

George J. Mitchell Oral History Project

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

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Mary McAleney

(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 May 1, 2008. I'm here in the special collections section of the [Bowdoin College] Library with Mary McAleney. This is Andrea L'Hommedieu. And I want to first start by – we're going to skip over all the background childhood information part of the interview today, because people can refer to the Muskie Oral History where all of that is – and I want to pick up today and begin talking to you, because you're a wonderful source of information for others to talk to, as well as your own knowledge and experiences. So let's just start by talking, we were going to talk about the leadership aspect of Senator Mitchell's career, when he was majority leader, and its impact on Maine.

Mary McAleney: I think that is something, that link is something that is not to be overlooked, because it was incredible and it was powerful and, you know, even to this day I am reminded of things that he was able to accomplish, because he was very cognizant that he was there for the people of Maine and the people of the nation. And, you know, he always said, "Is this consistent with my principles, is it good for Maine, is it good for the nation." That was what he would always say, and that was what he believed, and that was his direction to those of us who worked for him.

And you know, I was thinking a little bit about him this morning and about that time in my life, which was an absolutely incredible time, those ten years – as someone said, 'we ruled the world.' But when I went down to work for him, he was a junior senator from the minority party, and from a small state, and grew during that time. And the wonderful thing was that as he grew, his staff grew. He was always very careful and wanting to make sure that people from within were promoted.

When he asked me to take over the administrative assistant chief of staff work for the state of Maine when he became majority leader, he could have [chosen among hundreds of people]. I think there were a lot of people that said, "Oh, why is he getting her, I mean she doesn't really have a lot of D.C. experience." [p/o] He wanted someone that would take care of Maine, and that did understand about the ways and workings of Washington and understood the staff.

AL: And you did have that experience with Muskie.

MM: Well, I never actually worked for Muskie as, on the staff, but I had worked for Senator Mitchell, I worked for him for ten years, and I was there four years before he become majority

leader, and knew the staff, knew the state, understood how the place worked in Washington, from my time in the legislature, working in the legislature in Maine and things like that. When he became majority leader he said to me, “Okay,” he said, “I want you to watch out, make sure the mail gets answered, watch out for my schedule,” meaning his schedule back in Maine, “and take care of Maine.” And then, as I say, he left, he went over to the Capitol.

But there wasn't a time when I didn't walk over to there and say, “I need to see you about something,” when he didn't stop whatever it was, whatever high-faluting policy idea there was, and say, “What do you need?” Or if he was walking in and out he'd look at me and [say], “No, I don't need you right now or something, I was here for something else.”

He always wanted to make sure that Maine was taken care of. And whether it was with Portsmouth Naval Shipyard, going over to the Pentagon, Les Aspen at the time [p/o] was secretary of defense, going to Aspen to make the case personally. When, going to [advocate for] whatever measure he needed to do, and always consistent with his principles.

To make sure, for example, that DEFAS, the Defense, Finance and Accounting Agency up in Loring, I remember the day I was sitting there in the morning, it was morning, and a fax came in from Mary LeBlanc who ran the Presque Isle office, and it said across the front of it, ‘I want this’.

And it was this huge, incredible opportunity for [p/o] [Aroostook], and so we started to work on it. And there was a woman, Kelly Riordan [Horwitz] from Livermore Falls, [Maine], she was at the beginning of her career, and she put that argument together, she figured it out. This is an example of him bringing along younger people and mentoring them and making sure they had opportunities – and she put that argument together, made sure that he was comfortable, he was comfortable with it, and we got, it was not until after he had left the Senate, but today that agency up there in Loring, the Defense Department just added more people to it. That was something that he personally paid attention to.

He would personally pay attention to, for example, research at the University of Maine on wood composites [p/o]. There was an early project on what was called timber bridges, using laminate, and there was money in the Interior Appropriations for a large number of these bridges. [p/o] Senator Byrd was chairman not only of the whole Appropriations Committee but the Interior subcommittee, so he wanted a large portion of these for his state. So Senator Mitchell [p/o] said, “Figure out how to do it, we know that it's not going to happen this way [in the Interior Appropriations Subcommittee], figure out how to do it.”

Well he was on the Public Works Committee, Environment and Public Works Committee, so [through] that subcommittee, we were able to get funding for that project. And today, if you look at [p/o] earmarks [coming] through, you'll see money in the Interior Appropriations and Environment and Public Works, or whatever that subcommittee is, for wood composites and timber bridges. Because that was George Mitchell [p/o], he would say, “Figure it out how to do it and then come back and talk to me.” [He has] an incredible understanding of human nature, an

acceptance of human nature, knowing that you're not going to change how someone behaves, so you've got to figure out another way to get the job done. He was an incredible teacher that way, incredible teacher.

You know, another example of him thinking about Maine was the, there was an Eastern Fine Paper in Lincoln, they were selling, what they did was they brought sawdust in and processed sawdust and turned it into paper. And it all had to do with federal procurement, federal buying, and if it was a certain amount of post-consumer waste, a.k.a., recycled stuff, they would be able to sell to the federal government, and they were making a large portion of their product and profit that way.

Well, somebody somewhere decided that this really wasn't post-consumer waste, this stuff. And we knew that if that did not happen and it was not, we did not make the case, we had to make the case all the way up through to President Clinton that this was post-consumer waste, we had to still do it, you know, to define where Senator Mitchell was in his whole philosophy and background. But Senator Mitchell ultimately went to President Clinton and said, "Look, this is why this is consistent with the rules and regulations." But he would do that in order to help Maine people. That was, you know.

The other thing is, the same woman, Kelly Riordan, who was the woman that did all the work on the DEFAS in Washington, one night again I was sitting there – it seems to me I sat a lot, you know – and he called. The phone rang, and it was probably nine o'clock at night, and he said, "I've got a position over here on the floor, starting position on the Senate floor," and he said, "I was thinking Kelly Riordan would be good for that." So here's the Senate majority leader, okay, running the whole Senate, and thinking, hmm, this woman from Maine, she's very smart, she'd be very good over here; I know what she can do. You know? And here's, you know, daughter of a truck driver, you know, but she's very, very smart; a lot of smart young people that we were able to hire.

AL: And was she, did she go to Washington?

MM: She came down to Washington, yeah, yeah. I mean, during the time that he was majority leader, it was wonderful because any kid – kid, I call them kids, they were like twenty-two – and there's a big growing period of a person between the ages, when they graduate from college and that first year of college, it's almost – I used to be a teacher – there's other jumps in people's lives when they first leave home and go to college, and then there's another one, there's also the one between eighth grade and high school and, you know. But this was a big [one], and the opportunity that Maine kids had during that time, that there wasn't one of them that got off the bus or the boat or the train or out of their car, that didn't have an opportunity for a ninety-day job, whether it was parking cars, working in the copy room, working in the mail room, working on the doors in the Senate, running the elevators, you name it. And they could in that ninety days, they'd have money, they'd have a job, if they hustled, they would figure out to get a, you know, a permanent job.

And, you know, there were kids that, for example, wouldn't think the elevator would lead you to much. But if a kid was smart and learned to recognize every senator, and learned to watch and listen for the train, to make sure that these poor guys wouldn't have the elevator shut in their face, I know two or three kids that got hired by other senators because the Senator said, "Hey, that kid's smart, he recognizes who I am, and I've seen him wait for other people, I've seen him be kind and nice, I've got an opening on my front desk, we'll start that kid there."

But it was, there was, one day there was a kid, the only kid that we ever had who didn't, quote/unquote, 'get it.' And Bob Bean, who was the deputy sergeant at arms, Bob called me up and he said, "Mary, this kid," he said, "I had to bring him in and talk to him this morning." He said, "And I said to him, 'are you sure you're really from Maine?' Do you need money to buy an alarm clock?" And the kid was kind of taken aback. Bob said, "I've never met anybody from Maine that didn't show up to work on time, and didn't give more than a day's pay for, you know, a day's work for a day's pay." You know, "Are you really sure you're from Maine? Is there something going on in your life?"

But it was an incredible, and that was just another thing that he, when he said to me, "Take care of Maine." It was, that was what we would do. And then the other sort of fun – there was a lot of, I mean it was an incredible opportunity, it was just unbelievable, unbelievable. But to ensure that the policy that was going on in Washington was consistent with how it would impact Maine was something that I would always have in the back of my mind and constantly kind of watch for. And whether it was health policy – [Christine] Chris Williams, I'm sure you'll talk with Chris, she was the health policy person. She did an incredible job of understanding the Maine people and taking that to a national perspective.

One of the things I used to do early on was, before he became leader, I would come home in the summer, and I would go around to the field offices and while somebody went on vacation I would fill in. It was great, because I got a sense of what was going on on the ground, and that you needed, with the job I was doing, you needed to know what was going on on the ground.

So one day I was in the Augusta office and a man came in, one of the legal services for the elderly guys, and had a woman with him. And they told the story of this woman who was, her husband was in a nursing home. She had done, as most women had done, had stayed home and ran the house and brought the kids up. He was the one that had the pension. When he went into the nursing home, the fees for the nursing home took all of his pension before Medicaid, Medicare kicked in.

So there was a piece of legislation over in the House called the Spousal Impoverishment Legislation, and what that did was reserve a certain amount of assets for the community spouse. And after those people left I called Chris, and I said, "Chris, this is horrible." "Oh, I know it is, I know it is," she said, and there's something over on the House side. I said, "Well maybe you can get, I said Senator Mitchell just had a constituent come in here, and I said, if we would, "do you think we need a meeting?" And she said, "No, I'll go talk to him, I will start this process." I mean, and that was something that he, because somebody from Maine had brought that to him

and he had a face on that. He worked so hard, and today that is, that's law. And, I mean when my dad went in the nursing home my mother was able to live. I mean, we would have taken care of her anyway, but you know, a lot of people don't have that.

Things like that, that little tiny, you know, money for the College of Art in downtown Portland, the old Porteous building, an EDA grant to rehab that. Portland in those early years, during that time, downtown Portland was dying, Porteous closed, there was nothing. It was like a person without, like a Jack-o-lantern with no teeth, you know. The Bates Mill in Lewiston, huge EDA grant that he procured for the roof and heating system and the windows, and today that's a huge complex, that whole place is buzzing, as you well know. But that was because, if he hadn't gotten that EDA grant for that mill, it'd probably fallen into itself. Because there was no heat, those people took the boiler out of it, if you can believe that, those bandits.

You know, and you will hear a lot more when you talk with other people about the individual things that, you know, if it was a national policy on education, how would that help the people in Maine. And then, you know, always wanting to come back, and spending time in Maine, very, very careful, no matter whether he was running the Senate Campaign Committee, or whether he was majority leader, to spend time in Maine. Not just in Portland, not just in Bangor, not just in Lewiston, but in Calais, and Presque Isle, and Rumford, and Dover-Foxcroft.

And, you know, I have a great picture of him from when he was elected majority leader. He had, he decided that, because he was elected, reelected to the Senate in 1988, and that was also when he was also elected majority leader. And he decided after the election that he wanted to go do a tour all around the state, and I at the time was still doing the scheduling so we put this tour together. And he said, "One of the places I want to go," he said, "is I want to go to Talmadge Plantation." Talmadge Plantation was the only place in Maine that he lost. He said, "I want to ask them why they didn't vote for me, I want to meet with them, I'd like to see them."

So by the time that the tour actually happened, he had been elected majority leader. So of course the crowds of people were huge that came to congratulate him and see him, and just talk about their thoughts and their fe-, and it gave him a really good grounding opportunity, a grounding opportunity. And Talmadge Plantation is -

AL: Where is it?

MM: Well, it's on Route 1, between Princeton and Topsfield, and it's sort of near Grand Lakes Stream. I happened to know where it was because I grew up in Vanceboro, which was not far from there. And so, we sent out the regular meeting notice of a town meeting, but we went the extra mile and - because first he was nervous that nobody was going to show up, and so I actually, we actually called, because there was only maybe fifty voters in the town, so we actually called them all and invited them. And it turned out that the person who was the town clerk was someone whose family I had grown up with so, you know, we start yapping. And a few days later I call back to make sure everything's all right, the night before when I called back to make sure everything's all set, and she said, "Oh yeah, we've got quite a crowd coming," she

said, “we got a lot of people coming,” she said. “In fact,” she said, “we read that he likes chocolate so we’re making, we’re going to have a little lunch for everybody and we’re going to have a package for him.”

So the night before, I guess he must have been in Aroostook County, he was probably in Presque Isle and finishing up there, and so he called, talked about the next day. And I said, “Oh Senator, you’re going to have a good crowd there in Talmadge.” “Oh, how come, I’m worried.” Then he was worried that, what were they going to talk about. I said, “Senator, remember, they’re feeding you. Maine people don’t feed people that they don’t like.” “Oh, okay.”

But also he took the time, because the plane landed in Princeton, there was a third grade teacher in Calais – I think it was third grade, she might have been fifth grade, third or fifth grade – who, her students kept winning this national environment award, so they had won the award again that year. And she said, “Oh, he’s going to be so close, can’t he come and meet the kids.” So I talked to him about it and he said, “Do you suppose she can get a bus and get the kids out to the airport, and I can meet with them” – pray to God it wouldn’t be snowing or anything. And so that was what we did, and the kids, of course the bus got there a little early and there are these wonderful pictures of all of these kids in the [plane], I think the kids had more fun in the airplane [p/o], and great pictures of him with those kids, and they gave him a wreath and he congratulated them.

But those are a lot of the things that he went out of his way to do, he went out of his way to go to every high school in the state, he went to every high school in the state. It took him a lot of years to get to every high school. But he went to Allagash, he went to Islesboro, he went to North Haven, he went to Vinalhaven, every place there was a high school, he went.

And, you know, when he left the Senate he designed that scholarship program. Somewhere, I think I’ve probably given it to the scholarship people or something, but I have in his own handwriting changes to that program, to ensure that the impact would be greatest out in the rural areas of the state. I mean the one scholarship to a student in every high school was his dream, and when we started there was thirty scholarships that we gave out, but that no high school would get a second one until every high school had gotten at least one. And there were people who said, “Well that’s an unfair advantage to the kids from Portland,” for example, because there’s three hundred kids graduating from Portland and there’s only maybe ninety-eight graduating from Shead in Eastport. And he said, “That’s the way I want it because I want to do something for those kids.” And that has been his passion since he left the Senate.

His ability to understand human nature, to listen, to hire good people and give them the flexibility and trust [them] to get the job done, and the trust to know when to go back to him and say, ‘it’s not working, and this is why.’ That is the amazing thing for me.

And then, oh, there’s another, there’s a funny story of him thinking about Maine. They [p/o] have these caucus lunches, so all of the senators of each party gather and have lunch and talk over their strategy, their policy. And senators have their lunch, the staff doesn’t, so the staff

would be sitting around the edge of the room and just listening in case, if it was an issue that you were interested in. I can't even remember why I was there, I don't know what it was, something. Maybe I just decided to go.

[p/o] So all of a sudden I'm sitting there and I realize that he's [p/o] motioning to me. So I go up and talk to him, and the senators are in this horseshoe and they all have their little sandwiches and their chips and their sodas or whatever. He said, "Look at this, this water's not from Maine," he said, "there's no water here from Maine. Call up, call up every bottling company in the state of Maine and figure out how many of them want to send bottled water down here and we'll buy it in the Senate." So of course we did. And I don't remember, there was a little [company], it wasn't Poland [Spring], there was a little company that started sending bottled water down there.

AL: And it wasn't Poland Spring?

MM: It wasn't Poland, it was some other company, but there were six or eight companies and they all, we called them all. But there he was, sitting there, [p/o] but he was thinking about Maine, thinking about bottled water from Maine.

AL: That's a great story.

MM: It's just, that's the way he was.

AL: I have a question. You were to take care of Maine, and Senator Mitchell's focus, as you said, really always had a very special link to Maine. Were there others on his staff who wanted, who pulled him in other directions? Did you have a lot of pressure from other staffers you worked with to split his focus?

MM: No, no, I didn't have a lot of pressure, no. And I'm glad you asked that question, because what it was, was that was my focus. Whereas the people who were in Maine's stock, it was, Mary LeBlanc, her focus was Loring Air, Aroostook County, and that was was the only thing she was supposed to care about and the only thing she did care about, you know. Somebody else might only care about, their issue might be just, well I mentioned Chris with health care, health care was her issue; that was her responsibility. Someone else's issue might be, let me think about this, might be endangered species, and if there was something, and their focus would be the Endangered Species Act, or wildlife and fisheries. But not necessarily keeping in the back of their mind, how is that going to impact Maine. But there was always, there was an incredible opportunity to use the people in Washington, the policy people in Washington who were the best and the top of their game, to benefit Maine and to work, the two groups working together to make things happen was incredible.

Some of the things that, when you talk with Steve Hart and Mary LeBlanc, Steve was the agriculture person in Washington, and Mary was in Aroostook County, so that back and forth. With the fisheries back and forth, when you talk with Bob Carolla and you talk with Larry Benoit or Tom Bertocci, who were here in Maine. The Bath Iron Works, that was Larry and

Tom here, but really, whoever the person was, whether it was Bob Carolla or Brett O'Brien in D.C., they may be doing defense work but they paid a lot of attention to Bath Iron Works, so I didn't mean to say that there wasn't that.

[p/o] One of the things it was important to make sure it was never two conflicting memos that went in to him. Sometimes – I'm trying to think of how – one of the things that he did, and it probably was consciously but – he being Senator Mitchell – but never looked at that, was that the conservation policy people were different than the industry policy people. And sometimes there would be [conflict] [p/o].

And if the conservationists, they had to have, he required them to have good science; he believed it had to be based on a lot of science. And I can remember a few times where, and it was important for those two groups of people, the conservation staff people and the industry staff people, to talk. And lots of times for me, it wasn't so much of me with my input, but just to sit there and listen to them talk. And then they'd figure it out themselves. They'd come to a conclusion. They always did, because they were smart people most of the time.

I remember one day two of them walked in, started [p/o] at each other. And I was on the phone and doing something, and when I got off the phone I looked, and they looked at me and I said, did you want something? No, we figured it out, we'll see you later. [p/o].

AL: What was Martha Pope's role?

MM: Martha was, Martha had several roles. Martha was staff on the Environment and Public Works Committee, and she was legislative director, and then she was chief of staff before he was majority leader. And then when he became majority leader she was, she went over to be chief of staff of the majority office, and that was when I took over her job in D.C. And then she later became sergeant at arms, and John Hilley became chief of staff in the majority office. And then later, near the end, she became secretary of the Senate and Larry Benoit went down to be sergeant at arms in the Senate, and that was after he announced he wasn't going to run again.

I liken what I did to a fleet of ships, and each ship, a hundred ships, and you got a hundred captains on the ships, a.k.a., the senators. And you have a hundred first mates, a.k.a., whether you call them the administrative assistants or the chief of staff. And it just happened to be that the captain on my ship happened to be the admiral of the fleet. So it was a different way of managing things. And one of the things that I did, whether it was Martha or John Hilley, was probably two or three nights after six o'clock was to go over there and just, we would sit and talk to make sure that if there was something going on that affected Maine, that they weren't blindsided by it. The big thing was not to blindsides somebody.

And that was a lot of the thing was, because there was a lot going on, particularly when he first became majority leader. Someone, it was Bob Carolla that said, "This was like going from being the, running the corner hotdog stand to be the head of McDonald's." And Senator Mitchell, because he trusted the people that were around him a lot, that staff gradually became the policy

staff for the national policy, whether it was Chris Williams or Bob Carolla or Steve Hart or, Kim Wallace, Bobby Rozen, a lot of people that you will interview. [p/o].

AL: No, we can't pull them all from our memory, that's why we have lists. And now, then Martha Pope later worked with the Senator on the Northern Ireland thing?

MM: She did, yes.

AL: And that was just sort of in later years they connected again, right? Or were they -?

MM: He went to Northern Ireland right after we left the Senate, or not long after. And I don't remember, I think Martha had finished her time in the Senate and she'd been there long enough to get a, she could retire from the Senate if she wanted to. So he went to Northern Ireland shortly after he left the Senate and had asked her to go with him and run that shop. The other person that went and did work for him over there is Kelly Currie. Kelly started out in the mail room, and he was our press person from Maine in the early, when, he might have been there when, I think he was the first press person that we had after Diane Dewhirst went over to run the majority press operation. But Kelly went over with Martha, and Diane did some things over there, too, Diane Dewhirst.

So Martha, Martha probably worked with him longer than anyone else, when you're looking at the Northern Ireland time and going back to the Environment and Public Works, when he first went to the Senate.

AL: Did you have the opportunity to observe how they related to each other?

MM: Yes, yes, yes, and I think there was a great respect for each other's intellect and ability to get things done. And I think that he placed an incredible amount of trust in her.

AL: I want to talk a little bit more in depth about Loring Air Force Base and the closure. You were on the working committee? Is that correct to say? You're listed as part of the – let me pause just a minute.

(Pause in taping)

MM: Well, isn't that funny I don't have that time in my mind, I'm usually pretty good about times.

AL: That's o.k. We can always research that.

MM: The, well Loring. First of all, prior to the list coming out, there was always a lot of work done by the Maine delegation to ensure, to help the community make their best case, to ensure that the base didn't, none of the bases got on the list. And at that time it was Portsmouth, Loring, and Brunswick. There were also some, like Cutler and some smaller ones down on the coast.

And I remember at the time, it was Brunswick that we were most concerned about. And when we worked on projects like that, Bill Cohen and George Mitchell always worked together. There was no surprises, there was no big-footing each other, there was no, because they realized it was the only way to get the job done.

In fact, I was talking yesterday with someone who was in Aroostook County during that time and was talking about Mary LeBlanc and Senator Cohen's staff person, Dale Ashby, and he was kind of joking, saying, you know, "Those two, sometimes you couldn't tell who was working for who."

But it was very important to work together on that and use, leverage each other's strengths and expertise. And the, so when the list came out it was a huge kick in the gut, because we would not have been surprised had it been Brunswick. And I remember getting a call from Bob Tyrer, Bob was my counterpart in Senator Cohen's office, and he said, "I got the list, it's not good, it's not Brunswick, it's Loring." And it was like the wind had been knocked out of you, because Brunswick would have been bad, but Loring, because, you know, Aroostook County economy is agriculture, forestry, and defense, it was, and it used to be three, almost a third-third-third. But defense had gotten, if my memory serves me correct, a larger proportion [of the economy]. But to have that huge part, a third of that economy pulled was just, and not being near anyplace.

So once we knew it was Loring, then the next step was, okay, now we know we have to fight this battle before the Base Closure Commission. Then it was a tremendous amount of work on, with Mary LeBlanc coordinating the community up there, with Bob Carolla, and there was an intern, Megan Maloney, who spent the summer with us, who's now back in Maine, Brett O'Brien, other, you see the whole list of people there. But it was chiefly Bob Carolla and Mary LeBlanc that worked on this day in and day out. Bob working on the D.C. part and the national part, and Mary with the community up there, to put the best case forward for that. Including such things as comparing other bases, trying to make the case for Loring's strategic location, using maps, polar maps, to show how close it is to Europe and how there were, I mean everything that we could possibly think of, and using the best minds whence that working group to figure out how we could make that case, and how we could best make that case, down to the day that they took the vote.

And the day that they took the vote, my memory is, we weren't sure. I think there were seven people on the commission, and we knew we had three but we weren't sure of the fourth one. And then we ended up not having that person. So that, then you knew it had closed, or was going to close. And there was a time line from, several, a few years, until it did close officially. But during that time, the squadrons began leaving, there was no, not a lot of maintenance done.

The difference in the law then, than it is now with Brunswick closing, is that, the law has changed so that at that time they had to give it to the community, and the challenge then became twofold: one, to ensure that the Defense Department provided enough funds to keep the place in well repair, and that they cleaned it up – once Kate Kimball was involved in that, because Kate did the Superfund stuff – but to make sure that they cleaned it up, and to make sure that they kept

the place maintained, heat, lights, kept the runway intact, kept the runway plowed, all of that stuff. And actually, and that was George Mitchell and Bill Cohen who stuck to their guns and forced that issue. There's a huge difference now than there was then, because then the Defense Department had to spend the money to keep the place going.

And that was a boon to that economy that helped. Then the next thing became: how do we find tenants? What do we get there? We knew we had to have some federal anchor tenants – by then Clinton's in the White House – and that was whence the DEFAS thing came in. Mary saw that somehow, I don't remember the details, she'll remember, and we thought, "Okay, we got to get this thing."

Sandy Brown did a tremendous amount of work there. Sandy was the one that identified the Job Corps, there's a Job Corps center there. The other thing that is there is the – and again, we made the argument to the Department of Labor that the Job Corps should be sited there. Robert Reich was the secretary of labor at the time, he was very helpful, but he listened to our arguments. The other thing is the Maine School of Science and Math, and we got some funding to start that up, that was another thing, that was a Sandy Brown thing. She's got to be on your list to talk to, Sandy, about Amtrak and -

AL: The name is there. I didn't know the connection, so this is wonderful.

MM: She, so that was the next thing. [] We were trying to figure out, what can we get there, what can we put there? And we gradually sifted through a lot of things, realized the DEFAS, realized the Job Corps, realized the Science and Math. We had this 'brilliant idea,' quote/unquote, Bob Tyrer and I, that maybe federal prisons. So I remember we had the guys from federal prison come up and talk to us, and we said to them, well, you know, we were talking about how wonderful this facility was. And the guys looked at us and said, "How many days a year can the prisoners go outside?" because they were all from the South. Well of course, I don't know whether it was Tyrer or me, [p/o] it was I that said, "Well it depends on whether you have clothes on them or not." But it was very foreign to them, and then we realized this was not a good match. And their actual legitimate argument was, look, that is so far away from everything, how would you feel if a member of your family – most of the federal prisoners don't come from New England, so we knew that wasn't going to work.

But that's just an example of what we were trying to do. Anything, any idea that we had we tested it, and some worked and some didn't. And it was just, I mean Mary, I don't know how Mary did it because she, it was at that time that we got someone to work with her, because she was working fifteen hours a day and she still, she still had kids at home. Her husband had died years and years before, so she was a single parent.

So that's my recollections of the Loring, that it was a very, very, very scary time. Paul Haines had been involved when, as had Severin Beliveau, in the initial Loring during Muskie's time, as was Jim Case, and Paul again was of great help to the people in Aroostook County in getting

them, helping Mary help them speak to one voice, and also to come down and be the person down there. He had the flexibility – well, they might have paid him, for him to come down. But he was just there.

He became, he drank a lot of coffee, Paul did, and he was an early morning person. So by the time I would come in in the morning, which would be about nine, Donna Beck always came in at six thirty, Paul would have already been there. Once he found out that he could go in by seven o'clock in the morning and start drinking coffee with Donna, he was a much happier camper.

(Taping paused)

AL: We are now on Side B. And so you were saying Paul Haines really became one of you, and he was independent.

MM: He worked for the Loring, Save Loring Committee, that was his, that was the group, okay. It was Save Loring, and then there was, I think it had three names before they actually took the vote, and then during the time before they actually, whatever it's called now, in fact Mary LeBlanc is on that Loring Development Authority. Governor Baldacci appointed her to that. So she would have a lot more of the details than I would on that; she and Bob Carolla.

AL: Is Bob Carolla in Maine?

MM: No, he's in Washington. He did the defense work, he also did the fisheries work. And it would be, he would have, Bob would have good perspectives on the, what was required of Senator Mitchell in working to preserve and protect the New England fisheries, versus the west coast fisheries, which are very different. Because the New England fisheries are very small, small boats, family owned firms, and the west coast boats are much bigger, much huger, bigger, bigger boats, so it's a different fisheries. So again, to strike that balance, to strike that balance, and Bob was very good at that. He also was involved in some lobster issues between Maine and New Hampshire too.

AL: And then you were also involved in a lot of labor issues, small business, that type of thing, weren't you?

MM: Well I never really did specific policy issues. And I'll tell you a funny story about that. When I went down to work for Senator Mitchell, I wasn't really sure what I was going to be doing. My friend Charlie Jacobs had decided to come home, and he had been the scheduler and the liaison with the Maine staff, and he and Larry called me up one day and said, "Charlie's coming home. We think you should go to D.C. and do this job." And I had never thought of leaving Maine, I was perfectly happy, I was almost forty years old. But I thought, well okay, I'll pursue this, and I pursued it, it was about a year I guess. And Gayle Cory called me and said, "Senator Mitchell would like you to come work for him," and I was right in the middle of a, I worked for the Maine State Employees Association and I was right in the middle of a campaign,

inter-union campaign. And I said, “Well Gayle, let me get through this and I’ll call you back in three or four weeks, I just got to get through this campaign.”

So ultimately I decided to go, and because it was an opportunity, and it wasn’t really clear what I was going to be doing. And I started out, I had agriculture issues – I met with the Senator before I went down, and he said, “Well, I just want you to help me with Maine.” And I said, “Okay.” And so I started out, I had HUD, which was housing, I had labor, because of my labor background, and I had agriculture. And I think I might have been there about two weeks when I got the schedule too, the Maine schedule. And that really, since Charlie had gone there wasn’t really a system and it hadn’t been a priority, and I could see that that was very important. And what was happening is that I gave up the HUD, and I gave up the agriculture, because I knew I couldn’t do it. Because what would be happening is there’d be things crashing in the Senate floor, and then there’d also be, the two portfolios didn’t fit.

And Gayle Cory said to me one night, “Come out to my house.” Whenever Gayle said to come out to her house you knew, oooh, you could be in trouble here. So, and she was like our mother, for everybody, she was our mother. So we’re sitting there at her kitchen table, and she’s got her unfiltered Pall Mall and her whatever-she-drunk, she drank whiskey or brandy or, not brandy, but whiskey or scotch or something, and I don’t know, I must have been having wine, and we’re sitting there talking. She said, “Now look, tell me where you think you’re going to, how you can be the biggest help to George Mitchell. Do you really think he needs your help on deciding how to vote on a labor bill? Or do you think he really needs your help in figuring out, to make sure the maximum use of his time when he’s in Maine, and to make sure that the people in Maine are happy with what he’s doing?” And I said, “Ah, I think you’re right, Gayle.” And she said, “All right then, give up this.” She said, “You can get involved in any policy there is going on, because you’re going to do the scheduling, you’re going to know about Maine.” And so that was what I did.

And so there wasn’t an issue that I didn’t get to get involved in, because if he was going someplace, I had to make sure that he knew what was going on. Or there would be an opportunity. I also, because I had worked in the legislature and had, in different capacities, I knew the Democratic legislators, and so that was an opportunity to use what was going on in Maine, and perhaps leverage some of those good ideas in Maine to national issues, because there’s a lot of good ideas that come out of Maine. Witness the, you know, the Spousal Impoverishment Bill. But there was a lot of good things.

So I didn’t really do any policy, per se. But there would be a lot of good ideas that would come out of Maine that Senator Mitchell would get when he had constituent meetings. Or, our biggest fear would be, on Friday night before there were direct flights to Maine from Washington, that he would be in Boston, and we always knew we would get a call from Boston, because he’d check in, and that was when Martha was chief of staff, that’s why I remember it the most, we’d all have to stay until he got through Boston, because we knew, a) he would call in Boston, b) you’d never know how he was going to get home from Boston, which was the scary part because

you never knew what the planes were going to do, and really, you just never knew which constituent he was going to run into and get a good idea. And he'd call and tell us about it, and we'd follow up on it. There were a lot of good ideas that came out of [that airport].

You know, the intermodal, the Surface Transportation Act, where, that there were monies set aside for bike paths and walking trails and things, that came out of Maine, that came out of the Portland Trails group and Dick Spencer and [Nathan Smith]. That was an idea that some people said, 'hey, you know, if we're doing this huge transportation project, we should set aside some money for.....' And Senator Mitchell was on the Environment and Public Works Committee [p/o]. So it was, a lot of good ideas coming out of Maine.

[p/o]

AL: And I want to ask about Gayle Cory, because we can't interview her. Can you talk a little bit about her? Now, she was with Senator Muskie and then came, did she ever talk about, to you, about the differences that she faced with the different styles of the senators?

MM: Well, I think that Gayle – God, I miss her – she, well she went to work for Senator Muskie when she was nineteen years old. As she said, they needed someone, she might have been twenty, but she was very young, and they needed someone who, as she used to say, knew the bus schedule, or knew where Capitol Hill was. But anyway, she went down there, she was already in Washington working, I believe, for the phone company or something, so she was hired as one of the early staffers. And during that time, the number of staff that people had when Senator Muskie went down there in, was it 1959, wasn't anywhere near the size that it was when I went there in 1984, and even now it's bigger but, because the issues have gotten more complex.

So Gayle went there to work and did everything, whatever needed to be done. And, I mean I first met her in 1976, and she was the, she was the person who watched out for Maine, for Senator Muskie. She was the person that was there when I went down, she went with Senator Muskie when he became secretary of state, but after that election when President Carter lost, Senator Mitchell asked her to come back. And he had hired, David Johnson was the AA, chief of staff, and David, God, an amazing person, but didn't know Maine. So he asked Gayle to come back to do the Maine thing.

And so Gayle did, but she also, Gayle had a way of watching out for everybody and making sure that the job got done. One night I remember, I said, "Gayle, I've got to get out of here before ten o'clock because I have no toilet paper and no soap, and the store closes." She said, "Take a roll of toilet paper and a bar of soap from the bathroom and just stay here and finish your work." That was Gayle, okay? She always was quick to find a solution.

One of the things I remember during the '82 campaign, and I was in a panic. We were having a concert down on the coast somewhere, and you never wanted to have a small hall; you had to have a big crowd. And of course the way to have a big crowd was to have a small room. Well

this place was a little bit bigger than we anticipated, so I called Gayle, I said, “Gayle, what am I going to do?” [p/o] I said, “The place holds five hundred, we only have three hundred.” She said, “Is there a balcony?” I said, “Yes.” She said, “Condemn it.” So we took this yellow tape, put it across the balcony. Place looked full. That was Gayle, you know?

She taught you how to live by your wits, and she could find anybody anywhere, before cell phones, before..... She tracked down Leon Billings one time on the airline, on Route 9, because what did she do? She called the county sheriff. I learned to do that. One morning I couldn't get hold of Jan Welch [Barrett] early, early, early in the morning, the phone was busy, busy, busy, busy, it was about five o'clock in the morning, and I figured her phone was off the hook. So I called the Lewiston cops and asked them to go over and tell her to put her phone on the hook.

But that was Gayle, Gayle taught you to do things like that. She was very caring, very caring but, and at the same time, and she was strategic, she was smart, she figured out how to make things happen. And when Senator Mitchell became majority leader, the first appointment that he made was to appoint Gayle the postmaster. And as she proudly said, “You didn't see any trouble with the Senate Post Office.” Because he knew that that could be a tricky place, he knew that could be a tricky place, he knew it was a job that Gayle could easily do. And at the same time, she could go home every night on the train at five o'clock. And that was his way of paying her back, but at the same time utilizing her skills and having her still there so that I would go down and have lunch with Gayle once a week, I'd just go sit there and talk. And you just never knew what you were going to talk about or what you're going to learn or, if I had something that I was, needed thinking on, I could go down and Gayle would help me figure it out before I had to bring it to Senator Mitchell [p/o].

AL: Did she ever talk about where she got her sense of, her wits and just the know-how and, she grew up in Maine, right?

MM: She grew up in Maine, she grew up in Bath. Her father came from St. John Plantation, and they came down to Bath to work in the shipyard. And of course her brother was Buzz Fitzgerald, and he worked there, and his son is there now doing the same job as his dad did.

But she, how she got her wits? No, I think, she must have been born with them. I mean, an uncanny sense of, and a sense of humor, and an ability to just know what the right thing was and know when to smell a rat. During the years that she was the postmistress, one of the things I [remember], she would come up and visit Donna Beck and Anita [Jensen], and she'd come up and hang out. And when it came time for the Clinton inaugural of course, and Mitchell was majority leader in the Senate, is in charge of the inauguration, so of course everybody in Maine wanted front row seats [Gayle was a big help with that]. I never again will have a party for twelve hundred of my closest friends in the Russell Senate caucus room.

We had these massive lists of people and so I had Gayle come up, and I had some people who were at the beginning of their careers working with Gayle, and Gayle sitting there, going through

these index cards, and she could tell you a story about most all of these people. But I wanted to make sure there wasn't an old friend that had been missed, because it was very important not to. But she knew, she was amazing, just amazing, amazing person.

And a testimony to that is that, three years ago the staff gave in her memory, the Senate staff raised one hundred and twenty thousand dollars for a Pioneer, Mitchell's Senate Pioneer Scholarship, in her memory. And there was probably sixty or seventy people, and there were people like Kim Wallace and Bobby Rozen, that weren't from Maine but their way of saying to Senator Mitchell, "You gave me an opportunity," and saying that Gayle helped, that was their way. And they gave a lot of money; people reached deep into their pockets. And some people, everybody gave what they could, and everybody was very, very generous. So that's a testimony to her, a living testimony.

But I don't know where she, she just was born with them, I would say [p/o].

AL: Now, can you talk a little bit about the reelection campaigns in '82 and '88?

MM: Hmm-hmm, hmm-hmm.

AL: What your role was to make sure things went smoothly in Maine?

MM: Well, in '82 I ran the field office in Lewiston, and I was hired to, I was hired probably in July, and I had Androscoggin, Oxford, Franklin, Kennebec, and I had a couple of counties on the coast. I know I had Knox; Knox, Sagadahoc, and Lincoln; that's it, all those counties.

AL: That's a lot, not Somerset, though.

MM: No, not Somerset, no, not Somerset, no. So I started out, there was me and a woman named Emma(?) LeBlanc, and we were in Lewiston. And of course that was, well 1982, that was a while ago. So, Louis Jalbert still pretty much reigned supreme, but there were also a lot of new people coming on. And Joe Brennan was running again for governor at that time, so we had a campaign office there on Main Street, a joint campaign office.

It was my job to run the campaign on the ground, the field operation in those counties. And along about probably August or so, there was a guy named Bob Johnson who moved back to Maine and wanted to, so he was essentially a full time volunteer for Kennebec County, he worked for like fifty bucks a week or something like that, for Kennebec County. And then of course as the season wore on there were more, Estelle Lavoie, I had the best fun with Estelle, because Estelle came up after the Senate got out of session, and Estelle is from Lewiston and she's a French speaker. So she came up and stayed with me, and we worked must have been three or four weeks at the end of the campaign together. And it was great, it was great. And, you know, to get, I mean at the beginning of that campaign I do believe that Senator Mitchell was thirty-seven points behind David Emery.

AL: Yeah, I was going to ask you about that, it looked like a very uphill battle.

MM: It was a very uphill battle and, but I think the economy had a lot to do with it, but I think also – during that time when Muskie, from the moment Muskie was appointed secretary of state, George Mitchell didn't lose a beat to stay focused in Maine. He was out in Maine everywhere. Witness the stories that he used to tell about having his picture taken with the cows. I mean, he went everywhere. He held hearings on Social Security all around the state.

I remember going to one in South Portland. It was, in the beginning we loyalists would show up to fill up the room. I remember one morning my mother, this was a little bit later but, "Ma, where are you going?" "Well, dad and Johnny and Katherine and I are going down and sitting with Larry Benoit's parents, we're going to go sit in the front row because they're having a hearing on the elderly, so we have to make sure that we're beginning to fill up the room."

But he was so incredibly articulate, and he had these hearings all around the state. And I remember, it was a hot summer day, had to be probably eighty-one or something like that, listening to him, thinking this guy's brilliant. People were [really listening], and I knew it before, but during that time had refined his way of speaking and presenting. He just was everywhere, he was everywhere in that state. He came home every weekend; he didn't stop. And he didn't stop going to mill gates, and he didn't stop listening to people, and he didn't stop responding, and his staff didn't stop working.

I mean, Larry Benoit, Larry must have lost fifty pounds during that time. I mean David, the people in D.C., I mean they just, and then they all came up here, as soon as the Senate got done they were all here, working their tails off. Donna Beck and, she used to laugh about going to Sanford, she and Frank, her husband, door-to-door in Sanford. But he just worked, he worked hard and expected everybody else to work hard, but he worked so hard that you had to work, you had to get up awful early in the morning to get ahead of him, you know. Or at least stay up very late at night.

So that campaign was a lot of work. Because of the groundwork that he had laid, there was a wonderful, loyal contingency, he had the Democrats, he had the Democrats. And he had worked so hard during that time up to the election that he had the Democrats. And he had, there was a, during that time there was the Kennebec River Whatever Race, and so the Kennebec – there's a picture around here somewhere of the Kennebec – the Kennebec County Democrats decided they were going to have a float, and they, they were going to pass out food or something so I remember we were planning this, a great [event], who was going to be there, what their theme was, and had all these George Mitchell tee shirts on and all this stuff.

And then there was some discussion about should George Mitchell be on this raft. No. 'No' on raft, 'no' in funny vehicles, and 'no' funny hats, it was a rule. And, "Oh, it would be really good if he could be on the river." No, no. And actually, David Emery was on his raft, and his raft

sunk which of course, this is July, gave us great glee, because we figured it was a, it was a sign. It was a sign.

So that campaign was, it was an incredible campaign because of the people coming together to make that happen, and the loyalty that he had earned. And in Lewiston the young people like Greg Nadeau and Paul Dionne, and the older people like Dick Charette and Roger Pouliot, I mean people that, Jim Dionne, gave hours to make it happen. People up in Rumford, the Irvings and just all over, in every pocket there were people that would get up early in the morning and work to make that happen.

AL: And who did a lot of driving?

MM: David Lemoine.

AL: Did a lot of that driving.

MM: David did the driving, and David will have wonderful stories. The oral history would not be complete without stories from, driving stories from David Lemoine and from Jeff Porter. Larry drove a lot on the Senate staff, Jeff did the driving on the Senate staff, and then he also did the driving during the '88 campaign. And then of course Clyde McDonald can give you wonderful driving stories, and he's a great story teller.

AL: And driving stories are so wonderful, in and of themselves.

MM: Well they are because things happen the way they happen on the road, the driver has to be a very, very special person, because it has to be a person that the Senator feels extremely comfortable with, but who is there and alert all the time, and has so many – Tom Bertocci did a lot of driving, too – you have to be aware of things that are happening and anticipate things. Make sure that Jeff tells you the story of the night that they left the Chocolate Lovers Fling, and David can tell you the story of the last morning of the campaign in '82 – I won't tell those stories – and Clyde, get Clyde to tell you the story of the night they went off the road somewhere between Dover-Foxcroft and Bethel. But then there's other, there's others. Clyde will have wonderful stories of traveling through Washington County. And then of course Mary LeBlanc, when he went to Aroostook, Mary always drove him. So make sure that Mary tells you the story of the time when she was very sick and really shouldn't have been out of bed, and also the time that they went to Madawaska. They'll be funny stories, okay? Yeah, they're their stories, not mine.

AL: We are at twelve fifteen at this point. Would you like to stop today, and possibly I might come back to you again, would that be all right with you?

MM: That would be great, that would be wonderful, yes.

AL: Great, thank you very much.

MM: You're welcome, Andrea.

End of Interview