days where it looked like it wouldn't happen, and he kept at it, he kept at it, and in the end he was successful.

So, I was very supportive of him. There were several instances where even he got a little discouraged and thought: 'Well, maybe I should really, we're not getting anywhere, maybe we should pack it in.' And I encouraged him to stay. And I had a young baby at the time so it really, sometimes I traveled with him, sometimes I didn't; it didn't really impact the family that much with a very portable young child.

BW: But you had a role to play, I suspect, in the sense of your relations with him, right? I mean, because he could unwind with you, I would imagine, in ways that he couldn't with anyone else.

HM: Oh yes, yes, clearly. I think it was hard, the travel was difficult, he would fly out Sunday

night and go straight into meetings on Monday, and would meet Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, fly to D.C., kind of report in, do a little work in D.C., and then come up to New York Thursday night, Friday, and through the weekend, and it would start all over again. That said, there were plenty of breaks in between, a lot of breaks, long holidays, long Christmas, long Easter, a long summer, so there were breaks.

And I think it was really important for him to know that, you know, Andrew and I were here waiting for him at home, and once he got home with this young baby, who knew nothing about Northern Ireland, it put things in perspective a little bit. And I think it also, he talks about this in his own book, but I think it did motivate him even more having a young child of his own at that time in his life, knowing that our son would grow up in an environment of peace and stability that the children of his age in Northern Ireland had not had for a couple of generations, and I think that that did, it did motivate him, kind of humanized it.

BW: He didn't mention this in his book but once maybe, and that was security issues during that assignment. Was that a -?

HM: Well, it was something I was very, very concerned about. And I remember meeting someone from the State Department who had done a security evaluation and kind of came to report to me, trying to reassure me, but he in fact horrified me more than anything. He said, "Well, the chances of him being the victim of an act of violence are greater on the streets of Washington or New York City, statistically," and that did not serve to reassure me at all. But it was a consideration, although he kept saying, "I'm not a target, I'm not a target; there is violence, there's plenty of it, but it would serve neither side to come after me." I mean, I think that was said just to appease me. Clearly the risk was there, and he could have easily have been the victim of an act of violence, whether intentional or random.

So I was concerned when he was there, especially during certain times when tensions were a little elevated. And when I was pregnant with Andrew I went over during 'marching season,' and I remember looking out of the window of the Europa Hotel, to the huge, huge bonfires that they had every year during marching season, but it was a particularly strained, difficult period that coincided with the marching season and I was requested by the British and Irish governments to leave. So they couldn't really, they felt more comfortable having the pregnant wife out of Belfast at that time. So I knew there was a risk.

BW: Was Bill Clinton in Ireland with your husband at any point? Do I recollect that they did a bit of touring together, or was that not so?

HM: You know, I don't recall, I don't recall. I think I remember a rally that he had come over—I know President Clinton did come over and there was a huge rally, he had tremendous support, and I believe George was there during that.

BW: But you weren't.

HM: I was not, no.

BW: So when you went over, was it during a particular -

HM: I went over in the summer when the weather was nice, I tried to stay away in January and February.

BW: Was he still doing work for Verner Liipfert during this time?

HM: Yes he was, and they were very, very cooperative, allowing him to come into D.C. That's why he would go back to D.C., in fact, into his office and have a couple of days in the office doing his legal work with Verner Liipfert, and then off he'd go to Ireland. George was hired really as an independent broker by the, asked to broker this peace treaty, asked by the Irish, both the Irish and the British government, so many people think that he had a position in the American government. That is not the case, and he received no compensation for this, this he did really as an act of, without compensation, but was recommended and suggested by President Clinton, and both the Irish and British governments asked him to do this.

BW: So was he reporting back on a regular basis to the State Department, or not?

HM: Well he would inform them, yes, of what was going on, but he was really an independent broker.

BW: And was there a particular contact person at the White House during the process?

HM: There were I think a number of them that he would ---

BW: Have you and he made many trips back to Northern Ireland after '98?

HM: Yes, we have been back. He was, until very recently, chancellor of Queens University in Belfast, and we would go over, he went over every year, and I tried to get over almost every year. I think I might have missed a year or two but not many. He would be there for graduation ceremonies and such, and then go over again a couple of times during the year, and I would try and make it at least once, and that was really his way to reconnect with all the people in Belfast that he had been in contact with. It was a very special period of his life.

BW: Now, after that he had many other interesting assignments, like the Sharm el-Sheikh assignment and whatnot. I was particularly interested in his becoming the chairman at the Disney Corporation. How did that work out, and how exceptional was that to his other work and so forth?

HM: Well, right after he made the announcement that he was going to not seek reelection to the Senate, and it had been announced that we were going to get married, he was approached by Michael Eisner, who had just, I think in the previous year had lost the president at Disney, a guy

by the name of Frank Wells. And so Michael had approached George and asked if he would consider the position. And we went out to Los Angeles and met and went to the parks and spent some time with the Eisners and the board, and George decided at that time that it was just too far removed from anything that he had ever done, and that Disney would probably be better served with someone who had more background in the industry, but he did accept a position on the board. And so he was a board member for many years, and then became chairman of the board.

And they were wonderful, it was a great experience. The Disney Company is a remarkable, wonderful, wonderful company. And they did go through a few bumps in the road, and I think his diplomacy skills came in handy, but it was also nice for him to do something so completely different.

BW: Now, he became chairman after Michael Eisner left under something of a cloud, is that correct?

HM: Well, I wouldn't say a cloud.

BW: Well, it was controversial.

HM: But there was controversy, yes.

BW: So did that mean that he really took reins of the company and was making artistic decisions and so forth, or not?

HM: Not artistic decisions, no, he did not make any artistic decisions. There are many capable executives running each division. But he was very, very involved during that period, until there was a successor put in place.

BW: Did he see it as a kind of caretaker position, or would he -

HM: Well, I think he saw it more as a crisis management position for a little while at the end, and it was a difficult period for the company, and I think George was very helpful during that period.

BW: You mentioned commissioner of baseball—we're backtracking here just a little bit—what happened there?

HM: Well that, you'd have to ask him.

BW: And any thoughts about the Supreme Court dalliance, or not?

HM: Well, I think he would have been great, I think George would be great in whatever he does really. But at that time he still was in the Senate and was very involved in health care and wanted to see it through. He's not the type to abandon anything midway, or when things get a

little rough, it's not in his nature. And so even the most appealing of offers, when he's committed at something, he just doesn't like to walk away. So timing's everything in life, and the timing wasn't right.

BW: Talk about the transition from Verner Liipfert to DLA Piper, and was that when he moved his base up here, or was that, had been before?

HM: Well, there were a series of mergers and acquisitions of the law firm, so Verner Liipfert went through a number of incarnations. It suddenly became DLA Piper when they merged with another very large firm. And he had the choice whether to have his main base in D.C. or here in New York, because DLA Piper had a very, very large presence here in New York. And we had considered moving permanently to D.C., we in fact had bought a house, and our son had been accepted at school and we were really ready to move to D.C., but then the merger happened and they did have a very large presence here in New York and we decided that we'd stay here in New York and start our childrens' education here, so here we are.

BW: Talk about the offer to become the special envoy to the Middle East, how did that all unfold?

HM: Well I think George was very surprised to get a phone call one day shortly after the election, to go down to D.C. and have a discussion. And so he did, and eventually there was a phone call, after a number of meetings, and he was asked to serve as envoy. He'll tell you little more about it when you speak with him. But I think he was surprised, although I was not surprised, but he was a little more surprised than I was, and I think it's one of those things, given his background and his experience, that he felt that he had to try.

BW: And has it been at all reminiscent for you of Northern Ireland?

HM: Well yes and no. Our personal situation is different today; we now have two children who are of school age, adolescent, pre-adolescent son and a nine-year-old daughter who's very active. And they're not babies at home that you can kind of wheel them around so they really, they feel his absence much, much more than Andrew did when he was just a young baby. So that's harder from a family, from a personal standpoint; that is much, much tougher. And his travel is longer of course. The Middle East is farther and he's away a lot longer than he was when he was in Northern Ireland. We do not travel with him, as we did when he was in Northern Ireland. So it's tougher, it's tougher. And I think just the problem is much, much more complex than Northern Ireland, and it's a much tougher nut to crack.

BW: Is he in the same kind of a routine that he was in Northern Ireland?

HM: Well there's some rhythm, somewhat, away for an extended period of time, and then back to D.C., and back here and back down to D.C., and then the cycle starts again. But I would say he was much more in control of his schedule in Northern Ireland, and everyone in Northern Ireland were right there basically, there they were in Stormont in one building, and he would

shuffle from one side of the building to the other side of the building, it was a lot easier. This is much, much more difficult, so often plans are changed, meetings are canceled, they're rescheduled, they're moved, he's not completely in control of his schedule in the way that he was, so that's a little bit tougher, tougher for us to plan things and tougher for him, and it's trickier all around, I mean on every level, it's much, much, much harder.

BW: Does he have a team over there?

HM: He does, yes.

BW: And they're located where?

HM: In Jerusalem.

BW: I read somewhere that a friend said that Heather truly is the power behind the throne.

HM: Oh dear, I wonder which friend said that?

BW: So do you want to support that view, or refute it or talk about it?

HM: Well, I like to think I'm a source of support, and I think this has been quite a journey. We had never, when we embarked on this journey together when we got married, we had no idea what it was all going to look like. And it has been a journey, and there's never been a dull moment, and there have been difficult times and there have been great times and times of great joy, but it's really been a, I mean I know it's a cliché to say it's a journey, I mean every life is one, but it's been interesting. And I've tried along the way to be as supportive of him as I possibly can, and I like to think I've done that.

BW: The balance between the public life and the private life, how do you work that?

HM: Well, it hasn't really impacted us in a way that the family of a sitting senator or a governor would be affected. (*outside interruption*) I think that would be much more difficult, where there are many, many more demands on the time on family members. So I think we've been able, there's really no obligation on our part, on myself and our children, to participate in public functions, or without any obligation, the things that we do with him in that part of his life are really out of interest and love and support, but there's no real obligation to do it. Whereas I think it's a little bit different when you're the family member of a member of Congress, I think that's a lot tougher, or any other role as an elected official. He's not an elected official, so conditions are a little different.

BW: Some of his former colleagues in the Senate have expressed recollecting their frustration a little bit because George Mitchell, not having a family at the time or family obligations, was perfectly happy to spend endless, endless hours and keep the Senate in session in those endless hours while all these family men wanted to go home and whatnot. Is he still so full of due

diligence, or have things eased up a little bit?

HM: Well I wonder what kind of a majority leader he would have been if he'd had a young family at home; I think it would have been perhaps a little different. I don't know. I know now that there are many, there are a number of lines in the sand that are made: 'I've made a commitment to my kids to do this, and I'm really sorry but I cannot do that because there's a conflict.' Now, he'll do everything he can to try and work around it and be everything to everyone, and he certainly can't make every single event, on either side, but he really is able to, and he's been very successful at this, to figure out what is really, really important, and to be there for that.

I remember when he was in Northern Ireland there was a meeting that was scheduled at the White House with the president and I think it was Gerry Adams, and there was a schedule for a certain time of day. It happened to fall on Doughnut Day, which was father-and-son doughnut day, our son was really small. And so when I learned that there was a conflict, I said, "George, it doesn't matter, it's Doughnut Day, he's four years old, he's not going to remember, it's okay, you can miss Doughnut Day." [George said,] "No, I told him I'd be there for Doughnut Day, I'm not going to miss Doughnut Day." I said, "There's going to be plenty of Doughnut Days." [George said,] "Not going to be plenty of Doughnut Days when he's four. I'm going to be there."

And I remember he didn't tell [the] president or Gerry Adams that it was Doughnut Day, but somehow he was able to kind of work around it, and he made both events, let's just put it that way. So he's very good. There are plenty of things that he does miss, but he is able to figure out what is really, really important to each of us, to me, to both Andrew and Claire, and he manages to do it. So I think clearly, when you have no family consideration it's a lot easier, a lot easier. But he always used that when he was in Northern Ireland a little bit as a, almost a threat to many that he'd be working with, saying, "Well if we're not going to succeed, I'm getting on the plane, my kids are home, and this is the deadline, I've got a ticket to leave on such-and-such a day and I've got to get home," for whatever it was. And that kind of motivated everybody to move, and he was determined to get home when he said he was going to be home.

And I think that's part of the reason why, in fact, the Good Friday Agreement *was* Good Friday, because he said to everyone, "I'm going to spend Easter with my family, I am not going to be here on Easter, I'm telling you now, I'm warning you now, I will not be here on Easter, if we don't get this done." And so it did get done just in the nick of time.

BW: Do you have any thoughts about second families?

HM: Well it's my first family, so it's kind of hard to ---

BW: No, I understand that, but I mean, well if you don't, it just struck me that he is so enraptured with your kids and whatnot, and that maybe it's a different experience than a first family.

HM: Obviously he would have to answer that himself but I think, like anything in life, you acquire a certain amount of wisdom with age and there are benefits, like anything in life, there are benefits and certain disadvantages of being an older father, benefits and disadvantages. The disadvantage is the obvious, just the age difference, but really the benefits, the wisdom that you have, that you don't necessarily have when you're young and trying to work really hard and establish yourself in a career. And I have to say, with all the demands on his time and the portfolio that he has, he is the dad that's there for that Doughnut Day. And I see a lot of young dads that are here in New York, working really hard, but that didn't recognize the importance of Doughnut Day. I use that as an example, but - And he's able to do that.

And I think he's able to be with our kids when he's here in a way that is completely, he's very, very attentive. And I hear this a lot. I'm used to it because he's always been this way, but I hear it a lot in observations of others, they're always amazed when they see, oh my God, he made it to that event, or I see him out with the kids in the park and the ball, or with the dog, I mean he's very, he's a real participant in the family, and a real hands-on dad, even though he's not here all the time.

BW: George Mitchell has been described to me by so many people as a steady, brilliant dynamo. Do you know otherwise, or is that your husband?

HM: That's him, that's him. He has a great sense of humor. A lot of people don't always get to see that side, and sometimes he can be very serious, the public persona is often very serious, and he *is* very serious, but he has a wonderful, wonderful sense of humor. Sometimes he'll give a speech and the setting won't be really that serious, or the subject matter won't be that serious, and his humor comes out and people come up to me at the end and say, "My God, I had no idea he had such a great sense of humor." His friends know he has a great sense of humor, and he has a warmth, and just a great sense of humor.

And he just doesn't take himself too seriously. I think that's really what I love most about him, is that he's just really, you know, he checked his ego at the back door. I mean everybody has an ego, who's kidding, it doesn't matter what you do or how you live, we all, we're born with an ego. But his could be much more inflated, and he's very grounded, he's just really grounded. That comes I think from his upbringing, from his background, and he's never, ever forgotten that and it's part of who he is. And the kind of self importance that you see so often in people in many walks of life, once they've achieved a level of success, it's just not there.

And he's really easy going. I would say he's just a very low maintenance husband, he's very, very easy going, he's very cooperative, the peace maker, always trying very hard to, just to make things as good as they can be. So he's a very easy person to live with, and he's wonderful, I mean he's the man that I married fifteen years ago and he hasn't changed a bit.

BW: Your smile says it all. Thank you very much, Heather.

End of Interview