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George J. Mitchell Oral History Project

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Carole S. Cory
(Interviewer: *Brien Williams*)

GMOH# 163
October 26, 2009

Brien Williams: This is an oral history interview for the George J. Mitchell Oral History Project at Bowdoin College with Carole Cory, systems administrator for [Senator] Patty Murray. We are in the senator's hideaway office in the Capitol, and today is Monday, October 26, 2009, and I am Brien Williams. First, Carole, would you give me your full name and its proper spelling?

Carole Cory: My name is Carole Sue Cory, and Carole is C-A-R-O-L-E, Sue is S-U-E, and Cory is C-O-R-Y.

BW: And the date and place of your birth?

CC: September 14, 1970, Nashua, New Hampshire.

BW: And your parents' names.

CC: Gayle Cory, Myrna Gayle Cory, she legally went by Gayle Cory, and Donald Bruce Cory.

BW: Good. We're going to start with a footnote here, I said that we were in Senator Murray's hideaway office, and explain what the hideaway offices are.

CC: Well, each senator has a private space in the Capitol, it's usually a small room, the higher your seniority, the bigger room you get, and so they can have quick access to the floor.

BW: And you told me that this is what number in the -?

CC: It's the fourth that I know of. She might have had more before I started, it's the fourth since I've been here.

BW: So as we talked about it, with every election and things change, then the pecking order takes over and you change offices.

CC: Correct. If they elect to.

BW: Let's turn to you now and a little bit about your family background?

CC: Okay, so I am my parents' second child, I have a sister that's two-and-a-half years older than me, who is developmentally disabled. She was born here in '68, and I was born in New Hampshire in 1970, but I've been here most of my life. Mom and Dad left D.C. right before I was born, and he took a job in New Hampshire so she left the Senate for a brief period of time. When we were in New Hampshire they discovered that Melissa has developmental disabilities, and they actually weren't all that happy up there and so they came right back here, for the services, and Mom picked up again working for Senator Muskie.

I don't know if I should just jump ahead to my work here in the Senate, or -?

BW: Well, no. First of all, just talk a little bit about the Maine connection in your family.

CC: So my mom was born and raised in Maine, she was born in the St. John's Plantation. You can almost go no farther north in Maine, it's at the very tip of Maine, and I think they were there for five years before the family moved to Bath. My grandfather worked at BIW, and my grandmother was a school teacher, and I think she did not teach after they moved to Bath, I think she stayed at home with the kids at that point and it was, my mom was the oldest of three, it was my mom and my Aunt Carole and my Uncle Buzz, and my mom was in Maine until she was about twenty and then she moved to Washington, and she was working for the telephone company at the time. And within the first year I think she was here, she volunteered to work for Senator Muskie and then took a full time position in 1959.

BW: Did she go to college?

CC: She did not, no.

BW: And what did your aunt and uncle, what were their lives like?

CC: My aunt was a school secretary for many years, and she stayed in Bath, she still lives in Bath, raised her family there, two kids and four grandchildren now. Her husband she was married to forty-plus years passed away the year after my mom died, actually. And then my Uncle Buzz stayed in Maine, raised his family in Maine, was a lawyer for many years, and during that time he was counsel for, lead counsel for BIW, and I can't remember what year he moved over to become, I can't remember what his first position there was, but maybe executive vice president for them, and then he became president and then CEO of BIW, and he was with them for several years, until '95 maybe, before he stepped down from that position, and then he did other work before he also passed a couple years after my mom died.

BW: He cast a pretty big shadow in Maine, so talk a little bit about Uncle Buzz [Fitzgerald].

CC: Yeah, Uncle Buzz had a great legal career, very well known in Bath and then around the state. And of course when he moved over to BIW, you know, BIW is the largest employer in Maine, so yes, he had a pretty big profile. I'm not sure how much more I can elaborate.

BW: What about his political connections or leanings?

CC: Well, he was well connected prior to that position, I think just from his own work, but also because of my mother, and I think he had a good relationship with, as far as I know, with Senator Muskie, and definitely with Senator Mitchell. The family though were Republicans, my mom was the only Democrat in that family for years. I don't think actually Uncle Buzz ever changed party affiliations, I think he actually was a Republican for many years, and then I think maybe he was an independent later on in life. But my mom was the only registered Democrat for many years. My Aunt Carole I think is also now a registered Democrat. She [Gayle] was the black sheep early on.

BW: When did she come to see the light?

CC: Very early, yes.

BW: On her own?

CC: Oh, on her own.

BW: Before D.C.?

CC: Correct, yes, they would have, from what I've heard, they would have pretty storied discussions around the kitchen table and mom was always on her own, against the rest of them.

BW: Do you have any idea where she came by that?

CC: I don't know, I don't know, to be honest.

BW: Just in general, was she a pretty independent thinker?

CC: Yes, definitely, liberal Democrat through and through.

BW: Anything else, talk a little bit about her, since she cannot be part of this oral history, unfortunately.

CC: Which is very unfortunate.

BW: Can you talk a little bit about her childhood growing up and whatnot before she came to Washington.

CC: She was a very happy kid, she was gregarious, a ton of friends, very popular growing up, was pretty active at Morse High School in Bath, was head cheerleader. And like I said, she was an independent thinker, was Democratic leaning then and would have these arguments at the

kitchen table on, she said they used to get pretty heated with her father. But I don't have any specific stories in regards to that.

BW: How did she meet your father?

CC: Good question. They met, let's see, in the sixties, mid sixties. My Uncle Nordy and Aunt Joanne, not by blood but Nordy Hoffmann, he actually used to be a sergeant-at-arms here in the Senate, he and his wife and my mother were good friends, and they knew my father and they introduced them sometime in the mid sixties.

BW: It's coming back to me now, because I interviewed Nordy's wife.

CC: Did you, how recently did you interview her?

BW: About, it was I guess in January or something.

CC: If you have current contact information for her I would love to get it, I haven't spoken to her in many years.

BW: Good, I'll do that. So they were married in?

CC: 'Sixty-eight.

BW: And here.

CC: Correct.

BW: So she came to Washington as a single person.

CC: She did.

BW: And what motivated her coming down here?

CC: She got a transfer with the telephone company; she wanted to come to D.C.

BW: And which telephone company?

CC: C&P, I believe.

BW: And she worked for C&P in Maine.

CC: Correct, I think that's right. Or, you know what, I'm not sure, I'd have to look back at that. That doesn't sound right to me, now that I'm saying it.

BW: So then you said she volunteered?

CC: That's right, she volunteered in the evenings in his office, that first year, when they were still trying to set up the office, and I think they quickly offered her a full time position, which she took, and I think it was receptionist, answering the phones, which she did for at least three years.

BW: And then what was her next -

CC: Position? I don't know exactly, as she went through the organization. She eventually was his executive assistant, and she had that position for many years. And she was with him his entire Senate career, until he went to the State Department, and then went to the State Department with him and then came back to work for George. But they were very close, she was very close with all of the Muskies. Back then, there was always someone on staff in the Senate, in a senator's office, who kind of was a liaison between the family and the office, and it definitely was more a position many years ago, you don't really find that any more, though there still is someone who kind of is the intermediary between the family and the office. But my mom was that person for Senator Muskie, and so [she] and Jane Muskie were very close, and she was very close to those kids. She was almost like a second parent to those kids, second mother rather, to those kids. So I had to share her a good deal, not just with her family in the office, because I think the Muskie organization very much was like a family, but then with his actual family.

BW: Did you resent that?

CC: No, I didn't resent it actually, it just was the way it was. She worked long hours, she was out of the house for many hours, but she always had dinner on the table, she'd come home late at night and she'd still cook dinner and be my mom, when she was around. And she was around, she just was very tied to her work.

BW: So when you began to become aware of what your mother was doing and whatnot, describe what she was doing.

CC: Gosh, I mean she was the executive assistant, she was never, she never had the role of office manager in his office, but she kind of, she seemed like she was the office manager to me. All the staff went to her with many questions, and she was kind of, I mean she was kind of the face of the office. I mean, because she had such a rapport with Mainers. And I was young, so I mean my memories of that office are, I was ten when he went to the State Department, and I think I was in the office a handful of times during those years so I don't remember much.

BW: And what was your dad doing during this period?

CC: He was a computer scientist; he worked for a couple different companies. The last company he worked for was TASK, out of Silver Spring.

BW: He must have gotten into that field quite early.

CC: He did, he went to school to study computer science, and so he started that work. He was born and raised in Montana, went to Seattle, went to California, he started that work in California, or actually maybe even Seattle, and then moved his family out here, my dad was married before and had five children, divorced his first wife and then met my mom and had my sister and I. But yeah, he was a computer scientist for several decades.

BW: And where were you living?

CC: Gaithersburg, Montgomery Village, Maryland, is where I grew up. When we came back from New Hampshire, when I was just a baby, we lived in Potomac – no, that's not true, McLean, we were in McLean, Virginia, for a year before we moved to Potomac, and we were there for a couple of years before we moved to Montgomery Village, when Montgomery Village was brand new, a fledgling planned community, one of the first in the country actually. And it was still mostly farmland, but it's completely different now, it's major suburbia.

BW: And did you get the impression your father was comfortable with his wife's busy life?

CC: I think, I mean I think it was, there was some tension there. She was very committed to her work, and like I said, she worked long hours, she was away from the house, so he had to pick up a lot of the stuff that she wasn't around to do. But they seemed to make it work. The Muskie office, they were all so close, so those people, my mom's coworkers were their good friends, I mean they definitely socialized a lot with them, their coworkers. And my mom was always very gregarious, very outgoing, very outspoken, loved to have political arguments and discussions, and my dad was definitely quieter, more of an introvert, so he got a lot out of being with my mom and those relationships. I think he enjoyed those friendships, very much so.

BW: Now, it's my understanding the Muskies, while the Senate was in session, they were down here, and then during the summer they went back to Maine, is that right?

CC: The family? I don't know, but that sounds right to me. You mean Jane and the kids, yes, that's probably correct.

BW: So did you have much opportunity to interact with Jane and the children?

CC: Some.

BW: What was that like?

CC: Jane was my Aunt Jane, they were that close, and so yes, I remember her from my childhood, I remember going to their house. Because I think my mom definitely stepped in, helped wherever Jane needed help with the kids, so I remember being over there as a small child, I remember their dog, Black Bell, I remember their poodle, Black Bell, but I was very young, but

I do remember being there and it being comfortable and her being warm.

BW: And what about summers in Maine, did you travel up there with -?

CC: Oh yes, every summer. But we didn't spend our summers in Maine, we would just take a family vacation for a week, and we were always in Bath. My grandmother, she passed away in '99, but she lived in Bath, the house they grew up in, until she moved into a nursing home later on in the '90s. But we would always stay with her, the house they grew up in, and I would sleep in the room that my mom and Aunt Carole grew up in.

BW: So then your mother moved with Senator Muskie to the State Department.

CC: Right, that was eight months.

BW: Any recollections of that period?

CC: Oh, absolutely, I mean it was a whirlwind eight months, big life change to leave the Senate and work with the State Department, and they kind of made the most of it, for his short time there. Let's see, I think she went on two different trips. My mom, I don't think, had ever left the country until they moved over to the State Department, and then they took this more or less round the world trip the summer of 1980. I remember because we made our first trip to Montana, where my dad grew up, that summer, so the summer of 1980, and she had just, I remember we had just picked her up from her trip before we flew out to Montana.

And she, like I said, they went around the world, I think they, if I can remember correctly, they went to Italy and Turkey, Ireland, and a couple other countries, and I think it was a two-week trip, and she loved it. It was her first experience leaving the country, and it was as Secretary Muskie's executive assistant, so it was a great experience for her.

BW: And then unfortunately, Senator Muskie's State Department career came to an abrupt end. So what did your mother do then?

CC: She came back to the Senate to work for George Mitchell, and I think maybe she stepped right into that role of executive assistant that she had for Senator Muskie. Mum kind of wore different hats as the years went on, depending on what the needs were in the office. At different times I think they were without even a chief of staff, between chiefs of staff, so she would kind of slip into that role. She'd help wherever she could, but her position for George throughout, I think from 1980 to, until he became leader, she was his executive assistant.

BW: And did she ever talk to you about contrasting Senator Muskie with Senator Mitchell?

CC: A little bit, they're very different personalities, even though they both had illustrious careers, they both obviously made quite a name for themselves here, both of them. Senator Muskie had a little bit of a longer tenure. But at least from where I sit, he had a more imposing

presence; however, they were much closer. I think my mom and Senator Muskie were much closer, and I think that was because of the family connection.

And her work with George, for George – and I say ‘George’ because she always called him George, I would never call him George to his face, I would call him ‘Senator’ – it was different. She had such respect for him, and even though they were closer in age, there was a little bit more of a boss-employee relationship there, I think, from what I can tell, as opposed to being closer to Senator Muskie.

BW: Was there any socializing that went on?

CC: Between Senator Mitchell and my mum? Probably on an official basis, definitely different than I think her relationship was with Senator Muskie and Jane Muskie. But at least the office climate was I think very similar, very close to the other staff, socialized with his staff, and very much was like a mother hen in that office. A lot of the younger staff turned to Mom for many things, Mom definitely mothered many of the younger staff in that office.

BW: Like what would be the range of things that she would deal with?

CC: Everything, everything. She was kind of used to that role I think, from working for Senator Muskie, just taking care of the family, and my guess would be for the younger staff in that office as well, but I was younger so I don’t really recollect. But yeah, she definitely did whatever she could for anyone, she was that kind of person, she would do anything for anyone.

BW: Now of course, she and George Mitchell had been together in Muskie’s office when -

CC: For a handful of years, yeah, he worked for Muskie for three years, I think, and those were within the first five or six years Mum worked for Senator Muskie, so yeah, that’s where they met.

BW: So they knew each other before she came to work for him.

CC: Right. Actually, I have this great photo album, I have got to find it. It is, after my mom passed away and my father moved into assisted living several years ago, I had to empty out the house and a lot of the stuff is, I couldn’t actually go through it, it was kind of too much, and so a lot of it’s still sitting in storage, but there is some great stuff that my mom has from all those years. And there’s this great photo album from a trip that the office took, I think just to Maine actually, but it’s a, there’s a picture of everyone on staff at the time. It’s great. And there’s a picture of George, a picture of my mom and everyone on staff. I should try to find that if I can.

BW: I think that would be something that Bowdoin College would be very interested in making a copy of, too.

CC: I think so.

BW: I made a note about that.

(Taping paused.)

BW: Do you have any insight as to the circumstances under which your mom came back into, came to Mitchell's office? I mean was she invited, or do you know?

CC: I don't know, actually. It's my assumption that, I mean I don't even know if there was an opening for her, or anyone else that was with him at the State Department, but I would assume that their valuable experience he would want to have, and so I'm assuming that they made room for them, or people left and - I don't know the specifics there.

BW: Do you remember coming to the Mitchell office fairly often?

CC: Sure.

BW: What was that like?

CC: Smoky. Yes, that is something that is so, I have a vivid memory of that office, lots of noise, lots of chatter, people were always very happy but busy, and smoke, everyone, everywhere, everyone smoked back then. That was, everyone on the Hill smoked, always, in that office, but I don't think it was particular to that office, I think it was just the work, and back then you could smoke in your office. But I do remember that, definitely. And my mom was a big smoker, yes.

BW: And what about Senator Mitchell, do you recall?

CC: I remember meeting him a couple times, seeing him a couple times in the office, very warm and inviting but very busy.

BW: Did he have a big ashtray on his desk too, do you think?

CC: I think he was a smoker, but I don't recall ever seeing him smoke. But I don't remember being that, it being a smoky office, it was the other offices that, where everyone was sitting at their desk, working and smoking, literally under a cloud of smoke.

BW: Things have changed quite a bit haven't they, in that regard?

CC: Absolutely. It was very different, I do think about that often, like wow, I can't imagine sitting in this office with a bunch of smokers.

BW: Did your mother's smoking have consequences?

CC: Yes, she had lung, that's what she died of, is lung cancer, yeah.

BW: So now, at some point she moved over to the Post Office.

CC: Correct. Well first she went to the Leader's Office; when he became leader she actually went to that office, she worked in that office for, let's see, he became leader in '89? And she was in the Leader's Office until '93, so I think like four years. And leadership work is very different than member office work, it's, I had an opportunity actually, I used to work for Paul Wellstone from Minnesota, and when he died I had two offers, I had an offer to work for Harry Reid, and Patty Murray.

I got the offer from Harry Reid's office first, and of course everyone and their brother said, that is the job you need to take. And to have, knowing the experience my mom had, working leadership hours, my kids were young at the time, they were eight and ten, I knew I did not want to make that personal sacrifice to work those sort of hours, because you were kind of on call 24/7, and you're more or less required to be here at all time. I mean when they're in session, you are here, and I couldn't make that choice.

Of course my mom did, but we were older, my sister and I were older at that point. But it took a toll on her, those hours, and being here at nine and sometimes working here until nine or later, depending, was a lot. And so I think actually she went to George in '93, I think it was '93, and said, "I want to continue working here, but not under these conditions. Is there another position here for me?" And I think he nominated her for that position, and she was, so she moved over and became Postmaster in I think '93, and she had that position until she got sick.

And it was during the period where the House Post Office was under that cloud of scandal, so there was more focus on the Senate Post Office at the time, and she ran a tight ship and things, she cleaned some things up there, and she enjoyed her work there.

BW: She did? I mean it wasn't a letdown?

CC: She did. Well, I mean it definitely was different, it was right in the heart of all the action, which is where she left, I mean working for the leader. It was a little of a letdown I think, but I think she enjoyed her work there, and she enjoyed the fact that she could come home at a reasonable hour and have some down time, some personal life at that point.

BW: Talk a little bit about the structure of the Senate Post Office.

CC: Well, I don't know that much about it actually.

BW: Well, are there branches around, or is it just one -?

CC: Well there's two, there's the main branch in the Dirksen Building, and then there's a little satellite office in the Russell Building.

BW: And where was her office?

CC: In Dirksen, her office was in the basement of Dirksen, which is where the main Post Office is.

BW: I don't really want to ask you to talk your way through your mother's sickness and death and whatnot, but I would be interested in how members of the Senate reacted to that, and what it was like?

CC: To her sickness? Her sickness, to be honest, I know and can recall their reactions after her passing more than when she was sick. When she was sick, she did continue to work at the Post Office for a handful of months I think before she actually started her chemo, and I remember the staff at the Post Office was, they were very supportive, upset and supportive when she had to step down. I remember at one point they all came, like the entire office came to bring her flowers, and I believe they sang for her, Christmas carols I think, that's what they did one year. And I remember her being all, my mom was very emotional, could cry like that, and I remember her being very choked up about that, and how much that meant to her.

The Mitchell staff, I don't really recall – you and I were talking earlier about how we don't really like the phone so much. My mom was, the phone was always connected to my mom, if she wasn't engaging with people face-to-face, she was on the phone. [She] was such a talker. And so when she was sick, I'm sure she was talking to a lot of folks from the Senate and her friends, because that's what she always did and she was always on the phone. But I recall, after she passed, just the outpouring of emotion that people had. I mean her service, there were hundreds of people at her service, including George Mitchell, he actually spoke right before I spoke, and so did my Uncle Buzz, and Bob Rose [*Rozen?*] I think, and I can't remember what position Bob had, I think maybe he was communications director for George? Have you spoken to him? No, Diane Dewhirst I think was George's communications director. Press secretary is what they called them back then. But yeah, she had, and so many people came up to me after the service and talked about how important she was to them, and how loved she was.

BW: Where was the service?

CC: It was at St. Martin's Church, Catholic Church, in Gaithersburg. And so my [uncle], who I mentioned earlier, my Uncle Nordy, and Senator Muskie both had not been well, when my mom started to really go downhill, and my Uncle Nordy and Senator Muskie passed the month before my mom died, which was interesting, significant, that they were all so close and worked together for so many years, and they all passed within four weeks of each other. But my mom was so sick, she couldn't go to either of those services, which was very upsetting for her. At the end, the lung cancer had spread to her brain and it had already started to affect her faculties. She was still very with it, but was definitely fading. But I remember her definitely talking about how upset, she was so upset when they both passed and she wasn't able to actually go to either of their services.

BW: What year was that?

CC: 'Ninety-six, Mom died April 24th in '96, and Senator Muskie died four weeks before her, and Uncle Nordy, I can't remember if Uncle Nordy died before Muskie or right after, but they were within like a week of each other. And George talked about that in his, in the eulogy to my mom, about how he'd just been to one after another, and he talked about upsetting, how they were so upsetting, but my mom's passing was the most upsetting for him. And there were five people that spoke at my mom's service, and all wonderful speakers, my Uncle Buzz and two former staff persons, Muskie-Mitchell staffers, and then the Senator, and then I had to follow him. It was intimidating. But I think I held my own, did okay.

BW: Any other recollections about what Senator Mitchell said in that eulogy?

CC: They all had a common theme, about how, and I continued this theme: that Mom was just kind of the glue wherever she was; just loved people and she so wanted to help people. And she knew so many people, just hundreds and hundreds and hundreds of people. So they both talked, I say both because I'm thinking clearly of Senator Mitchell and my Uncle Buzz, they definitely talked about that, as did I but more on a personal level. I think it was my Uncle Buzz, [who] commented that my mom was like a precursor to the Internet, because she was so well connected, she had such a network of people.

Which is kind of funny, too, because my mom was a little bit averse to technology, she - When did the computer, when did the, I think in the leader's office, well before the leader's office actually, I can't even remember when every staffer first started to have a computer at their desk. I think in the late '80s, so she had one probably starting in the late '80s at her desk, and that continued into her work in the Post Office. She never turned it on, like never. She did not ever use the computer, just the phone.

BW: Did she die at home, or was she hospitalized?

CC: She had been at home, but she did pass at the hospital, she went to the hospital two days before she passed.

BW: So talk a little bit about your own career.

CC: So, I started working in the Senate, I started interning in the Senate actually, in the Senate stationery room, in the summer of 1986, and did that for a couple summers.

BW: And were you going to college at the time?

CC: No, I was in high school at the time. And then I came back to the Senate and started working for the Senate photo studio. The Senate has a handful of official photographers that take pictures of official events, and when constituents come to the office, everyone must have

their picture taken with their senator, so the Senate photographers come in and take those pictures. So I worked there for a couple of years, scheduling those photographers.

And then after my son was born, I stayed at home for a year, a year-and-a-half, and then I came back to the Senate and started working for the Senate computer center, and that was in 1992, late '92, and I worked for the computer center for five years. And I was the consultant, I was the liaison between Senator Wellstone's office and the computer center, and when their systems person left I jumped at the chance to work for Paul Wellstone, and I got it. And so I worked for him for five years, from December of '97 to, until he passed in October 2002.

BW: That must have been a totally grim experience.

CC: It was, it was devastating. He was running for his third term, he had been in the state campaigning, and I don't know if you were here at the time, yes, you were, you said you've been here since '95, you recall that the three weeks of October and September we were all under the sniper, the sniper had been going on, and do you remember how that was, and they had just caught him, those guys, the 22nd of October. So I remember that's what was all on the news, and it was a Friday, and I rarely took lunch outside of the office, but there was that relief and it was a Friday, and so I remember I went out with a coworker to lunch.

And I had come back and I turned my TV on, and there were reports of this plane going down in northern Minnesota, which of course made me think, okay, they're reporting a small plane down in Minnesota, what does that mean? And so I went to the schedule, I didn't physically go to the schedule, I pulled it up online, and saw that he was not scheduled to be in northern Minnesota that day, that Friday, and so I was like, oh, okay, relief. Then I looked at the top and I noticed I was looking at Saturday's schedule, not Friday's schedule, so I turned back and looked at Friday's schedule and noticed that yes, he was supposed to fly into Eveleth. And that's when our scheduler, or actually the executive assistant, came upstairs and told us that it was his plane.

And it was eleven days before his reelection, and he would have been reelected. It was a close race, he had actually just had that controversial vote on the war, and he of course was one of twenty-three members that voted against it, and everyone thought that he was sealing his fate with that vote, which is a vote, like he made, he took so many votes like that, he was a maverick, as my mom called him. I think my mom definitely admired him, but I think my mom thought he was a little bit too much of a maverick.

Anyway, I think, and actually his numbers started to go up after that vote, and he was definitely going to win that race. So yes, that was very hard. And at the time, when I took that job, I'm very liberal, I'm a very liberal Democrat, there were not many members I would have wanted to work for, but he definitely, it was great to work for him. So after he passed, like I said, I had two great opportunities to work for Harry Reid or Patty Murray, and I didn't take the job with Reid, one, because of the leadership hours, and two, because I really wanted to work for a woman.

And I made the right choice, she's great, she's very similar to Senator Wellstone in many ways,

very down-to-earth, very accessible, real, here for all the right reasons. I think so many of them are, but I think some of them lose their way a little bit, and Paul and Senator Murray have not, and she's great.

BW: Did you decide early on that you wanted to work up here on the Hill?

CC: I kind of fell into it, to be honest. I never thought I would follow in my mother's footsteps as I have, and I really have. But I like it, I like the work, I really like the people I've worked for.

BW: And did you go to college?

CC: I started, I started, I did not finish. I went to the University of New Hampshire, studying political science.

BW: But somewhere along the way, you got IT.

CC: I did, yeah. I just fell into that, and I picked up those skills as I went along, I didn't study computers in school. But that's my work.

BW: And it probably made your dad happy, too.

CC: I think it did, it did.

BW: And describe what your responsibilities are in Senator Murray's office.

CC: I am the systems and website administrator, so I manage the network; and the network consists of D.C. and the seven state offices, and then I oversee the website.

BW: Do you see changes in the Hill since you've been around? Is it a different place now than it was when you first came here? Which wasn't that long ago, but.

CC: Well, actually it was, it's [been] two decades; I'm almost at twenty years now. And of course I can recall the Hill from when I was just a kid running around here. The interesting thing which – and I'll go back to your question – the hallway that I currently work on for Senator Murray is the hallway my mom worked on. And so that hallway was represented by a Maine senator for half a century, and when I first started working for Patty Murray, on the other side of the hallway was Senator Collins, and I actually befriended the chief of staff there, Steve Abbott, and they made the decision, gosh, three years ago, four years ago, that they were going to move suites and they moved to the Dirksen Building. And I went to him, I said, "Steve, you can't leave this hallway, there's been a Maine senator on this hallway since Margaret Chase Smith, you can't leave." He's like, "No, we're leaving." So they're no longer in the hallway.

And the configurations were different, but the first office I sat in was an office I know my mom

sat in, and where I am now, I don't recall, but yeah, my mom worked in the same hallway. I didn't plan it that way, just Patty Murray happened to be in that hallway, and she's been there ever since she came to office in '92.

BW: Do the three Senate office buildings have a sort of different culture or feel and whatnot, describe that.

CC: I think so. I mean I actually, when I worked for Paul I worked in the Hart Building, which is the newest of the three Senate buildings, definitely different, more modern. (*Unintelligible*) at the time, I favor the older buildings, Russell's the original building, very senatorial, the building, it looks like the Capitol, beautiful old building. But now in my current position, the Hart Building is just better configured for a current modern office for computers and cabling and networking. The Russell building is, it's outdated in terms of modern equipment. For example, I would love to get us really nice modular furniture, but it's not approved for the Russell Building, we had to stick with this older furniture which is just not, it's just not computer equipment friendly, really.

BW: Do you see eventually pressures -

CC: Probably, probably, yeah, because the Hart Building, their offices are just much more efficient.

BW: So why wouldn't everyone want to work in the Hart Building?

CC: I think because it doesn't look like a Senate office building, I mean it looks like a more modern office building. And I think there are a lot of younger folks that prefer those offices, and I think I prefer those offices now just because of the configurations they can have. But it doesn't really feel like a Senate office building.

BW: Other than the furniture and whatnot, what other changes do you see over the two decades or more?

CC: Well the Internet has totally changed the way the offices hear from constituents and deal with constituents. When I started working for Paul in '97, I think we'd been Internet accessible for five years, the World Wide Web for five years at that point, so I was in this computer center when we started using the web, it was '92 or '93, so there was still a lot of paper shuffling and dealing with more physical mail. And now everything, I mean it's gone from physical mail being a hundred percent, or not when I started for Paul in '97, but still probably eighty percent of the mail, to literally ninety-five percent of the mail to ninety-eight percent of the mail being Internet mail, e-mail, and two percent being postal mail. It's very different.

Communications, you know, constituents expect immediate responses and so the Senate office has to respond much quicker. Don't write a letter and take three weeks to get a response to someone, people expect a response within a day, or at least within a week.

BW: And who's writing those responses typically?

CC: The legislative correspondents. LCs have been, an LC has been a position in the Senate offices for years. Currently in our office, the LC position is not called LC, it's called legislative aide [LA], because these folks in our office do a little bit more leg work now too, to assist the legislative assistants, and so they wanted different titles. Yes, titles are definitely shifting around the Senate, including my own, but I'm comfortable with my title for the time being. In essence the legislative correspondent or legislative aide writes the responses, and normally the legislative assistants, who are the folks in the office that are actually writing the legislation, they approve the mail, and usually the LD does the final approval before it's sent out.

BW: What about changes in staff and staff culture?

CC: Well the press department is probably one of the biggest areas that have changed I think. Like I said, in the '80s and before, the lead person in the press department was called the press secretary, and now that's not the case anymore, the press secretary is more a deputy position in the office, there's usually a communications director and then they have usually a press secretary, a deputy press secretary, there's now, almost all offices are hiring people called 'new media' people, to deal with all the new media, blogging, social networking and what have you. Actually they just made an announcement in the staff meeting this morning about our new media hire, which is on a part-time basis, and this is someone I'll work with too. So press rooms have gone from one to two people to four or five people.

BW: Other changes?

CC: Let's see, in regards to staff positions, they're more or less the same, I would say. I mean the leg [legislative] department's about the same, I mean LD, that oversees LAs and LCs, you have a chief of staff. Actually, most offices now have an assistant chief of staff, that's kind of a new position, newer position, I don't think we had them decades ago, and that assistant chief of staff is exactly that, an assistant to the chief of staff as well as kind of an office manager position, though there still is an office manager as well, usually underneath the assistant chief of staff. We don't have that person in our office, but many offices do.

BW: So actually you're describing enlarged staffs.

CC: Yes, oh definitely. Yeah, I don't know how many, of course I work for a member whose constituency is larger than the constituency of Maine, so it's not a great comparison but I would say that probably Mitchell and Muskie's staff consisted of fifteen people in D.C. probably, that's my guess. And we have over thirty in D.C., and then we have another thirty in the state.

BW: What about the demographics of the people working up here now, any changes?

CC: I would say probably yes, but I think about that today actually, because I work in an

office that, I am thirty-nine years old and I'm the third-oldest person on staff, and so I was thinking about that, is that really just specific to now, or was that the case way back when Mom was in the Senate. And I think it was less the case when she was in the Senate, and I think the staffs were generally, a lot of folks were in their thirties and some were in their forties, and then they had a handful of junior staff in their twenties, where literally most of the people in my office are in their twenties, a handful of people in their thirties. So it's definitely younger, a younger staff.

BW: And where, in order to keep that age group, they're going somewhere else when they hit forty or something, right?

CC: Right, right, they're leaving. I think ideally, young folk come here for the experience. It's great on the resume, and it's great to go to other, either the administration or lobbying or some other organization. I mean, we do have people that come and stay for years, if they can move up the chain. But once people hit that LA position, they stay in that position for a few years, so the junior staff either try to wait it out, they see it's not going to happen, they leave. So there's a decent amount of turnover in those junior positions. And even now, the leg aide positions, they, I'd say normally people stay in those positions five or so years before they move on.

BW: Thinking about your mother and her critical role in the Muskie office and then in Mitchell's, and then I've heard a lot about Jo-Anne Coe, who was Senator Dole's sort of Gayle Cory. Are there still, do you see as you go around the halls of Congress, those sort of devoted staffers, or is that sort of past, too?

CC: I think that's a dying breed. I think you find that with the older members, members who have been here for three or four terms or more, and actually this will be, Patty is in her third term, she is running for her fourth term, she's up, she's in cycle. So I'm saying people that have been here for three or four terms, but, so that would include Patty, but Patty definitely has a whole new staff than she did when she started here, so I guess people that have been here for four and five terms maybe, they probably still have a handful of devoted staff. And I would say the first person that came to mind Bob Byrd, he probably has a lot of his original staff, would be my guess. Maybe not a lot, but probably a handful of original staff. And I'm sure Kennedy did as well, though his staff was so vast. But yes, I think you see that less. Especially that position, too, the executive assistant, I think there's more turnover in that position now.

BW: One question I didn't ask you, and since you have had this life-long name connection, how important is Maine to the Mitchell, your mother's life and so forth?

CC: It was central, Maine was central to her life, for sure. I mean she devoted her life's work to the state of Maine and to the people of Maine. Yeah, the people of Maine were definitely my mom's focus, very much so.

BW: Did she have close relations with the field staff, I would imagine?

CC: Oh yes, yeah, she did. She had great relationships with anyone she met, she just was a, she was a people person, she loved people.

BW: Well I'm delighted to have this interview with you, but I must say I'm sorry I didn't have the chance to talk to your mother.

CC: I am too, and she had a wealth of information. So one other thing about my mom, and I'm not sure if this will add to what I've already said but it's definitely, I was thinking about this again this morning, even though she didn't do any leg work in the office, her work was different, she wasn't writing legislation, she was taking care of the people in Maine, she was. She was so knowledgeable, she would wake up every morning and read the paper from front to back, she was, she definitely was very interested in the world and knew her stuff, she did.

BW: Sounds like a real life force.

CC: She was, she was, and I wish she was here to give this interview.

BW: Any other thoughts that you're going to regret not saying?

CC: Not that I can think of right now.

BW: Do you have any sharp recollections, vivid memories of spending a moment with George Mitchell, or something funny happening, or -?

CC: No, and to be honest, my interactions with him were just pretty few and far between. I remember meeting him when I was young, and I remember him just being very welcoming, I remember his basketball, I remember his basketball right on the mantle. And actually I read, I thought, 'do I need to do any sort of research before this interview?' I definitely went back and forth and I thought, you know, I don't really want to do that, I wanted to come into this with my own experience. But I did pull something up about him and I read that he played in college. I never knew he played in college, but I do remember that basketball, it sat right center on his mantle.

BW: Was there a baseball up there too, or not?

CC: Probably, and I knew his love of baseball, my mom always told me that he always wanted to be the commissioner of baseball, either that or a Supreme Court judge.

BW: And yet he turned that down.

CC: Yes, he did, I'm not sure I understand that.

BW: Did your mother express any thoughts when he announced his retirement?

CC: I don't remember her observations. I myself remember being shocked that he was stepping down. He had been here for I think fifteen years or so, but I was shocked that he wanted to step down. Clearly he could have made this his, he could have been here for fifty years. And maybe that is why he left, he had other things he wanted to do, and clearly he's made the most of his life.

BW: True. Well good, thank you.

CC: Thank you. I hope I've added something, I hope this has not been a waste of your time.

BW: Oh, not at all, not at all.

Pause and Resume

BW: So we were just talking after the interview here about other changes that have occurred, and tell me about the ramifications after 9/11.

CC: Right, so when we were talking earlier I just, I don't know why that totally escaped me, that's been a major change, working in the Senate post-9/11. I was here for 9/11, I don't know if you want me to go into that at all? I will. So I was working for Paul at the time, and I had come in, it was like nine fifteen, so both towers, both planes had already crashed but the one at the Pentagon I don't think had crashed yet, and there was just people running around and confusion.

And I remember Paul was, there was already a vote scheduled so he was already on his way to the floor, and I remember there was word in the office that he was coming back, and as soon as he got back in the office he was telling us all to leave. There had been no official notification from Capitol police that we needed to leave, but he was already telling people to leave, so we were already assembling to leave when the word went out that we needed to vacate and get as far away from the buildings as possible. Which we did, and people more or less scattered and went to different people's homes, that lived on the Hill. I ended up at, we had a legal fellow at the time, and he lived about four or five blocks away and I went there with a couple of other staffers, and we holed up there because the city was more or less shut down for the entire day, and we of course just watched the news reports, as everyone else did, until the trains started running again, which went on until later that evening, and I could get out of the city.

But yeah, so the Senate security clearly has been, was more or less overhauled, there was an attempt to overhaul at that point, and things have been very different since. Various different barricades were put up almost right away all around the complex; the immediate streets right around the buildings are closed off to traffic. And then two months after 9/11 there was the anthrax incident, the letters that were sent to Daschle and Leahy, and so since, and during that post-cleanup of anthrax the building was closed for three months, so all staffers and all offices had to reassemble elsewhere. Which we did, we had like a satellite office at Postal Square, the sixth floor of Postal Square, the Senate has that floor, and so we had a, kind of a satellite office

there which we dubbed Wellstonia for those three months. And then Senator Dayton, the other senator from Minnesota gave up his actual conference room for us and we assembled computers all around the conference table and staff just shared computers for three months. It was interesting.

BW: And which building was that in?

CC: Russell, here, he was in this building. And then we got back into the building in January, but mail procedures changed, now everything has to go through a machine before it comes into an office, so we get burned mail, so it adds another week or so, or two, to the delivery. But as I was saying prior, I mean our postal mail is almost nothing anyway, most of our communication is via the e-mail.

BW: Where is Postal Square?

CC: It is where the Post Office Museum is, it's the building, if you're looking at Union Station, it's the building to the left of Union Station.

BW: So it's still very convenient to the Hill.

CC: Yeah, it's just two blocks away.

BW: Good, all right, any other addenda that we ought to -?

CC: I don't think so.

BW: Okay, great, thank you.

End of Interview