


4-22-2010

Interview with Kelly Currie by Brien Williams

Kelly T. Currie

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Recommended Citation

Currie, Kelly T., "Interview with Kelly Currie by Brien Williams" (2010). *George J. Mitchell Oral History Project*. 159.
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George J. Mitchell Oral History Project

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Kelly T. Currie
(Interviewer: *Brien Williams*)

GMOH# 209
April 22, 2010

Brien Williams: This is an oral history interview for the George J. Mitchell Oral History Project at Bowdoin College with Kelly Currie, deputy chief of the Criminal Division of the U.S. Attorney's Office for the Eastern District of New York. We are in Kelly's office in Brooklyn, New York. Today is Thursday, April 22, 2010, and I am Brien Williams. I'd like to start by asking you to give your full name and spelling please.

Kelly Currie: Sure, my name is Kelly Currie, K-E-L-L-Y, middle initial T, and last name is C-U-R-R-I-E.

BW: Good, and the date and place of your birth?

KC: I was born on September 11, 1963, in a town called Lewistown, Montana.

BW: And your parents' names?

KC: My father's name was Edmund Currie, and my mother is Bette Currie.

BW: And a little bit of your own family background.

KC: I'm the youngest of six in my family, my parents moved to Maine when I was five, we moved to Farmington. My dad at the time, and thereafter, was a professor of education at the University of Maine at Farmington, my mom worked as a nurse. I went to public schools in Farmington, graduated from Mount Blue High School in 1982. After that I attended the University of Virginia and graduated in 1986. It was a short time after graduation, in January of the next year, that I started working for Senator Mitchell on his staff in the Senate.

BW: Was your family very political?

KC: No, they weren't. My parents were people who always voted, always paid attention to current events, to the news, read the newspaper and that kind of thing, the radio was always on in our house. But they weren't the kind of folks who got involved in campaigns themselves, or were politically active in that way.

BW: And what was the transition for the family like, going from Montana big sky to New England and Maine?

KC: It was interesting. Our family story about it was that when my dad was finishing his graduate studies he had two job offers, one was from the University of Maine at Farmington and one was from a small college in Colorado. And my parents decided to go to Maine because I think the salary was about five hundred dollars more a year. So in the summer of 1969 they packed us all up in a station wagon and we drove to Maine, to start our life there. And Farmington is a great place to grow up; it's idyllic in the sense of community that you find there. On the other hand, at that time, late 1960s in Maine, Maine can be a bit of a parochial place, so I think that there were a couple years of adjustment for my family, especially being so far away from all our extended relatives, but ultimately I think pretty soon it felt like home for us.

BW: And did your parents stay then in Maine?

KC: They did. My dad passed away in 1988, after working at UMF for eighteen or nineteen years. My mom stayed for a few years after that. She later relocated to the West Coast in Seattle, where my older sisters live, to be a little closer to them and their families.

BW: Did you have trouble adjusting to and being accepted by the students in school?

KC: I don't really recall any of that. I was five and so the fall we moved there I started kindergarten and for me it was, I didn't really notice anything like that.

BW: So tell me about the steps from the University of Virginia to George Mitchell's office.

KC: Well, in some ways it kind of boils down to the old joke, that there's only thirty-seven people in the state of Maine. And the reason I say that was, when I was in college I always had had an interest in current events and politics in particular, I read a lot of political biographies and the like, but during summer vacations during college I worked in Waterville at a basketball camp, first it was at Thomas College and then it was Colby College. And I got to be close friends with Senator Mitchell's brother [Johnny], "The Swisher," and at some point I told Swisher I'd be interested in an intern in the Senator's office, and so Swisher helped make the introduction there. So the summer before my last year in college I got to spend eight weeks in Washington, working as an intern on Senator Mitchell's staff, with about another eight or ten kids, almost all of them were from Maine. So that was how I got to Senator Mitchell's office, was in some way directly through his brother John.

And so after having worked there for a summer, I graduated the next year, went back up to Maine, and actually spent that fall working on Jim Tierney's campaign for governor at the time, this was in the fall of 1986. Jim Tierney was the attorney general, he was running for governor against John McKernan. There was actually, as you may recall, there were two Independent candidates in the race at the time, and I actually got connected with the Tierney campaign through somebody on Senator Mitchell's staff who knew Jim and knew people on his staff. So Jim Tierney hired me to work as kind of a county organizer, so I did that for the fall, and unfortunately Jim didn't get elected. So after that I packed up my car and moved to D.C., I

wanted to work in D.C., I wanted to work on the Hill. And so I was pounding on doors, and was lucky because around the time I got there, there was an opening on the Senator's staff. I got hired as a, what at the time they called a legislative correspondent, which is someone who's responsibilities are, among other things in addition to doing some research and the like, [to] help respond to constituent mail and draft responses on particular policy kind of issues and the like.

One other thing that came with that job is, usually around that time the Senator would have a young staffer who would be the driver, drive him around Washington if he had meetings or appointments to get to and it wouldn't make sense to have him try to park the car or whatever. So one of my jobs was driving the Senator around D.C., or driving him around the airport, and sometimes driving him around up in Maine as well. So that's how I got to Senator Mitchell's staff.

BW: And so with that tour you were then on the payroll; you were no longer an intern.

KC: Yes, that's right.

BW: And just one step back, I don't think you mentioned what you majored in, in college.

KC: Oh, in college I was actually an undergraduate degree in, at the University of Virginia, in commerce, which is like a business, undergraduate business degree, so that was what my degree was.

BW: And as legislative correspondent, what was your bailiwick?

KC: Some of the issues I had were Finance Committee issues, so everything from the budget to tax reform, which was something that was going on at the time, during the Reagan administration. But you should understand that I wasn't the principle person responsible for those duties, there were others, for example Bobby Rozen, who you may have talked to, was the Senator's Finance Committee expert, and veterans' affairs was another issue I had, government affairs issues, and some defense issues.

BW: A fast learning curve? I mean, I know you weren't initially responsible for these issues, but -

KC: Sure, yes, it was an exciting place to be, especially if you're a young person working on the Hill, and a lot of interesting things going on at that time period. So you had to learn a lot about a lot of issues in order to be able to help draft the Senator's response to people who would write to him. And so I had that job for about a year, and then the Senator asked if I would be interested in working on press. So I became a deputy press secretary after about a year on the job, which again, that position is one where you have to know a little bit, enough about everything that's going on to be able to write about it or talk about it, but in some ways you learn in less depth. For example, I could be drafting a statement or drafting talking points for the Senator, or writing press releases about various topics, and you have to understand and know

enough about what's going on, with the help of others, to write about it, but then it's usually on to the next thing.

BW: And you were deputy press secretary, is that right?

KC: That's right, Diane Dewhirst was the Senator's press secretary, and later I think her title changed to communications director.

BW: And how did you and she split up responsibilities?

KC: I was her deputy, so she was my direct boss I guess. And the way it usually worked was, I was principally responsible for the home state media, whether it's the reporters who are based up in Maine or those who were in Washington who were kind of covering Maine press for the papers up at home. So my principal responsibility was to deal with the home state media, whereas Diane focused on the national, although there were plenty of times where we were, where I would helping her on some of the national stuff, and I was often seeking her guidance on issues with the home state media.

BW: Was your means of communication mainly by the printed word and by direct contact with these reporters, or were you holding press conferences? There was none of that.

KC: No, I wasn't the one holding press conferences. And this is kind of the rule for Senator Mitchell and throughout my interactions with him, was that we, the decision was, you wanted him to be the one making the quote for paper, being the one on the radio or on TV, so it was more a liaison role. Sometimes it was a matter of providing background to reporters about whether it's a particular piece of legislation or issue, and so they have the context to which to write their stories.

And another part of the role for that job was, the Senator always wanted to maintain outreach to the people of Maine and he saw using the press as one way to do it, but obviously with regular communications with the reporters who covered Washington who he knew very well, and the reporters and editors up in Maine. Also, he would do a weekly radio address where we would record in the Senate recording studio, and I would play the part of the questioner about whatever the topic of the day was, ask him some questions, and he would answer them and then we would make a bunch of copies of the tapes and send it up to the radio stations in Maine. And they could then put in their own reporter or reporter's voice asking the questions, and then you'd have Senator Mitchell, or they could take excerpts of it, use it however they wanted to do it. So that was one way we tried to be in regular contact.

Another way was, the Senator would send out a weekly column, *This Week in Washington*, where it would be about something going on, often with a tie to something in Maine, and so that was another one of my responsibilities was to help come up with that and often write a first draft for him to review before we would then send it up. And it was particularly directed at the weekly newspapers. And some of them would take parts of it, some would run it in full, others

who didn't use it said that they liked to have it just because it kept them informed about what the Senator was doing.

And one of the things that the Senator was very good about, and savvy about, at least during this time, in the late 1980s, is that he recognized the role of the small local newspaper and radio station up in Maine. And he would spend time when he was traveling around meeting with these people, always making time for them, making sure that if you were working press for him, you were in regular contact with some of these editors and reporters up in the state. Because all of that I think goes to the fact that the Senator really would strive to try to stay in touch with folks, and feel like he was both hearing what they had to say and also that, obviously from his perspective, you give the impression that he was engaged with that. And that was one of the ways that he wanted it done, and the ways that the staff came up to help with that.

BW: Now in '88 you were the press person for his reelection campaign, correct?

KC: Right, right. So I moved up to Maine early part of that year, and obviously I worked out of the Senator's Portland office and did my usual press duties. When it was time to do campaign related duties, I would go down the street to the campaign office and make phone calls there, and I think the way they worked it out was, the campaign paid some of my salary, the Senate paid some of my salary, and as we got closer to the election I think I went full time on the campaign payroll and off the Senate payroll. So it would be sometimes a little amusing. I'd be talking to reporters about something going on in the Senate, and later on in the afternoon I'd be down at the campaign headquarters and saying, "Okay, I'm calling about this (whatever) campaign issue," whether it was a campaign event or things like that, and so it was, I think, an important thing to do but - So I was back and forth a bit.

BW: You mentioned being the chauffeur, so what was that like? Because you got to see the Senator from a different perspective.

KC: Right. Well, in Washington it was, he knows Washington very well, he lived there for a number of years, he knew Washington better than anybody so he would be telling you directions, to go down side streets or cut through this alley because it's going to end up over on this place, right where we want to park. He always had great advice, and there were actually times that he wanted to drive, he was just like, 'move over, I'm driving,' and he would. He likes to drive fast too, by the way, and get to where we were going. So he knew D.C. really, really well, so I learned D.C. really well, partly because he knew it so well.

In Maine it was a little different. I didn't often drive him up there, but sometimes, particularly the year of the campaign, if I was up there - he had a regular driver, Jeff Porter - but there were times when I would have that role. And on those trips, and I remember one in particular where we kind of were doing a trip through western and central Maine, and he's talking to a few high schools and he's doing that kind of thing. He would often work in the car. He always had materials to read with him, so he would often spend the time to work, or to take a quick nap. And it was really pre-cell phone days, so he wasn't really working the phones in the car. And

obviously on those longer trips, the Senator, since he knows Maine extraordinarily well, knows everybody everywhere, he'd sometimes tell a few stories about, we'd drive by a certain place and he would tell a story about somebody who lived there or something like that.

BW: And going down a lot of back roads to save time in the state, too?

KC: Yes, yes. And again, he was great about knowing some of the back ways that I didn't know.

BW: Now I suspect when you were driving and he shared the front, he was in the front with you, he was not a back-seater.

KC: Yes, of course, no.

BW: Were there I guess times when he was relating some Maine history to you, an occasion where he was sort of talking off the cuff and non-business area. What about around town, were there times when you just chatted, and if you did, what would you chat about?

KC: Well, he liked to talk about the Red Sox or the Celtics or, I don't remember if I talked to him about the Patriots or not, but he was interested in that. So I remember sometimes driving, he'd like to have, if it was the summer time he'd want to have a baseball game on the radio, because I think he liked to follow that, too.

BW: Was he a slightly different personality in campaign mode and home from what he was like on the Hill?

KC: I think he was pretty consistent, but if you saw him do a campaign speech at a rally kind of event, it's obviously a different kind of event. He was great at it, he was great at getting a crowd excited and building up enthusiasm, and he always went out of his way to try to help other candidates at the time. When he was up in 1988, of course Joe Brennan was a [U.S. House] representative then, he was also on the ballot, and the Senator would go out of his way. And one thing that was different about it is, for the Senator, he is a very engaging public speaker, and he would adapt a little bit of his demeanor to the context. So a campaign event where it's a room full of people that you want to get excited to go out and get out the vote, there's going to be a different speech than one where he's talking to a chamber of commerce, and so he obviously adapted to that. But his personality didn't change dramatically because he was in campaign mode, I think.

BW: Did he rely a lot on humor on the campaign trail, or not?

KC: Yes, I mean he's a raconteur, he's a good storyteller, he has a lot of - And one of the things that the Senator has is, he has kind of a self-deprecating sense of humor, and so he would often tell stories or like to tell stories where he was the youngest brother in his family, and his older brothers were the great athletes and he was sort of always Johnny Mitchell's little brother.

So his humor was often self-deprecating and kind of at his own expense, and often had a theme to it, or some message relevant to his stop.

But one thing that I remember during that campaign is a speech he gave to a group of people, it was a town hall kind of event, and somebody raised a question about jobs, and so he talked for a little while. But one of the things that he talked about, and I think very movingly and poignantly was how when he was a child at home, at some point his father was unemployed for about a year, and he described how hard it was for their family, how hard it was for his father who wanted to provide for them, and how very badly his father wanted to work. And it was obvious to everybody that it was real to him, and so he could really relate to folks in a way that they responded to.

BW: Talk about the ambiance of the office in Washington, what was it like as a workplace?

KC: It was a great place. There were a lot of really smart, bright people there, most of them pretty young, and lots of people with ties to Maine or from Maine. Not everyone, but lots of people. I think we were all very proud to work for the Senator because he was the kind of boss that we felt he was making the right decisions, we felt that his intellect was obvious, and at the time he was, during the time when I started to work for him – well actually, this is an interesting story.

In 1985, the Democrats were in the minority. The Senator had been reelected in 1982, so midway through his first full term, Democrats are in the minority. So the summer of 1985 I'm working for the Senator and I recall myself and one of my fellow interns were in an elevator in the Senate Office building and some man struck up a conversation, "Are you here for the summer? Who do you work for?" And we said, "George Mitchell." And he said, "That George Mitchell's about the smartest guy in the Senate, he's really going places." And he could have said that no matter if we had said we worked for Howard Metzenbaum, maybe he would have said the exact same thing, but, and so I remember that.

And this is at a time when, pre-Iran-Contra, where he got a lot of notoriety and national attention, and I remember I started working for him right as the committee was being formed. I started working for him full time in January of 1987, and so there's an example of where we were all very proud of what he was doing, because it was an interesting time in the country. Obviously President Reagan was very popular, the Iran-Contra hearings were, it was a bipartisan committee, combined House and Senate, and the atmosphere was one I think that, obviously there's political overtones and undertones to the hearings, but it didn't strike me, from my perch as a young staffer, as being really rancorously partisan. And Bill Cohen and George Mitchell were both on the committee, and people who were smart and tried to flush out the facts.

And I think the Senator's contribution - It was interesting at the time. I can remember at the time that they announced that there was going to be a joint committee, and there was speculation in the press about who's going to be on it, and who's going to be prominent, and I remember at the time Dan Inouye was on it, Senator Inouye, the senator from Alabama – Howe [*sic*: Howell

T. Heflin]? He was a former judge, and people are thinking, 'oh, he's a former judge, he's going to be great.' And in those speculative articles, they didn't mention George Mitchell very much. He had - Nineteen eighty-six was a good year for the Democrats, they gained ten seats I think in the Senate, took over the majority, he got a lot of credit for that, but it wasn't surprising to us that he excelled in the committee.

And obviously the confrontation with Oliver North, you look at what that was built upon, in some ways he spent his whole previous life getting ready for something like that. An attorney, a student of politics, he was the United States attorney in Maine, he was a federal judge, and so his performance in the committee was something that, from a staff perspective, we were all very proud of him, and at the same time wasn't a surprise to us; we knew what his qualities were.

BW: You were not in a press position at that time, you were direct correspondence.

KC: Yes, right.

BW: So looking at him becoming majority leader in the end of '88, what did that look like from your perspective?

KC: Yes, that was interesting, because he's obviously running for reelection to the Senate in Maine, and there's the separate campaign, if you will, for majority leader, which is an insider's campaign. At the time there were fifty-five Democratic senators, so you're looking for twenty-eight votes or whatever it is. And I remember during the campaign occasionally he'd be asked about it, and he'd always just say, "Well my first priority is to get reelected to the Senate, my second priority is I'd like to be majority leader." And I can recall in, it must have been late October of 1988, a few days before the election, he had an interview with the reporter from the *Maine Sunday Telegram/Portland Press Herald*, his name is Steve Campbell, and I remember we did the interviews at the airport in Portland, at the Jetport. And we're going through a number of things that Steve's interested in, and he gets to the part about the majority leader's race.

And the Senator, any other time before then that I ever heard him asked about it he said, "Well I think I can win, I'm going to do my best," something like that. At this interview he said, "I believe I'm going to win." And I almost fell out of my chair, because Senator Mitchell is cautious, right? And I keep thinking that at some point I want to ask him about this, but at the time it occurred me that George Mitchell doesn't make these predictions lightly, so I'm thinking he thinks he's going to win, he actually believes it. He wouldn't be telling, it wouldn't be in his interest in any way to tell the reporter from the biggest newspaper in Maine, 'I think I'm going to win,' if he didn't really think he was going to win. So to me, after that I was confident.

And you'd see in the newspaper that, at the time, Senator Dan Inouye was running for majority leader, and also Bennett Johnston was running, and I remember they were all predicting they were going to win. And so at the time we were thinking, well, but I just thought he wouldn't be telling the Maine reporter this if he didn't really think he was going to win. And so in my view

he must have had enough commitments he thought that were solid that he was going to win, and it turned out he was right.

BW: It was also I suppose a little bit of a risk, how that would play back in the Senate, announcing beforehand he won it.

KC: Right, and who knows, maybe that was part of a calculated strategy, because everybody wants to make it appear that they've got the momentum and the votes and this and that. But nobody in Washington was reading the *Maine Sunday Telegram*, right? I don't think – so it was interesting. So I just remember that as pretty clear, about the majority leader race, about how that seemed to shift, at least from my perspective.

BW: So then when you did take on the press role, well you were, I'm sorry, did you stay in the Russell office, or did you go over when he became majority leader to the Capitol?

KC: I stayed in the Russell office. But that in some ways was, I was back and forth to the Capitol all the time.

BW: And where was Diane?

KC: Diane was over in the Capitol. His staff got bigger, obviously, as majority leader, and he would still come over to the Russell Building sometimes and work there or hang out, but he was pretty constant about it, just because of the nature of the way the Hill works. Even if a staffer's office might be in the Russell Building, if they had something, a committee somewhere or business on the floor, they were going to be over there.

BW: And during the period when you were the deputy press secretary, what were some of the big issues you were handling?

KC: Well again, some of the issues that were, I was primarily focused on the home state media as well. And I can't remember if this came up in 1989 (which is after he took office as majority leader) or not, but one of the issues that came up a few times was base closings. And so that, or worry about base closing, whether it be Loring Air Force Base or the Brunswick Naval Air Station or something like that, so I remember those were obviously very important local issues.

The other thing that was going on in 1989 was Clean Air, the Clean Air Act, important for the state, important for what the Senator wanted to do in finally passing a renewal of the Clean Air Act. So I remember Clean Air being very big in 1989, and 1990.

BW: What about the tax bill in '90, were you involved with that very much, or not?

KC: Not in a direct way.

BW: I asked you about the ambiance of the office, and we got off a little bit on that. Were there personality clashes, or did everyone work well together?

KC: I think for the most part the staff worked really well together, and I think that's a tribute to a number of things, to the kind of people that the Senator will hire, the leadership in the office in terms of the staff positions, Martha Pope, Mary McAleney. Not to say that there weren't ever disagreements between staff members, but for the most part everybody was trying to contribute in any way they could. And it was a great group of people, really nice and friendly. One of the things that I think was reflected in that is, people were seeing each other outside of work. People were having barbecues, or we played on the same softball team and all this kind of thing, so it was like your work and your social life, at least for me at that time, was all kind of wrapped up into one.

BW: So with all those good feelings, why did you leave in 1990?

KC: I left to go to law school. And I remember at the time talking to a few people who were lawyers who worked for Senator Mitchell: Bob Rozen, Bob Carolla. And at the time I thought, I had in mind coming back to Washington, but they advised me that they thought having a law degree would be beneficial no matter what I ended up wanting to do. And so I was tempted to stay and go to law school at night and continue to work on the staff, but I ultimately decided that the best thing to do was to go, leave at that point and go full time.

BW: And where did you go?

KC: I went back to the University of Virginia for law school.

BW: And then where did your career take you?

KC: Well, during law school I spent, it was during the 1992 campaign, so I took a fall semester off of that year to work on the Clinton-Gore campaign, and I was doing advance for Vice President Gore's side of the campaign. So I would travel around the country doing – advance work is setting up events, lining up the local media, et cetera, et cetera – so I did that for that campaign. So when I finally, as a result I finished law school a semester later than I would have, I finished law school at the end of 1993, and after that I accepted a job at a law firm in New York, at the time it was called Rogers and Wells, and so I moved to New York at that point and began work as an attorney here.

BW: Was it hard to not go back to the Hill, or had you really, with New York beckoning, that was great.

KC: It was. I thought seriously of going back to Washington, and at the time I thought that New York was something I hadn't done, and an opportunity to try it, and I could always, thinking in my mind, that I could go back to Washington if I decided that's what I wanted to do.

BW: And were you at that firm in '96, when -?

KC: Yes. So I started in the firm in 1994, early part of the year, and then Senator Mitchell began his involvement in Northern Ireland. The first part of his involvement, he was a special economic advisor for President Clinton, and later took on the role of chairing the commission to address what they called decommissioning of arms on the paramilitaries. I wasn't involved at that point. So the arms report came out, I think that was in December of 1995, or January 1996, around that time period. As a result of that report they had, in Northern Ireland they had local elections which set up the political talks which began in June. And the British and Irish governments asked Senator Mitchell if he would chair the talks, having gotten to know most of the political leaders in Northern Ireland, and I think having gained some of their respect, the governments thought that he was a natural choice to be the chair.

So after he became chair of the talks, he reached out and asked if I could come and work. And I remember at the time he said, "Well the governments are telling me it's going to be six months." And so I talked to my firm, they were great, they said, "Sounds like a great thing, go do it." Of course it ended up being a lot longer than six months, but, so I joined Senator Mitchell in June of 1996, working on the talks, and at the time Martha Pope was his chief of staff, and David Pozorski, who was a career Foreign Service guy, he was on the staff, and I was the third.

BW: And what was your role?

KC: It was a mixed bag. My role was, in part it was dealing with the media, but only part of it. It also involved doing everything from participating in meetings on behalf of the Senator when he wasn't there, meeting with the political parties, the leadership of the Northern Ireland parties, the British and Irish governments. In some ways I guess I'd liken it to, it was a political kind of job in the sense that you had to gather the intelligence, if you will, of what's going on on the ground, or among these people, and sort of help the Senator in his role of first of all getting the talks launched. And also during the process of the negotiations among the parties, sounding them out, talking to them sometimes informally, trying to figure out, help figure out where different people or different parties stood on particular issues, or where we were in the process, and try to give advice on how to move the process forward.

BW: So that's quite different from being a mouthpiece, which a press person can be.

KC: Right, well, and part of the reason, one of the things that was true about the way the Senator approached the media while he was in Northern Ireland was, he didn't want to be having a role where he was talking to the press very frequently. He didn't want it to be where every day, at the end of the talks, he's making statements or things are coming out of his office about how things are going. Because at the time, all the parties - And the Senator said that what discussions happen here are confidential. Of course the parties, being parties, they would kind of go out every day and the press scrum would be there, and they'd say, 'well I told him this and I told him this.' So I think the role for the Senator and my role was a little different, in the sense that he didn't very often want to go talk to the press, only when he thought it would make a

difference or be important, and there's a couple examples of that.

When the talks finally got started in June of 1996, the first thing that was supposed to happen was the parties were going to agree essentially to the rules of procedure. And you'd think that that wouldn't take all that long. It ended up taking the summer, because the discussions about the rules of procedure were really a proxy for everything else, so everybody got a chance to air out their reservoir of grievances or their positions, and the Senator was chairing that process. And so it took all summer for the rules to be agreed. And there were a couple times where he did go talk to the press, and this is in the context of that summer, where there were a lot of bad things going on in the street.

In Northern Ireland, some of the traditional Unionist marches were very contentious, particularly if the marches went through neighborhoods that had become predominantly Catholic or Nationalist. One of the infamous marches is one in the town called Drumcree, and it was a march by the Orange Order through a certain neighborhood called the Garvaghy Road, and there had been a lot of contention over parades that summer, it was a very tense summer. And that summer, the Parades Commission in Northern Ireland stopped the march, which – actually, I'm sorry, they let the march through. Actually, I'm trying to remember whether they stopped it that year, or the next year they stopped it.

But in any event, I remember that summer was a summer of lots of burning cars, lots of throwing of Molotov cocktails. I can remember, we were staying at this hotel in Belfast called the Europa, which is right in downtown Belfast, but nearby was a neighborhood that was of these small little row houses that folks there call council flats. And on the sides of the buildings on the end, people would paint elaborate murals. And this particular neighborhood happened to be a Unionist neighborhood so their mural, I remember, was of King James on a horse, commemorating the Battle of the Boyne in 15-whatever [July 1, 1690]. And part of the tradition is bonfires, and so in this particular neighborhood there was an open lot pretty close to the hotel, and they built probably a three-story bonfire, very elaborate, and they have a bonfire committee and everything else, and so they have a big bonfire in it, and for them it's part of their tradition and their culture.

But in the days leading up, it was very tense. I remember before the night of the 12th when the bonfire went off, there was some sort of a confrontation on the street that we watched, and young men were throwing Molotov cocktails at British soldiers and RUC, the Royal Ulster Constabulary, the police, who had these armored Land Rovers, and they managed to ignite one of the Land Rovers. Nobody was hurt or anything, but they burned out a Land Rover, and the crowd was very excited about that.

But then the night of the bonfire, it was this three-story bonfire, within a hundred yards of the hotel. And I remember walking out among the people there, and for them it's like a celebration of their culture. In this particular crowd there was nothing that was particularly sectarian or anything going on. But in any event, some of the marches as part of this tradition of the summer were contentious if they went through particular neighborhoods, and so there was a lot of rioting

in Belfast that summer. So in the meantime, what's going on at the talks is these discussions about procedural rules, and so what's going on in the street is being reflected by what's going on in the talks by their representatives, talking about the violence, or talking about whatever their perspective was.

So in some ways the Senator, when he would go make a speech and the questions would be along the lines of: Senator, isn't this doomed to failure? Isn't what we're seeing on the streets? And at this time the IRA was not on cease fire; earlier in the year they had ended their previous cease fire. I think the day I flew over to join Senator Mitchell's staff there was a bombing in Manchester that the IRA did, and so there's a tremendous amount going on in the streets, and people were very discouraged. But the Senator, I think strategically, gave a brief press conference, make a few statements to the press saying that he believed in the process, he thought that there could be a solution, and in a way, using his role very effectively to help keep things going.

Because there was pressure on a number of the politicians to walk out of the talks, based on the violence, based on the strife that summer, and particularly there were a couple parties that traditionally represented what had been loyalist paramilitaries, and so they're sort of akin in that way to Sinn Fein. On the Unionist side they're much smaller, their representatives were people who had – many, not all – had served time in jail for their activities, and a very interesting group of people to talk to because they ultimately signed up to the peace process and decided that the best solution for their communities was peace rather than the continuation of the violence.

So going back to your point about the press is that the Senator at times would use his position and the respect he had, to basically keep the talks going by talking to the media and saying that he actually believed that there could be progress and they could get a solution. And I think that was important.

BW: He makes that point in his book about the talks, saying that he didn't realize going in that one of his responsibilities was to be an optimist.

KC: That's right, that's right.

BW: So what you've just been talking about was mainly occurring in '96, so that was two years away from the -

KC: From '98, yes. So ultimately, I remember one of the things that happened right, ultimately at the end of July, the parties agreed on the rules of procedure, and they probably didn't look very much different at all than they did in June. But right around that time, the Senator's brother Robbie had been ill, and the Senator had seen him, had been to visit him, and was hoping I think to make it home, to get this particular part of the talks finished and be able to get home to see Robbie again. But it was either the day before or the day that the rules were agreed, Robbie passed away. And I know the Senator is close to all his siblings. I just remember at the time the press had learned of it, and I think we released a very brief statement at the time

that the procedural rules had been adopted, but I remember the Senator going out and the media folks were expressing their condolence to him. And it appeared that it was very difficult. It would have been difficult for anybody, but he stayed for that, even though he knew his brother was ill and he would have liked to have been with him.

BW: Overall, what percentage of the time was he with you?

KC: Well, if you talk about that time period, he was there a lot. The talks didn't necessarily sit every day. If the talks sat three or four days, or three days in the week, he may try to go and take care of some other business, but that summer he was there virtually all the time that the talks were in session, listening to the hours and hours of debate. So he was there a lot that summer, and obviously was there when Robbie passed away.

And so that was 1996. One of things I found kind of amusing is, for some of the Northern Irish politicians at the time, they were standing and talking about the crisis, 'this is a crisis, we've got to move things forward.' And particularly there was one guy whose name was Robert McCartney, who represented a small, very strident Unionist party, and he was talking about the urgency, but at the same time, as we were kind of coming to the close of the procedural rules debate, he essentially let it be known that he wasn't going to be around the following couple days when we were going to do that, because he was heading off on vacation. So everybody took their vacations seriously. So we were off from August until later in the year.

I recall the fall of 1996, winter into 1997 as being, again, it was difficult because there was a lot of violence on the ground still. One of the things that I'll remember is Belfast latitude is pretty far north, and so in the winter the days are short, it starts getting dark early. In the summer it's great, because it's light out until ten at night. And frequently cloudy or rainy, and one of the things in Northern Ireland is, folks burn peat in some of their houses like in little wood stove kind of things, so there's this smell of burning peat that's kind of in the air. It's not unpleasant necessarily or anything, but it's just distinctive, I hadn't really lived or been anywhere where people would burn the peat. So I can recall just a long, rainy, cold fall and winter, the smell of peat burning as you're walking around Belfast.

And again, it was a situation, heading into 1997, where one of the things going on politically was John Major was prime minister, and there were going to be elections coming up, and everybody in Northern Ireland was going to be running for election as well, at least for the parliament. So there was that context going on too, and with the IRA not on cease fire and Sinn Fein not in the talks, the challenge was to keep the talks going until political conditions could be right for a deal. And I think everybody knew, even if nobody was going to come out and say it, it's like you can't cut a deal without Sinn Fein being involved that's going to stick. So that fall-winter was a long, kind of discouraging one. And again, Senator Mitchell I think had to be the optimist and say, "No, I haven't given up hope. Yes, I think there can be an agreement."

And then I think it was in the spring of that year there was a suspension in the talks for the elections, and then Tony Blair was elected, and that did change the dynamic in the talks I think.

Blair brought in a new team, and I give Prime Minister Major and the British government as a whole, and the professionals that preceded the Blair administration, a lot of credit too because they moved the process a long way and helped set the groundwork for it, but I think Blair's election in some ways was a shot in the arm. And I don't remember exactly the timing of it, but Bertie Ahern became Taoiseach not long after, I think, and so everybody was hopeful I think, coming out of that, that he could start moving things along.

And so that summer, again, I remember it being a little bit less fraught in terms of violence on the streets, but one of the things that was going on is that everybody was kind of waiting for first the IRA to call a new cease fire, which they did, I think, in July that year, because that would set the groundwork for all-inclusive talks. And of course what ended up happening was, when Sinn Fein joined the talks in September of that year, some of the Unionist parties left, the DUP left. And then, of course, that begged the question of, can you cut a deal? Could the Ulster Unionist party, which was at the time the largest Unionist party in Northern Ireland, could they cut a deal politically without the DUP cutting their legs out electorally? So a lot of that was going on in Northern Ireland at the time.

*End of CD One
CD Two*

BW: So at what point did you begin to think that, yes, things are really going to work here?

KC: I think it was pretty late in the game. When Sinn Fein came in there was a lot of controversy, nothing ever moved smoothly. One of the things that happened over that time frame, the fall of 1997 into the spring of 1998, there continued to be violence on the ground. At one point during the talks, one of the Unionist parties got expelled for a time because paramilitaries associated with them had committed a murder, and that was a setback and a distraction. They ultimately returned to the talks a short time later. There was a time period also where Sinn Fein was expelled from the talks for a time period because the IRA had committed some violence.

So it was never, I don't know if there was ever a time where we were certain that all this is going to happen, it's only a matter of time. And one of the things that the Senator recognized was the necessity or the value in setting a deadline, which he ultimately, in discussing with the British and Irish governments, saying let's shoot for Easter, or a bit before, because otherwise we could talk for another eight hundred years and not move forward. So I think setting the deadline was important, and him helping convince the parties that that was in their interest too.

BW: I'm curious, how do you account for your being selected to join this tiny team of three, considering all the people that had passed through Mitchell's office over time and whatnot?

KC: I don't know. I think in part it had to do with the fact that I had some experience doing press for him, the fact that I'd worked closely with Martha in the past, and at the time I was single and could pick up and move to Northern Ireland, maybe all those factors had something to

do with it.

BW: Were you surprised?

KC: Well, I guess a little, but I was flattered, I was excited about the opportunity. And at the time I remember talking to the Senator and talking to Martha Pope and Martha saying it's like, 'we could be here two weeks, we could be here two months, we'll see how it goes.' So I don't know what to attribute it to.

BW: It strikes me that as the press person, you were dealing with the British press, the Irish press, the Northern Irish press, and the U.S. press, and probably some others, too, but what was that like?

KC: Well, in some ways it depended on the state of the talks. There were a lot of times where we would get a lot of requests for interviews that the Senator would just politely decline. But there were times, again, where strategically he thought it was important to be out there and making a statement, one that would have the effect of showing that there was still a meaningful process going on. And it's interesting, for a relatively small piece of the earth, Northern Ireland, and a relatively small population, they have a really vibrant press corps; maybe because of the history of the place, or the history of the troubles. The local reporters would joke about the reporters or the media from the worldwide outlets, or who would parachute in for big events, parachute in for what they thought was going to be something interesting or important. And they would come in and then they would leave, and the local guys would still be there.

I became good friends with a lot of the media there, there are some really smart, talented people. And one of the things that was very helpful to me was having informal conversations where they were giving me their perspective, or the benefit of their years of experience, or their take on a particular politician that they knew well from having covered them forever. And not just me, but Martha Pope and Dave Pozorski and I, we would have a lot of these kinds of conversations with some of these journalists, which I think were very important in informing our views and helping tell the Senator about the lay of the land, if you will. I don't know whether it's indigenous to the folks in Northern Ireland, but these folks love to tell their stories, and many of them have been covering that part of the world for fifteen, twenty years, so they knew everybody. They would help fill us in on stuff that we, as relative newcomers, couldn't have known.

BW: Do you have anything to say about the Gerry Kelly episode?

KC: I recall it well. It was right around Thanksgiving, we were all back in the States when the story broke. I forget the name of the publication; it was one of the Sunday publications in Ireland.

BW: I think it was London, actually.

KC: It may have been, yes. And then it was picked up elsewhere. It was like one of those

dark points of the talks, where it was utterly baseless: Martha Pope had never even met Gerry Kelly, and these newspapers were saying that they were romantically linked. The *New York Post* picked it up, and they found some picture of Gerry Kelly from the 1970s and put that on the front page of the *New York Post*, I mean.... And also trying to see if you could discern where it was coming from, and of course there was absolutely nothing to it. And I remember talking to some of the reporters that by then I had some relationship with, and just saying, "Listen, they got this really, really wrong, it's not even in the ballpark."

And at the time, some of the reporters were suggesting to us that they were hearing from different sources that this is part of a British dirty tricks campaign, or there are elements within the British intelligence or elsewhere who want to use this as way to get to Senator Mitchell, help derail the talks, et cetera, et cetera. Who knows what really was behind it. And I don't know if we'll ever know. One thing, I give Martha lots of credit, because she's a very strong, smart person, and she essentially just toughed it out and said essentially, 'the truth is the truth,' and she never publicly batted an eye, and so I give her a lot of credit for that. And ultimately, it's kind of in the public record, that she retained some attorneys and very quickly the two or three news organizations who published it really, literally within a week, published retractions and agreed to a financial settlement. But it was ugly and unpleasant, and it was hard to see someone that I respected and my good friend, go through that.

BW: If you had a day to relive during your Irish experience, does a certain day come to mind?

KC: Yes, well I guess one of the things that will obviously be memorable is the forty-eight hour period running up to the agreement, because it was an all-nighter, nobody slept that night, everybody was hoping I think to be done by the Thursday but they ultimately didn't get it done until Friday. I remember thinking at the time that, the fact that the British and Irish prime ministers were involved, the Taoiseach, Bertie Ahern, and Tony Blair were deeply involved, the fact that – and I think this really is important for people to try to appreciate – is that the deal wouldn't have happened without the really intensive involvement of the two governments and their civil servants, but ultimately, obviously, the representatives of the people in Northern Ireland are the ones who are going to have to take the lead, right, and sort of getting the groundwork for that was critical. And I think that that started happening years and years and years before the talks even started – the community, the civil society, the former prisoners groups, everybody for years and years essentially putting forth a message: we're tired of the violence, we want it to end for our kids. So I remember the last forty-eight hours.

I remember there was one thing that happened. It was really late at night Thursday night, and John Hume came by our offices and he's telling some stories and he just said, I think at the time, even though it got a little sketchy later, he thought, 'we're going to do this thing,' and I remember he just said, that it's been thirty years. And then his eyes kind of teared up and he couldn't really talk any more, and he just said, "Thirty years," and then he just sat for a little while. And there's a man who really spent his life working toward this goal.

One thing, and I think the Senator recounted this in his book, where he's talking to the political

leaders and essentially saying, “Okay, are we ready to do this?” And ultimately talks to David Trimble who says, “Okay, let’s do it, and the sooner the better.” So it’s a bit of a scramble to get everybody in the big room, where it was sort of a rectangle, or a big square, where the parties all sat around, the party representatives sat around in the center, it was in the middle of one of the sides of the square, and at the time the Northern Ireland office press is arranged so, if it would come to this, they could go to a live feed for the media. And so I remember one of the behind the scenes things that was going on was. Usually, generally speaking, the parties had agreed as part of their procedures that you have a couple people who would be sitting up at their desk, and maybe a couple of their party members or support staff would be sitting behind, was the general rule of the talks, about who would be in the room.

It became evident that it was important for all the parties to have everybody in the room, or as many people as they could in the room, because one of the things that happened with the Ulster Unionist party by David Trimble is, there was a split. Jeffrey Donaldson was one of the talks members, who was a member of parliament, walked out. And it was important for them I think – I remember running around to some of the rooms and just sort of was telling them, it was like, ‘get whoever you want in there’ – because it was going to be televised, the leaders wanted to have, when the camera panned to them, they wanted to be able to demonstrate their people were behind them.

And so in some ways it was the symbolic thing and important for them, and I remember for Sinn Fein there were a number of people who had been active for a very long time, who were standing behind Martin McGinnis and Gerry Adams. And same thing for the Ulster Unionists, I mean it was important for them symbolically to at least demonstrate on TV that they had the support, even though in some instances they didn’t have it all. So I remember that pretty vividly, and I just remember there wasn’t a signing or anything that happened, it was essentially the Senator going around the table, calling on the parties and essentially having them speak about whether they could sign up to the agreement, and they did so one by one.

And Sinn Fein had a little bit of an internal process issue that they had to deal with. In other words, because of their own party structure, essentially [they] had to go back and get the blessing, but they essentially said, they fudged it a little bit and they said, ‘we are going to recommend that our party support this,’ it basically was as far as they could go. But everybody sort of said, ‘well I really doubt that too many people are going to disagree with Gerry Adams and Martin McGinnis.’

So they went around like that before the vote, and I can just remember looking around and being so happy for all these people, that they finally were going to reach a milestone on the way to helping repair their society, and feeling lucky that I had a very small part and was able to be there to see it.

BW: So, and you came back to New York.

KC: I did, I came back to New York. And actually I’ll tell you one other story about after the

agreement. So the Senator did a lot of press interviews after the agreement. As you can imagine, a lot of people wanted to talk to him. So it was a bit of a media scrum after that for a long time. But I remember the next day we did, the morning after the agreement was voted, he did an interview with a reporter in some little hotel outside Belfast, and we were walking out to the car and there was these two elderly ladies who were walking into the hotel, they were probably in their middle seventies or something. And they called out to Senator Mitchell, "Senator, Senator," and they wanted to come over and shake hands and say thank you, 'thank you, for our kids and our grand kids.' And it was a really nice moment, it was like, that's exactly what it was all about, these little old ladies, no idea whether they were Nationalists or Unionists or anything like that, but they were just happy about the future.

And one of the things that happened a few weeks, probably a month or so after the agreement, the Senator went back and was in both Northern Ireland and Dublin and was giving a few speeches. Obviously there was a lot of interest, people wanted to hear his perspective on the process, so I accompanied him on that. And I remember we went to, one of the speeches he gave was at a university in Dublin, I think it was University College Dublin, in sort of an auditorium setting, there was probably four or five hundred people there, giving him just this uproarious ovation. And there was a Q&A following it and he spoke briefly, and as he always does, he gave credit to their leaders: they're the ones that cut the deal.

But one of the things that was interesting to me in seeing that, and other parts of that trip, where people were coming out to thank him for his role in everything, is that it was – he was away, kind of symbolically after the fact, and these people expressing their gratitude and being so, again, giving him such a warm reception – was, they were finding a way to express relief and happiness after generations of this, and the Senator always, I think rightly, gave credit to their politicians who ultimately are the ones who had to take the leap. And I think his role as chairman was, he had the intellect to run a contentious meeting, he had the capacity for patience, he had strategic thinking, he had the respect of the people involved, and he brought necessary gravitas to the process.

And I think he would probably be the first to say that it's easy for anybody to say well, you know, to do the one or two line things like, well George Mitchell brought peace to Northern Ireland, and I think he was saying, and I would agree, that he was an important part of helping the process get to a point where it was politically palpable for everybody to reach agreement. I don't think he – there's one member of the talks who said, when they finally got the agreement and had sort of made this version of the joke before was, well, the framework essentially is the same as what it had been twenty-five years earlier in what they called the Sunningdale Agreement, but now, this is Sunningdale for slow learners. So the framework of what the agreement was going to be, there were certainly some details that were important to everybody, but the framework wasn't really in doubt, everybody had sort of had this idea of what they wanted the government of Northern Ireland to look like in terms of representative process and the like, but it was the Senator's role, and like I say, it was a really important one, but it was helping create the conditions and guiding the process to where everybody could do what they sort of expected they would do all along.

BW: So you came back to New York.

KC: Right, I came back to New York, and so this is middle of 1998, and returned to working at my law firm, and then it was about at the end of 1998 I left that job and began my current one as an assistant United States attorney here in Brooklyn. My next interaction, or opportunity to work with the Senator, came in the end of 2000, beginning of 2001. President Clinton had, in the context of the Middle East peace process, had set up, or helped set up, an international fact-finding commission called the Sharm el-Sheikh Fact-Finding Commission, named after this place in Egypt where it was agreed to be set up, and he asked Senator Mitchell to be the chair, along with a former Norwegian prime minister, and one of the international chairs was a former president of Turkey, and also Javier Solana, who at the time was the European Union, essentially like the minister of foreign affairs for the EU.

So the Senator was going to chair, and the remit was this commission was asked to look at some of the underlying causes of what was then an upsurge in violence in the Middle East, and also to make recommendations to get the process back on track. So the Senator asked if I could take some time to help with that, and so I was detailed to the commission staff from my position here in the beginning of 2001 to go work with the Senator on that Middle East fact-finding commission.

BW: And your role?

KC: My role, I guess a little bit like Northern Ireland, my role was multifaceted. He had again a pretty small staff, he had another lawyer, a guy named Jim Pickup, and myself, and Fred Hof was on the commission staff, and also Larry Pope for a time, and each of the other commission members had some of their own staff. Senator Warren Rudman was also one of the commissioners, and he had a staffer named Brendan Melley who worked there, so it was a relatively small group of us who were working with the Senator on that. And my role was, again, it was a bit of a, it was political counsel, handle the press, that kind of thing.

BW: And did you become involved before the Waldorf Astoria meeting in New York, or did you -?

KC: Yes.

BW: Oh, so you were in from really the start.

KC: No, I'm sorry, which, I'm sorry, there's a couple things that happened at the Waldorf Astoria.

BW: The kick-off, this was the first, this was in late 2000.

KC: Late 2000, no, I wasn't involved yet.

BW: And what about the first trip that the commissioners made to the Middle East, were you on that?

KC: Yes, I was then, yes.

BW: That was that hectic trip.

KC: Yes. If I'm remembering it right, let me think. Because there was that trip, was that still in 2000?

BW: I think it might have just been into '01, I think it was January.

KC: January of '01, actually no, I wasn't involved in that first trip, I think I joined right around that time, and so I think they had done that first whirlwind trip where they had a number of meetings there and then returned, and then I think I joined up right around that time, early 2001.

BW: And joined up by going to Jerusalem.

KC: Yes, yes.

BW: What are your vivid memories of that experience?

KC: One of the things that was, what I recall is that, where we stayed in Jerusalem, the hotel that we were put up in, had these, happened to have faced the walls of the Old City and it kind of had this almost, like a storybook kind of look to it. You see the walls that were built at some point by the Ottomans around the old part of the city in a very short walk from there, and I had never been to Israel or Jerusalem before that, and so I guess my memories in some way are consistent with what anybody's first experience is there, walking around the Old City and seeing all the sights.

But one of the things that was part of that experience was trying to, we were all sort of trying to figure out both how to go about the fact-finding in terms of who should we meet with, who should we talk to, how should we think about structuring the report, how many trips should Senator Mitchell, Senator Rudman, the other principals make, who should they be involved in. And at the same time, the context was, there were still talks at the very beginning going on at Taba, where there were still discussions about final status kind of issues, like the borders, the right of return of Palestinians, what's going to happen with the city, how would Jerusalem be divided. But there was also at the time, there was going to be an election in Israel, and ultimately Ariel Sharon was elected prime minister, and so there was that political context going on.

And a part of the role of the commission, assumed this role I guess, even though it may not have been the intent when it first came up in the fall of 2000 was, it in some ways became a little bit

of a proxy for the process, once the process sort of formally broke down. You obviously had a new president coming in here, George Bush was coming in, he was going to be naming his new team, coming in with a very short transition time period because of the contested election in 2000. So part of what was going on was, what's the new administration going to do about this commission. Are they going to, obviously the commission was formed by the will of the president, and it could have been dissolved. And so that was one of the questions, was there even going to be a commission going forward. So that was part of the whole context.

And one of the things that was sort of an interesting learning experience was, what you see - The Israeli press is very interesting, it's obviously a small country, lots and lots of newspapers per capita, lots of radio, lots of media. And so one of the things that goes on there in a somewhat different way than you'd see here or in my experience in Northern Ireland, was you saw a lot of things being floated in the press as, whether they're trial balloons or they're this or they're that, and in some ways part of the process seemed to be that politicians or public officials would use the media as part of their sparring process. So you'd see stories that would name unnamed Israeli government officials who thought that the Mitchell Commission should be disbanded, and then others saying, no, the government's fully behind it, and all these kinds of stuff being played out in the media on a daily basis, which was unusual. And usually all unnamed sources.

So there was that impression, and the other impression I had was, going around to, we probably saw some places on the West Bank and in Gaza that tourists usually don't go to. We had a lot of meetings with representatives of the Palestinian Authority and the business community and others in different parts of the West Bank, and I remember there was a couple trips we had down to Gaza as well, to get their perspective, so it was, having that opportunity to meet with some of these people was fascinating. And again, part of the discussion among the staff and with the Senator and the other principals was, so what's this report supposed to do. And once our administration, the new U.S. administration came on board, Secretary Powell was the secretary of state, and he expressed his support to the Senator and essentially said that the administration was behind this, which in turn led to moving things forward.

But one of the things about that process that was, when we sort of got to the report writing stage, or were getting toward the report writing stage, I pulled out the Senator's decommissioning report from Northern Ireland and sort of circulated it to my fellow staff members and I says, this is the kind of thing he has in mind, or this is the kind of - First of all, this is the way he writes and thinks, so it's instructive for our purposes in helping draft, and also for people who didn't know the Senator very well, myself and Jim Pickup - and Jim worked with the Senator at his law firm - we were kind of saying, once we draft this thing and we have a working draft, don't be surprised or upset if the Senator has a very lively editing pen, because that's just the way he is. He's going to be very engaged on it, and he's going to be, and he'll be very active in writing it. And it turned out to be the case.

So it was a relatively short stint, I started in January, we finished the report and it was presented to the president and to, President Bush and the secretary of state, and to the governments, to the Israeli government and the Palestinian Authority, but not immediately made public. And I think

the reason for that is everybody wanted to I guess digest it. It seemed to be, particularly from the Israeli government side and the Palestinian Authority side, they wanted to see it first. And so most of the drafting took place in Washington, and so we worked there.

BW: How much time did Mitchell spend over there? Was it just those two visits?

KC: I think he had, no, I think he was there – I don't know exactly. I think it was probably two or three, three visits, maybe four. I remember there were a couple things that, where we had a planned visit and outside events made it so it wouldn't make sense, whether they were events on the ground in terms of what was going on politically within Israel or the Palestinian Authority. So there were a couple, once or twice where we kind of had planned a trip by the principals that didn't happen.

But ultimately, I can remember one of the trips where the Senator came, and it was again a kind of a whirlwind trip. We were meeting with, we met with Prime Minister, with Ariel Sharon, the senators, the principals, they met with Arafat, they met with Shimon Peres, they were driving to Gaza and visiting hospitals and driving to, and going on a very intense and very compact time frame. And at the same time, we were also receiving submissions on certain issues from both sides, and also doing some consulting of certain experts on our own, like, I remember we talked to some people who were experts on, for example, the settlements. And in the meantime, there was a while before we started drafting.

One of the things that were interesting, I mentioned sort of the Israeli, what gets aired in the press, in terms of how the media is sort of part of the process – I guess anywhere – but I recall that there were reports and comments that were going on about what was in or not in the report before anybody had even started writing it. And you don't know, it's always kind of interesting to try to figure out, okay, what's the source, can you speculate on the source, and what's the aim of this purported leak of a non-existent portion of the report. I remember at some point there was one saying that there was going to be, the Mitchell report is going to include a recommendation for some sort of an international peace keeping force. Obviously, it never ended up in the report, and nobody even had started drafting anything right there, but there was sort of this back and forth in the press about that. And you wonder whether that was sort of an intentional sort of, 'okay, don't put this in there,' because certain parties aren't going to like it, or what it was. So it was kind of an interesting environment to work in.

BW: Any observations on how Senator Mitchell and Senator Rudman worked together?

KC: I think they get along really well, and I think they work well together in the Senate, knew each other well, relatively speaking being neighbors, they've worked on obviously things that were of common interest while they were in the Senate together. So I think they had a good working relationship going in, and during the process, too. Senator Rudman, very sharp, astute politician like Senator Mitchell, they talked the same language, so I think they work well together.

BW: Someone told me that you did a lot of your discussion with Senator Mitchell by phone. Was there one person that was conducting those calls from there, or were you all from time to time.

KC: I think we would all take part in it. I remember, I talked to him at times, sometimes Fred Hoff would or Jim Pickup, but we were in touch with him. On the days he wasn't there, we were talking to him every day. And one of things that was, again, interesting about this is that one of the things that Senator Mitchell wisely picked up on, and he would say this in his public statements. The question might be in one way or another: Is the commission going to stand down or are you going to quit? Are you going to keep going? And he would always say, "Well of course we serve no purpose if the government of Israel or the Palestinian Authority doesn't want us here." And in some ways he was kind of putting the onus back on them, and so I don't think either the government of Israel nor the Palestinian Authority wanted to be seen as the party who pulled the plug on the international commission.

But I can recall talking with the Senator at times, and I can remember standing on the balcony of our hotel, in this really nice Mediterranean evening and just sort of, you know, at times talking to him about whatever had been going on that day, who we'd met with, discussing things like, oftentimes it was discussing what happened to be being kicked around in the media that day. So there was a fair amount of discussion by phone, just because the Senator had a lot of other responsibilities, and so I think by necessity was relying on us to help keep him informed. But at the end of the day, knowing that he and the other principals were going to be the ones that were going to have to work out the framework of the report, what were the key provisions, there were certain things that were important to different people who were involved. And so it was a matter of kind of helping provide the intelligence, if you will, for the Senator on a day-to-day basis.

And the other thing that was part of the mix was that the Senator was the independent chairman, he wasn't working for the State Department, wasn't working *for* the administration. I think the idea was this commission was an independent commission. Not to say that he wasn't keeping the administration informed, he certainly was, and there [were] certainly a lot of discussions, many of which I wasn't privy to, about the process or what was going on, or the context and things.

BW: With the final report, is it accurate to look at the final report as if it were pretty much an American product, or were the others and their staffs deeply involved?

KC: I would say they were deeply involved. And there were certain things that were more important, or of more importance to different principals, where their staff would make that plain. But it was a collaborative kind of effort, there were, Javier Solana had some great staff people, so did the EU people, the former Turkish president and his staff, all very good, and the Norwegians also very good, and very smart people. And at the end of the day everybody I think wanted to come up with a framework that had a relatively short narrative of, this is what happened, but what became the more important part of the report was going to be in the recommendations, because everybody can dispute whether Ariel Sharon's trip to the Temple Mount, was that the

cause, was it a proximate cause, you can debate that forever, but really the more important part at the time was, what are the recommendations going to do to sort of try to steer things back to substantive negotiations.

As it turns out, unfortunately the report didn't, the parties didn't return to substantive negotiations, but I think you can attribute that to everything else that was going on. I don't think the report had a - I mean I think it was pretty, my impression was it was pretty well received by both sides, I mean you knew you probably hit it about right if neither side is completely happy with it. And ultimately the principles that the Senator and the others wanted to convey was, there needs to be an immediate cessation of violence, there needs to be confidence building measures on both sides, and ultimately to get to where the parties are back to where they're talking again about a resolution.

BW: And was there anything specifically said about an American role going forward, or not?

KC: American role going forward in what sense?

BW: In how to resolve matters.

KC: Well, I don't think the report necessarily went to that, but I think that, at least from the staff's perspective, and (*unintelligible*) the Senator's, but I think everybody kind of assumed that the United States was going to have to have a role in the process, for historical reasons, for our own national interests, for a million reasons. But I think everybody assumed that the United States would have to have a role going forward.

BW: But there was some disappointment, I guess, amongst you, that the Bush administration did not pursue this, or is that not correct?

KC: Yes, I'll speak only for myself. Yes, I was disappointed in the sense that I think Secretary Powell, I think he wanted, he took a pretty active role, he visited the region. And I don't know what was going on inside the administration, the Bush administration in the months after the report came out. There was obviously the quartet talks started up and a lot of the quartet proposals looked a lot like what was in the Mitchell report, and so I think a lot of the work that came out of the Mitchell Commission report sort of continued along. And I don't know, it seemed to go, in my view, our policy there seemed to drift, in the sense that there wasn't the focused attention on it that had been present in the end of the Clinton administration. And some say that was a deliberate choice, but I don't know.

BW: Have you had contacts with Senator Mitchell since?

KC: Yes, yes, I've seen him from time to time. Actually I ran into him last fall here in New York. His sister Barbara is very active in her church, in the Maronite church up in Waterville, and she was being honored at a ceremony here in Brooklyn, and so the Senator's siblings were coming down. And I'm still close with the Senator's brother John, "Swisher," and so I took my

wife and my family and we went to the service for Barbara. I think it was in November, I got to see the Senator and chat for a few minutes, and that's the most recent time that I saw him.

BW: But you've not been on any of his other baseball escapades or whatnot.

KC: No.

BW: I notice you've brought some notes with you, is there things that we haven't covered that you thought of?

KC: Well, one thing that I think for me stood out, and this is going back to the Northern Ireland, and after the agreement. The Senator was going to go to meet with the president, with President Clinton, at the White House and I got to tag along. And so it happened to be, this is in April of 1998, it happened to be the day of the Easter egg roll at the White House. So (*unintelligible*) went and had this nice meeting in the Oval Office, the vice president was there, Vice President Gore was there, and Secretary of State Albright and Sandy Berger, and President Clinton's wearing this great tie that had a bunch of little Easter eggs on it, for the Easter egg roll. And that's the first time I'd ever been in the White House, I thought it was really nice of the Senator to bring me along to do that. And Heather was there, too.

But I remember the president, we're all sitting down, and the president kind of turns to Senator Mitchell and says, thanks a lot for bringing this home, you know, for getting this done. Because at the time, and this is my own speculation, at the time there was a lot going on with the president, a lot of political turmoil, you know, Ken Starr and everything like that. And my impressions of the day was this beautiful spring day, and the president had his Easter egg tie, and I just remember thinking, very cool, Mr. President, that's a great tie. But it was a nice interlude.

BW: I've been asking people at the end of these interviews how history should look back on George Mitchell. What would you say?

KC: What I would say is, he was a person who loved public service, and worked extremely hard at whatever task was before him. He used to say something along the lines of, if you try to prepare as hard as you can, and do what you think is right, the future's going to take care of itself. In terms of his career, I don't think he would have predicted that, for example, that Cyrus Vance was going to resign as secretary of state and Ed Muskie was going to become secretary of state and he was going to get appointed to the Senate, and then be majority leader six years later, and all the other things that have happened. But I think that you can sort of look at that as, in some ways, in those respects George Mitchell was a lucky guy in some circumstances, which I think he would acknowledge is true. But from my perspective, he worked extraordinarily hard, and his capacity to absorb information and to speak coherently and cogently about it, and to relate to people who are, whether you're a mill worker from Millinocket or you're a head of state, and relate to them on a way that I think people connect with.

One of the things about the Northern Ireland politicians is that, I think he could relate to all of

them because they're all people who are in public life and had to go face the voters. They all kind of have something in common, right, they're all, and so I think his intuitive understanding of what those people needed as part of a deal to satisfy their constituents was certainly something that he could appreciate. Like I use the example of the mill worker in Millinocket, his mom worked in a factory, right, so he has this appreciation, or this ability to sort of see where everyone's interests lie and connect with them on that level.

And so I guess what I would say is, at the end of the day, he certainly made the most of every opportunity he had, and part of that was just dedication and diligence, and ultimately, what he would always say on whatever the issue was, you do what you think is right, and you'll see how it sorts itself out.

BW: Do you think there'll be more like him as time goes on?

KC: Yes, I think so. I mean, there are people who go into public life in the way that he did, and I'm sort of talking about electoral politics, people do it for a variety of reasons, and I think that for the most part, people who do that are doing it because they care about their community, they care about the country, they want to do the right thing. Whether you're going to find another George Mitchell out there somewhere, I don't know, it's hard to say. I mean, look, everybody's a product of their own times and their own upbringing, and are we going to have future senators and diplomat types that are going to do well, sure. But I don't know if you're going to have somebody who kind of has the breadth of career that he's had; everything from being a prosecutor and a judge to an elected official, and doing the international role, is kind of a unique kind of package.

BW: Thank you.

End of Interview