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### Interview with Marcia Gartley by Mike Hastings

Marcia Ann Gartley

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## ***George J. Mitchell Oral History Project***

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**Marcia Ann Gartley**  
(Interviewer: *Mike Hastings*)

**GMOH# 039**  
September 27, 2008

**Mike Hastings:** The following is an interview for the George J. Mitchell Oral History Project, an activity of Bowdoin College. Today is Saturday, September 27, 2008. I'm Michael Hastings, the interviewer. The interviewee is Marcia Gartley. This interview is taking place at 223 Houlton Road in Presque Isle, the time is 8:30 a.m. Mrs. Gartley, good morning. Could I ask you to begin by stating your full name and spelling your surname?

**Marcia Gartley:** Marcia Ann (Bacha) Gartley, G-A-R-T-L-E-Y.

**MH:** Could you also spell your maiden name for me?

**MG:** B-A-C-H-A. And Marcia's M-A-R-C-I-A.

**MH:** And your date and place of birth?

**MG:** I was born October 2, 1952, in Bradford, Pennsylvania.

**MH:** And your mother's full name?

**MG:** Mary Alice (Divel) Bacha and my father's full name is George Victor Bacha.

**MH:** Are they still living?

**MG:** No.

**MH:** Tell me a little bit about them; let's start out talking about your mother and father. Can you give me a kind of a quick synopsis about your mother and your father?

**MG:** My mother's lineage goes back to John Adams. Her father and grandfather were masons. My father was an immigrant who was carrying the bricks to build the road in front of her house when she met him.

**MH:** They met in Pennsylvania?

**MG:** Yes, he had immigrated and worked one day in a coal mine and didn't like that, so moved to the oil fields. But only after I had daughters did I realize how my grandfather must

have been pulling out his hair, to have his daughter marry an uneducated immigrant.

**MH:** How did he end up being a bricklayer? So he worked in the oil fields for a while?

**MG:** He worked, I'm sure; I would say the oil fields were after the road building.

**MH:** So they both, they grew up in Pennsylvania. You grew up in Pennsylvania, is that correct?

**MG:** Yes.

**MH:** Whereabouts?

**MG:** Northwestern, in the oil fields, in the Appalachian Mountains. And I moved to Maine because I wanted to own a farm, and the cheapest land in the country was in Aroostook County, Maine.

**MH:** Let's stay in Pennsylvania for a minute, though. Tell me about growing up there. The name of the town was, again?

**MG:** Rixford.

**MH:** Rixford, how do you spell that?

**MG:** R-I-X-F-O-R-D, it was probably two hundred and fifty people.

**MH:** And what was the nearest big town?

**MG:** Bradford, Erie, Buffalo.

**MH:** And what was it like growing up in Rixford?

**MG:** I had a great childhood, you know. I grew up right in the middle of town, I was the only girl, I was spoiled, I was the youngest. My mother was forty-two and my father fifty-two when I was born.

**MH:** How many brothers and sisters, how many brothers do you have?

**MG:** Three brothers.

**MH:** And you were the youngest.

**MG:** Yes.

**MH:** And did you, I assume you went to local schools?

**MG:** I went to local high school; I went to Pitt, University of Pittsburgh, yeah.

**MH:** So Rixford had its own high school and own elementary schools?

**MG:** We had a, it was sort of like an SAD [School Administrative District]. They didn't call them that then, but it was four boroughs, three towns.

**MH:** How big a high school was it?

**MG:** My graduating class was a hundred people; it was the largest class to ever graduate.

**MH:** And what were your interests in high school?

**MG:** Academic, although social too, but politics, actually when I went to Pitt I took a course on political philosophers and got the bug.

**MH:** What year were you at Pitt when that happened?

**MG:** I think I was a freshman.

**MH:** So did you end up majoring in government or political science?

**MG:** Political science, yeah.

**MH:** Did you have any professors that were particularly influential?

**MG:** The lady that taught me the political philosopher class, but I can't remember her name.

**MH:** Pitt is located in Pittsburgh, right? Is it downtown Pittsburgh?

**MG:** It is, it adjoins Carnegie Mellon's campus.

**MH:** What was that like, going from Rixford to Pittsburgh?

**MG:** To thirty-five thousand undergraduates? It was, I was just like, "all right," you know, I was very excited by the whole mass scene, you know, coming from that tiny town.

**MH:** And you would have graduated when?

**MG:** I didn't graduate. I went four years, so I started in '70.

**MH:** Very good, and so how did you get from, tell me about getting from Pennsylvania to

Maine.

**MG:** I wrote to realtors – it was before Internet and e-mail – I wrote to realtors all over the country and found out that the cheapest land in the country was in Aroostook County, so I put everything I owned into a jeep and headed north. Met a realtor in Meddybemps -

**MH:** I know Meddybemps well, in Washington County.

**MG:** Yeah, who brought me up through the Hainesville Woods – I really thought it was the end of the earth – and there was a man up here selling fifty-acre lots and I bought one. And then when I met my husband he owned this farm, and we moved here.

**MH:** What did you do with your fifty-acre lot?

**MG:** I sold it, and we actually finished the inside of the house with that money, so -

**MH:** That's fascinating; an interesting way to get to Aroostook County.

**MG:** Lived in a canvas tepee for the first year.

**MH:** Through the winter?

**MG:** Yes.

**MH:** What was that like?

**MG:** Cold. I didn't do it two winters.

**MH:** On your own property?

**MG:** Yeah.

**MH:** I see. Was the property close to town, or was it far away?

**MG:** It was in back of Mars Hill, it was in Westfield, the property, but it was a ways from town.

**MH:** And did you farm the land?

**MG:** Grew it, just a garden and had milk goats and that sort of thing.

**MH:** You say that your interest in politics started with this philosophy class. Did you continue when you first got to Aroostook County, being interested in politics, did it take any form here?

**MG:** Well, until actually I went into Senator Mitchell's office, I volunteered one summer there. I really didn't have a connection, just didn't know anyone, you know.

**MH:** But there was, you said, you told me before we started the interview that you went to work for Senator Mitchell after your -

**MG:** Fourth child.

**MH:** Fourth child was born, right, okay. So you have four kids. Boys and girls?

**MG:** One boy, three girls.

**MH:** They live nearby?

**MG:** One is actually living at the little house at the top of the driveway, taking care of her grandparents. One is in Portland, Oregon, right now, one is in Fredericton, New Brunswick, and one is in Monroe, Maine.

**MH:** Okay, not too far from where I live, in Hampden. Very good, so you start to work for Senator Mitchell in, when?

**MG:** Eighty-seven, November 1st.

**MH:** Now did you take the place of someone on his staff, or was this a new position?

**MG:** It was new. Mary LeBlanc was the field rep here, and the case work was continuing to increase and she had lobbied, she offered me the job and I think it was two years later or three years later that the funding became available.

**MH:** Did she interview you, or did somebody come up from the south or from Washington to do so?

**MG:** She had recommended me, and then I met with Martha Pope.

**MH:** Martha Pope, she must have been the administrative assistant at that time probably, for the Senator.

**MG:** Yes.

**MH:** What were your duties when you started?

**MG:** I was a case worker. At first they just all fascinated me; I mean people just have such stories when they come through the door. There were a couple that stood out: one was a group

project that was all the people who had worked at Newbury's and-

**MH:** J.J. Newbury's, the department store?

**MG:** Yup, and I'm trying to think, Kresge's, and their pension fund went bust. It was Milliken and the junk bonds, and because of all of that -

**MH:** Oh, Michael Milliken, okay, yes.

**MG:** The Pension Benefit Guarantee Corp. was set up, but that wasn't in any of the congressional liaison books or any, and I finally found the attorney general in California had dealt with the same situation. I think his name was John Garibaldi, and he's who led me to the Pension Benefit Corp., and they ended up getting fifty cents on the dollar for what they had put in and nothing from the company.

**MH:** So, wow. Other kinds, did you do a lot of Social Security work?

**MG:** A lot of Social Security, a lot of VA, incredible amounts of Veterans'. The other one, though, that totally fascinated me was, a woman had been getting her husband's Army pension, they were getting the pension, and he died. She sent the Army the death certificate; they continued to send her the check. She deposited them unsigned and the bank accepted them. At some point the Department of Army realized they shouldn't have been paying that, and they took an electronic transfer that was coming into the bank from the Department of Education for loans, and the Army took it, so then the bank got involved in suing this woman to get the money back. And the attorney for the bank was Christa McAuliffe's husband, the astronaut that had blown up in the space shuttle. He was a very nice man, and in the end helped - the woman did lose her house, but he really bent over backwards to help her not be on the street, you know.

**MH:** During this period did you see the Senator often?

**MG:** The Senator, until he became majority leader, was in Aroostook County every month.

**MH:** Really, that often.

**MG:** I'm not sure why, it wasn't the population base.

**MH:** Would he fly in, or would he drive up?

**MG:** Both, both, and they didn't really do charters like they do now. But he did fly in commercial, and he would be driven at times, meet somewhere, you know.

**MH:** Did you do any of the driving?

**MG:** Very little. Mary did most of the driving. The first time he came to town and I was

working in the office, I was keenly disappointed to not meet him, you know.

**MH:** You'd never met him before?

**MG:** No.

**MH:** Oh, I see, okay.

**MG:** Which is not uncommon on these staffs.

**MH:** While you were working in the Senator's regional office, or the Presque Isle office, were you involved at all in Democratic Party apparatus or politics or committees or whatever? Can you tell me a little bit about that?

**MG:** Well, I've been the city chair, I've been the county chair, I've been treasurer, and certainly during campaigns we were, we all worked on, you know, on the campaign, every aspect from doing, organizing the lit drops, to the groups when people would come in to, who's going to put their name in the paper to support a candidate.

**MH:** Had you ever done any work with the Democratic Party, I mean like in Pennsylvania, before you came up to Maine?

**MG:** Just minimally.

**MH:** All right, canvassing and that sort of thing.

**MG:** Yeah, and doing lit drops.

**MH:** Tell me about the Democratic Party when you were involved, when you first got involved in it in Aroostook County. I mean is it a, are there many people active in it, or does it depend on a small number of leaders?

**MG:** Small number of leaders. Before the onset of television and that whole way to be in contact, certainly when a candidate came to town the crowds were much bigger, because that was the only chance to really hear what they were saying, so it was in many ways more exciting in those times. And of course as his, we went from having to spell his name whenever we'd call someone, to when he became majority leader. Once his stature changed then people would come from everywhere to see him, certainly. And he liked to do public meetings.

**MH:** Where would he hold those?

**MG:** Often at the Northeastland, in the Red Room.

**MH:** Really? Interesting. And you'd accompany him to these meetings?

**MG:** We would, and we would have everyone sign in, you know, and keep notes of if they needed to be gotten back to, et cetera.

**MH:** Any particularly memorable ones?

**MG:** The man who stood up with a colander on his head.

**MH:** Tell me about that.

**MG:** He said he was getting messages from outer space, and the Senator didn't miss a beat, he just said, "If you'll contact my staff about that, I'm sure they'll be willing to help you."

**MH:** And did he?

**MG:** No.

**MH:** Never heard from him.

**MG:** No, which was all right.

**MH:** The Democratic Party in Aroostook County, how has it fared over the years that you've been here, in terms of its success at winning elections?

**MG:** Fairly well. The county is really three different segments: the northern, which is the St. John Valley, runs up to eighty-seven percent Democratic enrollment central Aroostook breaks about a third/a third/a third, and so does southern Aroostook. So certainly the strongest segment of the party is up in the north. But we've done well at electing local candidates; we tend to keep the Aroostook state delegation with a Democratic majority. We were able to deliver the 2<sup>nd</sup> District to Kerry, which we always get so much attention in presidential elections because we split our electoral votes.

**MH:** The issues in Aroostook County, have they changed since you first came here and today? I mean the big issues, the issues that people really get passionate about?

**MG:** Well, in some sense they stay the same, you know, it's the jobs, the economy, health care, education. But certainly with the Loring closure, the paper mill closures, the focus has moved, we aren't as prosperous as we were. I mean, at a time this was an extremely prosperous county, and I don't think people say that any more.

**MH:** Now you mentioned Loring Air Force Base, can you talk about that a little bit? What was the story there, and what was your involvement or the Senator's involvement?

**MG:** Well, Loring was put on the closure list for the second time, this was during one of the

BRAC rounds, and Bobby Carolla did an incredible job at researching and putting together the defense for Loring, you know, its strategic location, that it had a very protective surroundings, it has power in from Quebec and from New Brunswick, so there were no issues of an enemy being able to cut that off. And then when the decision came down – and we all just put hundreds of hours into it, you know – when the decision came down to close Loring because Plattsburgh was equal to it and had a better quality of life.

**MH:** Plattsburgh Air Force Base, in upstate New York.

**MG:** Yeah. We were just devastated.

**MH:** Who were you working, who were the community leaders who led the effort to keep the base open?

**MG:** There was a gentleman named Paul Haines, who may still be here, who led the fight for Loring. He was an insurance man. And it was all obviously fiscally oriented for those, for the community people. Bob Clark was at the Northern Maine Development Commission. Art Thompson was another insurance man that was involved.

**MH:** So they had a citizens' committee that you worked with.

**MG:** Yeah.

**MH:** What, tell me about some of the people that, I'm interested in, you indicated that Mary LeBlanc was your office person, were there just two of you in that office?

**MG:** Hm-hmm.

**MH:** I see. And what kind of things did Mary do?

**MG:** She was the field rep, so she attended most of the meetings; she represented the Senator in the community.

**MH:** Did she have to give speeches from time to time?

**MG:** Yeah.

**MH:** Did you ever have to give speeches?

**MG:** I probably did, and it sort of blurs because I went on to work for twenty years for other bosses, but much more rare than Mary. I primarily was the case worker.

**MH:** Now there, I'm being asked to interview while I'm up here several other, mostly prominent Democrats. Who were the prominent Democratic politicians locally here in Presque

Isle?

**MG:** Well, Floyd Harding was a state senator; Jim Dunleavy was the probate judge that was elected. The sheriffs are, as you know, are elected, and we, I'm trying to remember, I can't remember if we had a Democratic sheriff at that point. It almost seems to me it was a Republican sheriff. The state, or the county treasurer is elected on party lines, and Will Bell was that.

**MH:** Okay. Now you say you worked, after you worked for Senator Mitchell you said you worked for others as well. Who did you work for after you worked for him?

**MG:** John Baldacci and Mike Michaud.

**MH:** And do you still work for Mike Michaud?

**MG:** No.

**MH:** No, you've stopped, okay. So your political life is at least, you're not working for the, as a salaried employee any more.

**MG:** That's correct.

**MH:** Are you still active in Democratic politics?

**MG:** Somewhat, although I'm partially hatched in the job, I mean I'm hatched in the job I have.

**MH:** Oh, I see, what are you doing now?

**MG:** I contracted to U.S.D.A. to gather information for them on the crops in the state of Maine.

**MH:** Does that involve a lot of travel?

**MG:** Mostly in Aroostook County, and Penobscot, but I did meet with the state coordinator for the Obama campaign and was able to provide him some names, people that I thought would be helpful to him. But that's about all I've done this year.

**MH:** I see. I work for the university and we have several branches up here, cooperative extensions, do you work with them?

**MG:** Oh absolutely, yeah.

**MH:** And they have the farm here, I just passed it on the way to your house.

**MG:** And our upper farm is actually rented to the university for research plots.

**MH:** What? The potato industry is a big factor up here. You must have had to deal with it in your job, your old job as well as your new job.

**MG:** Always, every year. They have had massive issues with importation from Canada, with disease, you know, just every year, always, the potatoes have issues of some sort.

**MH:** Now what are the alternative crops to potatoes in this area?

**MG:** We grow broccoli, we grow oats and barley and canola in a rotation, and that's about it. I mean there's obviously truck gardens and things like that, but -

**MH:** Do you see young people going into farming?

**MG:** Yes.

**MH:** So that's not really a problem here.

**MG:** No, it's a very generational thing here. My father-in-law was a farmer, and his father was a farmer.

**MH:** When I was young, growing up in the midcoast area, we used to, probably mistakenly, envy the kids in high school who would get let out of school every fall, I guess, to harvest the potatoes.

**MG:** But they have to go to school at the first week of August.

**MH:** Right, right, and that's still a practice here?

**MG:** It is. Less and less. Southern Aroostook doesn't let out schools any more, but here in central they still do, and in the valley. They're out now.

**MH:** And what are the options? If you want to be a farmer and you graduate from high school, do you go right to the farm, or do you go to higher education now?

**MG:** We actually – in my father-in-law's generation they all went to Orono and they all took agi degrees, very highly educated. Not as much any more, but a lot of them do go to Orono. I just wanted to, when I worked for Senator Mitchell we had these trade issues going on, and the trade reps flew in, he got them to come up here and see what was going on.

**MH:** United States Special Trade representative.

**MG:** Yeah, and I picked him up at the airport and dropped him at the Northeastland, and on the way they said, “Where do you get your migrant labor to dig your crops?” And I said, “We let our children out of school.” And they said, “No, really?”

**MH:** Is that, do any migrant laborers pick crops here now?

**MG:** They do pick broccoli.

**MH:** They do. Why just broccoli?

**MG:** It was not a crop that was traditionally grown here, and I think because they cut with machetes, maybe they didn’t want children out there. But when they started growing broccoli, they started bringing in migrant labor.

**MH:** I see. What are the big trade organiz-, I mean commodity organizations that play a role here in the Presque Isle area?

**MG:** Well, we have the Maine Potato Board, and we have something called the Agricultural Bargaining Council, which negotiates with potato processors on behalf of the growers. When the Senator was in office, there was something called the Family Farm Corps, which was the St. John Valley farmers.

**MH:** What did they do?

**MG:** They were, they tried to hold for prices. You know, they would try to cooperate, to negotiate higher prices primarily on table stock. And Steve Hart would often come up and speak at their annual meeting.

**MH:** Right, he was a colleague of mine when I worked in the Washington office. So what is, the production in the Presque Isle area, how does it break down to table stock to seed stock?

**MG:** It’s primarily processing and table. They either sell it to a potato chip plant, a french fry plant, or they sell it in bags that you buy for cooking. The seed growers obviously grow both, processing potatoes, because they just are growing seed.

**MH:** And they’re, do most of your potatoes get exported out of the country, or do they get eaten right here in Maine or in the Northeast?

**MG:** The Northeast. We ship to, you know, the New York-Boston market is where we try to.

**MH:** What do Aroostook County, who is Aroostook County potato farmers’ biggest competition?

**MG:** They would say New Brunswick. I don’t know if that’s true. With fuel prices, again, it

may be, but the Canadian dollar has come up, which was always a bane to us because they could sell under us and still reap the American dollar profit. So that has evened things out. We then had potatoes coming in when fuel was cheap from all over the country. That may not be such an issue this year.

**MH:** Why is that?

**MG:** Because fuel is higher. You can't ship a potato from California for the price you can ship it from Maine.

**MH:** Idaho, has that been a big competitor?

**MG:** Idaho, yes.

**MH:** I recall many years ago that there was an effort by the gentlemen who ran the potato industry out in Idaho to try to buy one of the big processors up here, it's Mr. Simplot.

**MG:** Oh, yeah.

**MH:** Are there any Simplot holdings now in the county?

**MG:** The only processor here is McCain's.

**MH:** Which is New Brunswick-based.

**MG:** Yes.

**MH:** Well, last thing I want to ask you, in terms of the community in Presque Isle, what holds it together? Is it largely based around one organization, or the schools or the potato industry? You know, when you think of your, the community in which you live and operate in, what are the things that hold it together?

**MG:** I don't, you know, I don't know. You would think it would be the schools, as hard as they fight to keep them all. But our community is so elderly that I wouldn't say it's the schools. It's more that it's the people that are just left here, you know.

**MH:** The elderly people are they mostly independent, or do you have a lot of institutions for them to live in?

**MG:** We do have a lot of institutions. I had never heard that terminology, but when the paper mill went down in Millinocket recently they were talking about, because it was a mill town and one person was home, they didn't warehouse their elderly. That happens more here.

**MH:** Are those institutions church-based, or for profit for the most part?

**MG:** For profit.

**MH:** For profit, yeah, yeah. I mean that is of interest because you have a, you know, it's obviously, it's a farming community and you have, the farms, while you're not terribly distant from each other, you know, I can see where elder people might be somewhat isolated.

**MG:** And I think they are. They do, you know, emergency management tells you, you know, when there's a storm coming in the winter they say, you know, check on your neighbors and be aware of where the elderly are and things like that. And I think that we are, you know, we're certainly very friendly to each other, and to outsiders. I mean my in-laws were farmers, and we have them here and taking care of them, they're both ninety and they're quite debilitated. So there certainly are quite a few families that do that.

**MH:** They live you say in the little house at the end of the drive.

**MG:** Yeah.

**MH:** The, let me just cycle back to Senator Mitchell again, have you followed his career much since you stopped working for him?

**MG:** Oh, sure.

**MH:** Have you kept in touch with any of the staff people, other than, I mean outside the area at all?

**MG:** Oh, Clyde and Margaret mostly, Judy Cadorette.

**MH:** Margaret?

**MG:** Samways.

**MH:** Samways, yes, of course, yeah.

**MG:** Janet Dennis. I've seen Tom a couple times – Bertocci.

**MH:** Were you able to go to the evening for Clyde that was held, I think last year or the year before?

**MG:** Yes, I have my, it's in my car, my Clyde button.

**MH:** He's a great guy. What do you think of the Senator's activities since he left the Senate? I mean he's been largely a businessman, but he's been a lawyer. Does it surprise you, the things he's done?

**MG:** Oh, not at all. His first foray into Aroostook County was as a lawyer for Vahlsing.

**MH:** Is that remembered by the people here?

**MG:** Yes, it is.

**MH:** It is, it is – and how do they remember that?

**MG:** Just more with humor I think, not, you know, I don't think they hold it against him.

**MH:** Yeah, that must have been back in the late '60s, I would think, maybe early '70s, when he was a lawyer in Portland. Has there been any effort to try to revive sugar beets in Aroostook County, or they have, one time was enough?

**MG:** Yeah, I think that was plenty. It probably made them less likely to try new things than anything else.

**MH:** Really, really, yeah. Well, we always give people the opportunity to tell stories or answer questions that we haven't asked. Is there anything about your time with the Senator that was particularly, that you'd like to make sure people remember?

**MG:** It was such an incredible thing to be working for the majority leader, but none of us knew it until it was over really, you know.

**MH:** Why was that, because it was gradual, or -

**MG:** Well, just because we were just doing it, you know, and yes, we could accomplish more than we had been able to accomplish when he was the junior senator, but it was, you know, you were just caught up in the incremental little things that you were doing through his name, you know. And then when it was over and we all sort of dispersed, and I keep in touch with Diane Smith and Mary Mac, too, but, that we sort of went, "Wow."

**MH:** Diane Smith is, was -

**MG:** His scheduler.

**MH:** Okay, right, right. Now let me ask you, when you started he was not majority leader.

**MG:** No.

**MH:** That's correct. Did you find that after he was elected majority leader that all of a sudden the agencies became much more responsive to your questions?

**MG:** Oh yeah.

**MH:** I mean, that was apparent?

**MG:** It was very apparent. I said, we had to spell his name before that. And then when he announced he was stepping down, I had an issue with an American embassy in the Philippines of two priests that were trying to come in on a visa. And I got up at two in the morning and called the Philippines, because of the time change, and the man literally said to me, "You're a lame duck, why should I do anything for you?" And I was just, I mean my jaw hit the floor.

**MH:** These were priests you were trying to bring in for Aroostook County parishes?

**MG:** Yeah.

**MH:** I see. As you look back on your years of doing case work for him, what are the cases that you're the proudest of?

**MG:** I don't know.

**MH:** No rush. I mean I was a case worker for a while, and I remember there was once an adoption case that was really interesting to me, and I ended up spending almost a whole year on it and fortunately it was successful in the end, but you know, it's one of those things that I don't think that my boss, which was not Senator Mitchell at that time, I don't think he was hardly even aware of it.

**MG:** Well they aren't, I mean they can't be, there's just too much going on in their offices. But you certainly learn things often you don't ever need to know again. I had an adoption case where the child was from China and they, the birth dates are calculated differently there and there was this whole issue over the age of the child, and what the schools are expecting from it, and the people wanted the age moved back and the local probate judge wouldn't do it. And Mary McAleney turned me onto Judge Childs I think his name was -

**MH:** Arthur Childs.

**MG:** Who was the head of the probate judges, and he had adopted a child from China, so he was able to facilitate that.

**MH:** During all the times that you were working for the Senator, did you ever get a chance to travel to the Washington office?

**MG:** No.

**MH:** Never got down there, I see. How did you learn that he was going to not run again?

**MG:** Oh, this was great. We got a call saying, “You need to close the office and come to Portland.” Well, you know, the office never closed, so we were like, ‘whoa.’ So we took off, Mary and I took off in my vehicle, because it was four-wheel drive and it was winter, and we were driving down the Interstate, and my husband was here, and he got a phone call from Dennis Curley at WCXU radio, because Dennis -

**MH:** Right here in Presque Isle?

**MG:** Caribou. Dennis sat on the NBC board of directors, and he found out through them that the Senator had bought thirty minutes of air time on every station in the state, and he wanted to know what was going on. My husband said, “I don’t know, they got called to Portland.” So we were driving down, and we had listened to a book on tape. The book got over and we turned the radio on, and we’re just driving past a car on it’s roof, because it’s snowing, and the radio announcer says, “Senator George Mitchell has announced he’s going to step down.” And I sort of looked at Mary and I said, “Well, we’re two hundred miles from home, we just passed a car on its roof, and we don’t have jobs.”

**MH:** Did it take you, you had almost a year though, as notice, didn’t you?

**MG:** No, it was March. I want to say it was March that he announced.

**MH:** So you had about nine months notice. And did you land on your feet? Did you start right in with somebody else?

**MG:** Yes, I did, yeah.

**MH:** That’s great.

**MG:** No break, yeah. But that night he was, you know, he was, he actually looked about ten years younger, when he walked into the room to talk to us. It was like a huge load had been lifted off his shoulders.

**MH:** Where was that meeting held?

**MG:** We were at Holiday Inn by the Bay.

**MH:** Right, right, and how many were you in the room?

**MG:** Well, it was all of the field staff, and there was the campaign staff that he had brought on.

**MH:** For the next campaign.

**MG:** Yeah, so there were probably twenty-five of us. And he spoke to us, and then he went

around to the tables and he sat down by each of us and talked to us, and then he left and we pounded on the tables and demanded an open bar from Larry Benoit.

**MH:** Did Larry give in?

**MG:** He did.

**MH:** Well, that'd be a first time.

**MG:** I think so.

**MH:** Well Mary, this has been very nice, thank you, Marcia, excuse me. You keep referring to Mary.

**MG:** Well, and my mother was Mary, and my daughter's Mary, and the Senator's mother was Mary.

**MH:** That's right, except for, I spoke with the governor and, I haven't interviewed the governor but he mentions Mitchell to me occasionally, and he always refers to the Senator's mother as Mintaha, which apparently is her Lebanese name.

**MG:** Yeah, probably the pet name in the family, or -

**MH:** Yeah, Mrs. Mitchell senior has a lot of names she goes by. Thank you very much for this interview, and if you have any other stories or recollections that you'd like to share with the project, we can always hold another interview, or we'd love to receive anything in writing that you'd like to share. Thank you very much.

**MG:** Thank you.

*End of Interview*