


3-23-2010

Interview with Susan Longley by Andrea L'Hommedieu

Susan W. Longley

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.bowdoin.edu/mitchelloralhistory>

 Part of the [Law and Politics Commons](#), [Oral History Commons](#), [Political History Commons](#), and the [United States History Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Longley, Susan W., "Interview with Susan Longley by Andrea L'Hommedieu" (2010). *George J. Mitchell Oral History Project*. 89.
<https://digitalcommons.bowdoin.edu/mitchelloralhistory/89>

This Interview is brought to you for free and open access by the Special Collections and Archives at Bowdoin Digital Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in George J. Mitchell Oral History Project by an authorized administrator of Bowdoin Digital Commons. For more information, please contact mmcderm2@bowdoin.edu.

George J. Mitchell Oral History Project

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

© Bowdoin College

Susan W. Longley
(Interviewer: *Andrea L'Hommedieu*)

GMOH# 204
March 23, 2010

Andrea L'Hommedieu: This is an interview for the George J. Mitchell Oral History Project at Bowdoin College. The date is March 23, 2010, and I'm at the home of Susan Longley in Liberty, Maine, and this is Andrea L'Hommedieu. Susan, could you start just by giving me your full name.

Susan Longley: Susan W. Longley.

AL: And where and when were you born?

SL: Lewiston, Maine, in December, mid-December of 1955, at Central Maine General Hospital, CMG, now it's, I don't know what the name of it is now.

AL: CMMC?

SL: Yes.

AL: And did you grow up in the Lewiston area?

SL: Yes.

AL: So that would have been '60s mostly that you, early '70s.

SL: Mostly '60s, graduated from Lewiston High School in '74.

AL: What was Lewiston like when you were growing up, in terms of neighborhoods, and economic and social activities?

SL: It was a wonderful place to grow up. I grew up around Bates College, and I went to school down there where they make bread every day, over near Kennedy Park – well it became Kennedy Park when I was a child, because President Kennedy spoke there. And the French Catholic, they made up eighty-five percent, very hard working, it added a lot of diversity to my life as an Irish Catholic in Lewiston. So, as an example, in high school there was Joni Mitchell, and there was also Edith Piaf, there was that mixture, so I feel very fortunate to have grown up in Lewiston.

AL: And talk about social activities during those years, what did kids do for fun? Did you have sporting areas?

SL: Well, living around Bates, our baseball field became the Bates gym, and it will forever be our baseball field. And I had a friend whose dad was a coach at Bates, so that got us opportunities around the Bates facilities. It was not uncommon for a bunch of us kids to jump fences and play tennis on our skates, when the ice covered the tennis courts. And separate and aside from the Bates parts, those were years when kids grew up every daylight hour outside, playing kickball or baseball, it was a neighborhood sports scene, contrary to today where I think kids get driven a lot of places, we were just playing street ball all the time. In fact, when Senator Mitchell came to the legislature, I was in the Senate at the time and we had a joint session in honor of Senator Mitchell, and it was right after the Good Friday agreement in 1998, and it was our day to honor him. And it was also right when daylight savings time had begun, and having grown up where every daylight hour every kid was out playing, one of the things I got to say when I spoke to the joint session of the legislature, was to Senator Mitchell, for all of us with daylight savings time, and it was so thrilling as a kid because it meant more time outside to play. And that he made it so -, helped -, was so critically important to all those kids in Ireland, being able to get outside and play safely. There aren't enough thank yous to say to him, for him having allowed more kids more play time, in this case in Ireland, because he made it safe, he made it so that peace happened and moms and dads could let their kids get outside and play and not worry about bullets, and just have them play ball.

So we played outside a lot. And what else did we do? I went to St. Pat's, which was down by where they make the bread, and down by the mill, and so I got to go to school with a great collection of kids from all economic classes, and so that economic diversity was right there too. Some of my friends didn't speak English before they started school, the French influence was still there, the French speaking generation, the immigrant generation was still, the grandmas, the *memères* and the *pepères* were still speaking French to their grandkids at home. So the kids, some of them just were, when they started sub-primary, we called it then, and first grade, they were struggling with English as a second language. Not a whole lot, but some. And then by the time we started getting language classes, French classes in high school, these kids were French IV when the rest of us were French I, and in my situation it did sort of mute me because they were so eloquent and so able to get those trill r's. And I knew not to speak up because I know when people are much better than I am at something, to keep quiet.

Another thing I did, the cathedral, St. Peter's, after school during Lent, I was the kid in school that would walk over to four o'clock Mass at St. Pete's, because I could hear French booming from one part of the huge cathedral to another, and it was so fascinating to walk into that very different world. I can still hear the deep voice, (*unintelligible French phrase*), and the fourth grader would be so excited to be around this kind of different world.

AL: How did the schools approach the French children coming to school speaking French, was it discouraged to speak French at school? Do you have a sense of that?

SL: I don't, I don't only because at St. Pat's we tended to get the Irish kids and the kids that worked. It was near Park Street which was near the tenement housing, so you tended to get – well actually, I was oblivious to it, there must have been some French-speaking kids in my class. It was mostly Irish, but located where we were, there had to be some mill workers' kids there that, where I connected with the French speaking group was when the St. Peter's classes joined the St. Pat's classes post-grammar school, and that's when I was hearing that they had, that's when I was becoming friends with, and realizing I guess that there was a lot of French being spoken in the homes. I heard it in stores as a kid, all the time, but my friends were mostly I guess in my neighborhood around Bates, which tended not to be the French collection.

AL: And talk to me about your parents, what were their names?

SL: My mum's name was Helen, my dad's name was Jim, and they met during WWII. My mum's a Buckeye, from Ohio, and my dad was stationed at Wittenberg College in Springfield, Ohio.

AL: And he was from -?

SL: Lewiston, Maine. Thank you. And they met at a Friday night dance, and many years later, after my dad had come back and been able to go to college, to Bowdoin, on the G.I. Bill. And then his mom was a widow because my grandfather, my dad's dad, was from – it's actually a very interesting story, if I can digress a little. He was adopted into the Jim Longley family in Lewiston, my grandfather was named Jimmy Long, he was adopted by Jim Longley and his family when in those days, if you were an orphan – in this case he was an orphan in Somerville, Massachusetts – it's my understanding they paraded these kids in front of parishes on Sunday, to see if anyone would adopt them. And that's how Jimmy Long was adopted by Jim Longley; I guess that would be my great-grandfather way back. So Jimmy Long became Jimmy Longley, my grandfather, and that would have been heading into WWI. WWI came along and Jimmy Long, now Jimmy Longley, went into the military. And on his gravestone at Mt. Hope Cemetery in Lewiston it says – BGLR, bugler is what comes to mind here. He went to France, he served in the Maine regiment, I'm not sure exactly what the name of that regiment was, I can dig it up for you, but they ran into gas warfare. And it's my understanding that in the trenches, with the gas warfare, he came back, and suffice to say that he didn't live long. And there are other grave sites at Mt. Hope of guys who look like they died young too, maybe because they were in the same regiment.

So my dad was a fifteen-year-old Lewiston High School student when his dad was having strokes and being moved to a Massachusetts veterans' hospital, and it was devastating for my dad, as a young kid (he was the second oldest). There was his older brother Frank, and then my dad, and then there were [three] younger sisters. Where there four? Three, excuse me, and they were much younger, seven and -

AL: So he had to take some responsibility with helping.

SL: Well, they wanted, right, and his mom, whom I call Grammy – they wanted to go right to work in the mill, the two brothers – [but] she kept them moving through high school. And then the war came along and my dad was understandably divided, he had a family, he had his widower mom to take care of, and the military issues of WWII. At any rate, he had had a job at Benoit's clothing store down on Lisbon Street, and then he joined the air force, landed in Wittenberg, met my mom, came back, walked into work back a Benoit's when he came back. And John O'Sullivan, his first ever boss, said, "What are you doing here, haven't you got the G.I. Bill? Get in the car, we're driving you down right now."

And I have it in my, I actually, I'm a history major too, and have a master's in history, and this is my master's thesis, it's on my dad's gubernatorial years. There's some point in here where I found the stubs for the amount, the tuition receipts for when he got enrolled that day, and I think a blanket cost ten dollars and you had to pay a fee on a blanket, tuition, I'll dig it out, but it was, I think it was \$146. And so he drove home that day, enrolled in the next semester, and twenty-seven months later, having worked three and four jobs and been president of his class - My dad was quite amazing, and the G.I. Bill was tailor made for somebody like him who was smart and talented and a go-getter. And but for the fact that there was an education opportunity past high school, he wouldn't have had it, and it was a wonderful opportunity for my dad. As was, you know, that studies show how it created a whole middle class, because these fellows who otherwise wouldn't have been able to go to higher education, get any higher education, did. And then they went off and a lot of them became public servants. And my dad was another example of that, too.

At any rate, so when he came back and he got to go to Bowdoin, and then he was still needing to pay bills to help his mom, and then he decided to go into insurance and set up a business. Meanwhile, my mother is waiting and waiting and waiting, and then -

AL: In Ohio.

SL: In Ohio, and then even, I think oh, this close to giving up, because she became engaged to another fellow. But my dad shows up on New Year's Eve, by surprise, and she's out on a date. And he is playing cards with my grandmother, who that night I think, my grandmother learned how much she thought this guy was a star. And as my mom always said, grandma would just as soon, if she had to choose between her daughter Helen or her future son-in-law Jim, it would have been a hard decision, she loved him so much.

Anyway, my dad was so sad. And somewhere in my research, a story that I understand is, he found a priest to go talk to and poured out his heart, and somehow that priest helped him realize, to focus on what was going right in his life and his future. And my dad came out of that talk with that priest a new person, and became much more optimistic and I think then he started lobbying for my mom's attention. And somewhere between June and July of 1949, when she's engaged to another fellow, my dad manages to get my mom to change her mind, and they were married Labor Day that summer. It's very fun. And then when, I'm told, a story has it, they went on a honeymoon at Niagara and were driving when they crossed the Kittery bridge back

into Maine, a cloudy day turned extraordinarily sunny, the sun broke through the clouds, and that was their relationship. So, isn't it a fun story?

So he was an insurance businessperson at that point, and he stayed that way for twenty-six years, brought five kids into the world, saved, saved, saved so we could go to college. At one point when we were young, my mom tells a story that he came home and said, "Do you know how much we need to put away every single day so these kids can go to school?" And she was floored. I think it was something like three dollars a day or five dollars a day, and when we went to college, the price of college was really high, but high at that point was, as I remember it, three and four thousand dollars a year, as compared to today, thirty and forty thousand. But anyway, we got to go, and we knew that they had saved all their lives. Do you want to hear next about when, twenty-six years later, he decides he wants to get into politics?

AL: Well I was going to ask you, '74 was the year you were graduating from high school, and he was running for governor. Was he in, he was in politics prior to that, though, was he, or not?

SL: Not.

AL: So this was his first foray.

SL: Yes.

AL: I'd like to hear the story.

SL: He was very charismatic, he was a wonderful salesman. When he did the aptitude test, they said he shouldn't be in sales, he was too sensitive. But he always maintained, as Voltaire says, that his strengths were his weaknesses, his weaknesses were his strengths, my force, so my foe, and my foe, so my force. My force is my fault, and my fault is my force, but we translate it, our strengths are our weaknesses and weaknesses strength. Because he was so sensitive, he could be in a room at a meeting and tune into what people were worried about. So he was a great converter of that, turning weaknesses into strengths.

I should actually footnote and tell you about why he chose insurance. When his dad died, he was a fifteen-year-old, president of his senior class at Lewiston High, it was the beginning of April, my dad was going to turn sixteen in a few weeks. And the insurance fellow had come every week, or every month, to pick up his monthly premium from my grandparents, Grammy and the grandfather I never met. But when Jimmy Longley died, and Grammy was sitting there with bills and young kids, the insurance fellow didn't show up with the check for the insurance. The insurance who'd come to collect the money all the time mailed a check, didn't deliver it, and my dad was at the table, kitchen table with his mom when she opened this check. Her husband's just died, she's got several bills, hospital bills, and she opens this check and it's for sixty dollars, and the bills were far more than sixty dollars. And my dad sensed it, paying attention to people and all their emotions, felt the full weight of that moment. And he maintained that – I think, my

sense is he went into insurance because he knew how important it was for families like his, but he was going to make sure that he wasn't there just to do the collecting of the money; he was there to help these families.

As a result, he probably attended more funerals of his clients, as they passed on, and was there for them at their most critical times, probably like, I would bet, I would guess, precious few others in the life insurance business. And people really appreciated him for that, I think that was his base out of Lewiston. And so in 1974, he's become this very successful, nationally successful insurance person, out of Lewiston. He became noted by the nationals, now he's president of the insurance industry, the big huge group, it was called the Million Dollar Round Table, for those who reached the million dollar sales piece, which he managed to do out of Lewiston, and out of Maine, as a successful businessperson, who was gone, by the way, at night when I was in second and third grade; he went to law school at UMaine at night, to work in the day. Had a law degree. Ken Curtis was in his class, Governor Ken Curtis.

So Governor Ken Curtis is running into political problems where he was serving. Governor Curtis was in office after L.B.J. [President Lyndon Baines Johnson] had been in office. L.B.J. had majorly expanded the role of the federal government, and there were dollars that could be used at state levels if states followed suit. Well, a lot of dollars rolling in, I don't know exactly how many but my general sense is that the fiscal conservatives were saying, 'we need more accountability, we need to know where the money's going.' So Ken Curtis turns to my dad and said, "Would you run a management cost survey?" This would have begun in 1972. Well my dad, who as kids I remember thinking it was easy to have him working, because when he was home on a Saturday he would have us – he was such a hard worker – we five kids would be out there clearing a forest. "Don't you have paperwork to do, daddy?" Anyway, he was very high energy driven, get work done. Find work if you don't have any.

Anyway, my dad gathered a team, a great big team, and for almost two years he was going into state government, finding ways to save money, cost, and management. And he came up with – for you that's listening, I'm now standing on my chair and go to my bookshelf and bringing down a copy of the *Maine Management and Cost Survey*, which went through every single – we're going through the book now – but basically it was, every single department, ways that you could save. What the current practices were, how the business people evaluated it, and their recommendations, to the tune of twenty-three or twenty-nine million dollars in state savings, which by our numbers in 2010 might seem minuscule, but it was millions of dollars and very, very huge back then.

Well, my dad maintained that Governor Curtis, there was a difference of opinion on how adamantly Governor Curtis would push for these recommendations. Suffice to say that my dad felt like Governor Curtis could have done more. For whatever reason, my dad was the one who was on the radio and on the TV in '74, saying we've got to make these cuts, we've got to save money, the state government isn't efficient. And you can imagine how receptive the Maine voting public was to that. 'Tax savings, yes, by golly, we need to have our money saved.' And there's my dad, who's very forceful, saying, 'we need to have this done,' and this Irish fight was

out there, we need to have this done.

So when I was senior at Lewiston High School, coming home and very differently hearing my dad on the news all the time - It was quite a double take. And so going into June '74, which would have been the month I was graduating, at that point, through those months leading into June, actually he announced in April, so backing it up, going 1974, January, February, March, 'you got to run for governor, you got to run for governor, you got to run for governor.' And he had promised the governor he'd keep this nonpartisan. He had been a registered Democrat, and fairly active in the party. There's letters in here where he writes to Senator Muskie, and his letters are interesting, they're always talking about how the dues are going up, where's the accountability. They apparently paid dues to the party back then, or there was something about, his letters were about needing more fiscal responsibility within the Democratic Party. So he was singing the same song with state government.

So April, there's a lot of stories, including us all in the living room. What should happen? And he wanted to run. He said he'd keep this nonpartisan. Should he run? He'd been to an insurance convention conference where he'd heard John Gardner, who became his hero, John Gardner from Common Cause eventually, but he wrote a lot of books. And when John Gardner had spoken at the insurance convention the words were, 'never underestimate what one person can do,' and 'we need people in public service, these are times that call on us.' So he came back really wanting to, but not knowing if he should or if he could. Suffice to say, as everyone knows, he decided to do it. But there was a Saturday night, as I remember, where everyone gravitated to the living room, because this was the point of making the decision.

AL: Family, just family, or family and friends?

SL: Right, family, it was family, we were a very private family, and this was going to create a major change in our life, arguably very upheaving, to go from a very private family to a very public family.

There's an article that was written when my mum was First Lady, about my mom, and apparently in the article it says that at one point I was probably down by the washing machine with her, or in the kitchen, and I had come to the decision that he should run. And in the article about my mother, she's quoting me as saying, "Well mum, I think that he's the one who can do the job the best, I think he should run." And anyway, he decided to run, he announced at the Holiday Inn or Howard Johnson's in Augusta, I left my high school history class, Geneva Kirk, an icon of Lewiston, she says, "What's he going to decide?" And I was duty bound to not say anything. And Geneva Kirk had been a justice of the peace and I had looked at my history teacher, I thought, 'if she's a justice of the peace, I can become one too.' So suffice to say I became a justice of the peace and spent my summer enrolling voters, and my dad got a kick out of some of the places he had to drag me out of, because I was in there registering everyone - eighteen was when, that was the year, '74, that eighteen-year-olds were allowed to drink, so I was allowed in bars, so many a - not that I was drinking, I was enrolling voters.

Anyway, so he entered and he ran, and there's lots of stories about that. I should probably dig out the picture of the Portland paper, from the morning after the election, where Senator Mitchell has been taken completely by surprise, because he was absolutely expected to win. And my dad eeked through and I think like a three o'clock in the morning call, conceding, from Senator Mitchell.

AL: And your dad ran as an Independent, which was a fairly new concept.

SL: Right, right, well also through my junior and senior year in high school, Nixon and Watergate were happening, and so the public was very upset and felt betrayed, and maybe they broad-brushed it into partisan politics in general, but there was that post-Watergate wave. I should say, though, that before my dad announced in April of '74, George Mitchell was running and was coming to all the different high schools. He came to Lewiston High School and I can still remember, I was in one of the front row bleacher seats, and he announced that he needed somebody to keep time, let him know when the bell was about to ring so he could know to close up, and I volunteered. And I guess my watch was fast, because I cut him off five minutes too soon, and he made a joke of it, but I think symbolically it was like, you know, a Longley at that point, as it turns out, the Longley family was generally cutting him off five minutes too soon.

But when you see how Senator Mitchell's path has gone, you can't help but think that everything has worked out very well for all of us. I think he was devastated. When I've spoken with him since, Senator Mitchell, he said the best advice he got after that loss was to keep working. So the next day he was back at his law office, and soon thereafter he was a judge, and then soon thereafter he was a senator, and soon thereafter he was majority leader, and his path has been very impressive, to this day, right as we speak, he's probably in the White House with the president and Netanyahu of Israel trying to figure out ways to find peace in the Middle East. So Senator Mitchell just keeps going, doing wonderfully important work.

AL: I want to jump back to '74, and so your dad talked to the whole family about the decision whether to run. Were any of your brothers and sisters also involved in the campaigning?

SL: Thank you, yes, everybody, it became a family effort.

AL: Your brother Jim was involved?

SL: Cass, Steve, Nance, the dog, my mom, oh, we ate, drank, and slept campaign, everybody gave their all. And I know my story, which was at that point I was trying to become a ranked tennis player in Maine and I was well on my way, and I pretty much tossed the racquet into the closet and campaigned. And when we got to the Blaine House – I had heard the track stars, when their careers were over they hung up their shoes – and in the Blaine House, in my room, my tennis sneakers were hung up on the wall as symbolic of, I traded in my tennis game for my dad to become governor.

No, everybody, and my mother of course, as I said, they were married in September, and so

September that year, with their anniversary, my mom's only request was that everybody be home for an anniversary dinner that night. Nobody was ever home, we were all scattered, we were at racetracks, from morning, noon, and night, we were in - My dad had this Winnebago that was just touring the state, "Longley for Governor," some of us were here, some of us were in it, everybody was, it was an all-out effort. And it became an extended family effort, all the relatives, the garage in his insurance office became campaign central. An uncle became postmaster general, he was the one who knew how to do the mailings, the room, the coffee tables were set up in that garage. And the day he was elected, all of Lewiston was just, everyone put posters in their windows and everyone, it was very much a Lewiston-based race, and everybody, the extended family, it was an extraordinary win, like the best football game you ever watched, because it was nip and tuck.

Walter Cronkite announced my dad the winner at eight, but we were just cautiously optimistic, and the score was even most of the night. I'll show you that picture, I'll dig it out to show you, because it is a picture of Senator Mitchell with his then-wife behind him, and Hathaway, and Mitchell's tie is, his shirt's unbuttoned, his tie's, unlike you ever see Senator Mitchell, slumped in a chair, like 'oh my goodness, I cannot believe I didn't win this.' He was expected to win. Nobody thought my dad could win, Independent -

AL: How did you organize, I mean your dad had never been in politics, and campaigns can be quite strategic and complicated. Did he have any advisors who had experience?

SL: Yes, three of his kids - we're still called his chief advisors. He had pulled in some businesspeople from the cost and management survey. We would have - in high school, fifty-minute classes were as much as you could handle on any one subject - we'd have three- and four-hour meetings on Sunday night at his office. So we went from the farm team to the professional ball club. This was serious, and he was our driving force. And to be around him was to know that he was going to win against all the odds, to believe it. And yes, he was a hard worker, my mom was a hard worker, they were always working, and they had a lot of energy, and they had five kids with double that energy, and relatives and commitment from everybody. It was an amazing effort, with a very driven, talented, charismatic leader.

AL: So what was the, you were college age when he went to the Blaine House. Did you stay with -

SL: You'd think I would. I was, to be honest, he said to me one day, "I fully expect you to report to..." I was heading to Mt. Holyoke, very excited, had gotten in early decision - and, "you're going, you're going." And so I went, and I wanted to go, too, I wanted out of the campaign, it was so hard. It was exciting but hard work, hard, you know, 24/7, going with all your might, all the time. Yes, he didn't - a fair amount of expertise was needed in campaigns. We didn't have it, but we made it happen.

And so we were bringing kids home on weekends, to campaign, and two weeks out, when my dad, to meet him was to understand that he thought he was going to win, maybe he can win,

‘jeez, maybe I’ll vote for this fellow,’ you know, ‘good for him, non-politician, good for him, I’ll vote for him.’ And my dad was everywhere, *everywhere*. I’ve got a story just from a few months ago, of a guy who came to fix something in my basement, on a Saturday, working overtime, he comes up, he has seen some of the Longley things I have, memorabilia, in the basement, and he says, “Your dad Jim Longley?”

And to give you an example, he goes, “I was working at the Millinocket Mill, and two weeks before the election, graveyard shift, and he’s there greeting us all on the way out, to the last person. *And* two weeks later, he gets elected. That same weekend, I’m working graveyard shift, I’m the last person out at midnight, the shift ends at eleven, I’m the last person, and I come out, and who’s the one person standing there with a big tall police guard but your father, he’s come back to thank us.” This was, hanging out, the way this former mill worker described it, my dad was there for the last person. And he says, “Oh, this fellow, I’ll never forget that, he’s the greatest governor we’d ever had.” And I was blinking back the tears, it was such a beautiful story to hear.

And back to two weeks out, though, at the same time he’s up at the Millinocket Mill, and every other mill for all we knew, the *Bangor Daily News* has decided to endorse him. Huge. Huge. You could hear the excitement. I could hear it in western Massachusetts, it was huge. *But*, the Sunday before the Tuesday election, the Portland paper, the headlines read, “Mitchell seen easy winner over Erwin, the Republican candidate.” And my dad was eventually mentioned in like paragraph five or ten. That Sunday we’re all home from college or wherever, and as I remember, everything started getting, the operation got moving at four in the morning, by six my dad’s advertising fellow, Jack Havey is on the phone saying, “What are you still doing at home, haven’t you seen the newspaper?” I’m guessing, but my guess is by seven, he and Jack were at some studio recording an ad that, in my memory, was a lot like Winston Churchill in WWII: “We’ll meet them on the beaches, we’ll meet them in the air,” “blood, sweat and tears” – we are going to win this election, look what they’re saying about us. It was aired on all the radio stations, maybe TV, I don’t know, but it was a rally call that Mainers rallied to.

Governor Curtis, years later, when I was doing my master’s thesis on “Governor James B. Longley: A Governor and His Independent Political Style,” I interviewed Governor Curtis and he said that’s what won it for my dad, that the key to professional campaigning is being able to stop on a dime at any point and address the issue at hand. And this was very much a late point, when all the plans were being executed, that morning the plans basically got tossed, and they came up with the new battle plan. And so my father and Jack Havey, their ability to stop on a dime at a critical moment and head in a different direction was why my dad then became Governor Longley two days later, or two-and-a-half days later really. It was the day, the early morning after election night, it was clear that my dad had won the election.

End of Side A
Side B

AL: We are now on Side B of the interview with Susan Longley, and I think now’s a good

time to jump to when you met and worked for George Mitchell.

SL: Great. So that would have been, my dad was elected '74, and then future Senator Mitchell went off to become a federal judge, and then a future senator, and I worked for him in 1984, before he became majority leader. But the story about his allowing me to work for him is a wonderful story, and there's two little stories that I think tell a lot about Senator Mitchell.

The first is when he hired me. I walked into his office and met with various staff, asked for a job and was told 'no.' Returned to Maine, and Senator Mitchell had heard that Governor Longley's daughter had been by, and he turned to his wonderful staffer, Gayle Fitzgerald [Cory], I think is her name?

AL: Cory, yes.

SL: Gayle Cory, and the two said, "We'd better call her back, and we have to hire her." And I was hired because I was Governor Longley's daughter, child, offspring, the person who had beat him. He was generous enough to say, we'll go out of our way to include her as one of our staff. So I worked with Mike Hastings who, I was in the same office with Mike, and got to work in Senator Mitchell's office, which was Reagan era and a great opportunity. Anytime somebody gets to work on Capitol Hill, it's a huge opportunity. He gave me that opportunity and I'm eternally grateful.

Another story I want to tell from that time is that during this Reagan era, whenever grants came forward the Republican legislators would hear about it and be able to announce it. And as the Democrat, he was often not part of the party when the money was being doled out. And there was one point later where our office, I think our team, we did get word, and Senator Mitchell's press person turns to him, and I was in the room, and said, "Great, let's run to the press, let's do it, let's get credit." And Senator Mitchell turned to him and said, "We don't like it when they do that to us, we're not going to do that to them. Give the others a call, and we're going forward together." Wonderful ethic; a principled person.

And that reminds of probably the third ongoing story, is Senator Mitchell, 'Mr. Principled,' as I returned to Maine and I ended up running for the state Senate and -

AL: What year was this?

SL: That was 1994 – nice decade increments, 1974 the gubernatorial win for my dad and loss for future Senator Mitchell, 1984 he's a U.S. senator, he's going out of his way to hire me, and 1994 I'm a candidate for the state Senate back here in Maine. And as with every candidate, if you give Senator Mitchell a call, he does what he can to help. And so he was always willing to do endorsements, he was often willing to come, in a very busy schedule, and find time for fund-raising parties. And at one particular fund-raising party in Belfast, it was my pleasure and honor to retell that story about his being principled, and his hiring me, and also his deciding to live the Golden Rule, 'do unto others as you would have others do unto you,' and it only makes perfect

sense that everybody has learned to love and respect Senator Mitchell.

I'm trying to think of other -

AL: I have a couple questions about your time working for him. How long was the time you worked with his office, from '84 to -?

SL: It was a year, and the reason it was a year was because the fellow in Senator Mitchell's office, Mike Hastings, was heading off to Africa, and I had said to him and his family, "Oh, I've always wanted to go to Africa, I would love to go to Africa, if you see anything come up in Africa, please let me know." And that was the same year as *We Are the World* was being sung, and one day I was hearing this song and was being inspired. And so I wrote Mike a letter, and his family, in Africa and said, "Please, I'm still interested, is there anything?" And I got this most wonderful telegram of my life from the Hastings family: make reservations immediately, repeat, immediately. And so off I went to Africa, and I got the meaningful years, wonderful jobs that I've had over time. Nothing touched the heart and the soul like doing refugee work in Africa, which I got to go do compliments of the Hastings family.

I was working in a squatter settlement, and these people had nothing financially and economically, but everything spiritually. They had smiles that started at their toes, and by the time the smile came out of their beautiful faces, they were warming your heart eternally. So it was a huge, wonderful opportunity, going from Senator Mitchell's wonderful opportunity to a spin-off opportunity in Africa.

AL: Right, and what sort of work did you do in his office?

SL: I did a lot of correspondence, and boy was there a lot of it. I was on environmental issues; it's the area I like the most. I remember too, that was the time of the Topsham overpass, and boy, did we get letters on that. It was intense times, it was anti-ballistic type Reagan era, issues with the then-Soviet Union. At any rate, I was doing a lot of letters.

AL: Do you have recollections of Gayle Cory and what she meant to Mitchell's staff?

SL: Everyone loved Gayle, everyone loved Gayle. Gayle was the heart and soul of that office, and Senator Mitchell knew that, too. And they had a lovely working relationship. Yes, he was lucky to have her, and she was lucky to have him. There were others on the staff, Anita Jensen I remember: brilliant, very brilliant.

AL: She did a lot of speech writing at that point?

SL: Right, very caring in her, beneath that occasional gruffness, there was a very dear soul who was sensitive like my dad was sensitive, she could tell from a distance. I remember one day I had to go have a cup of coffee, I was so down, and who shows up in the Senate cafeteria right there but [Anita]. "I'm here, what's the matter?" There was another gal under Gayle -

AL: Was Mary McAleney there?

SL: Yes, yes, Mary was there, Mary was the spirit of the group, wonderful Mary. Bob Carolla, Mike Hastings, somebody Brown, might have been -

AL: Sandy Brown?

SL: Steve Brown, maybe?

AL: Steve Hart?

SL: Steve Hart, yes. How do you know all these people?

AL: We've been doing this project for two years. We've interviewed most of them, so that's a good thing.

SL: Oh, nice, yes. And Sandy Moore came in, she'd worked for Tom Andrews, and she got recruited into the office, she turned into being a really fine friend, good gal. Yes, and Mary McAleney, oh yes, she was the Irish spirit of the group.

AL: Janie O'Connor?

SL: Yes, you've connected with Janie?

AL: Yes.

SL: Where is Janie?

(Taping paused.)

AL: And so you were talking about some of the people you worked with in the office, and I'm wondering, during your time there did you get a sense of Senator Mitchell and how he did things, managed the office, and was there anything new you learned about him? I mean, you'd sort of seen him from afar before that.

SL: I realized he was warm, he was quick, he was intuitive, he was hard working, he was fair, he was respectful, and everybody understood – I remember his press guy, [John] Trattner, was forecasting that this fellow was going to go places. And I remember we were at an event, maybe a holiday party at the Trattners', and Senator Mitchell was there, and I forget Trattner's first name, but he introduced, in hosting the party he had just said that he'd never worked for such a fellow, and he was sure this fellow was destined for great heights. And I think that proved to be true, as Senator Mitchell has options on the U.S. Supreme Court, and then there was times people thought he might be running for president, and what he's gone on to do in Ireland

and what he's trying to do in the Mideast, and what he's done for all of us back here in Maine. He's always dedicated to Maine.

That was another piece, he always made it a point to, he tried to hire Maine citizens so Mainers, he could share that thrill with his friends and neighbors from home of working on Capitol Hill, and he was also very good with the Maine press. I remember even as he became, when I was working for him it was big, when he was on McNeil-Lehrer was the PBS show at the time. But with time, he consistently always placed the Maine press first. So you can imagine, if CBS and NBC and national press is wanting an interview, and he's making sure that he gives equal time to the Maine press, he doesn't forget where he came from, which is all the more why we love him; he's kept his feet on the ground.

He asked me to play tennis once, he knew I was a tennis player, and to be honest, I got word the next day that he'd come down the hall in the Russell Building, looking for me to ask if I could play, because he suddenly had some time. And to this day, I'm sorry that I wasn't there to say 'yes, let's go.' I think we would have had a very similar tennis game, and I don't know what that means about our politics and policy making – I'd like to think it means a lot because I have great respect for him, and his very steady, back court consistent game. Very steady. Back court, not that aggressive, to the net, but very steady and consistent from the back court. And that strikes me as, he's still going strong, and he deserves to have much more time off than he gives himself. But he's been the steady, consistent player on the world stage for decades now.

My dad died right after he got out of office. He was fifty-six, he no more than served his one term as he promised, and only one term, than within the year he was diagnosed with cancer and he died – he was supposed to die two months later, he fought and died eight months later. But when I compare the two, they had, with the help of some of what you told me, I understand what similar backgrounds they came from. They both had fathers that were adopted, and they both came from: one, working class Waterville; one, working class Lewiston. They both got to go to Bowdoin, it was a huge opportunity, and they both raced against each other for the hearts and souls of the Maine voter.

My dad came out of nowhere and crossed the finish line and won by a nose. Senator Mitchell, to mix analogies, running in tennis, he was the steady, consistent person who's managed to keep a steady, consistent energy through the decades. My dad put all his energies into the (*telephone interruption*) – and didn't get to last as long, but they both have very similar stories.

AL: And so before we end here, is there anything about Senator Mitchell or your dad's time that you feel is important to add that I've missed, haven't asked you about?

SL: I guess the closing comment I would have is that both of them, as I, with the benefit of long hindsight, and as a historian myself, knowing, I guess I see them both as sons of Ireland, and how as the immigrant generations that make up this country, how the country of Ireland sent forth two fellows, one named Jim Longley, one named George Mitchell, and how anyone with a Irish gene in their body, or an Irish sense, or as a citizen of the world, of this country, that

country sent forward these two souls that were so good and dedicated and committed to helping this state and this country.

AL: Great, thank you.

End of Interview