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### Interview with Clyde MacDonald (1) by Mike Hastings

Clyde MacDonald

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#### Recommended Citation

MacDonald, Clyde, "Interview with Clyde MacDonald (1) by Mike Hastings" (2008). *George J. Mitchell Oral History Project*. 85.

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

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**Clyde MacDonald (1)**  
(Interviewer: Mike Hastings)

**GMOH# 014**  
May 23, 2008

**Mike Hastings:** This is for the George J. Mitchell Oral History Project. It is May the 23, [2008], Friday. I'm with Clyde MacDonald, this is an interview at his home in Hampden, Maine. I'd like to begin, Clyde, if you could give us your full name, and if you could spell your full name, I'd like your date of birth and place of birth, and the names of your parents.

**Clyde MacDonald:** Okay, it's C-L-Y-D-E, of course, M-A-C-D-O-N-A-L-D. I usually capitalize the M and the D; sometimes I don't. I was born in Old Orchard Beach in December 5, 1929, in my mother's house, my parents' house. Let's see, what else?

**MH:** Your parents' names.

**CM:** Oh, my mother's name was Nellie, and my father's name was Clyde, so I was Clyde, Junior.

**MH:** What was your mother's maiden name, Clyde?

**CM:** It was Caroll. They were both, came here from Nova Scotia, and my grandmother and grandparents had lived in Nova Scotia, and they moved to Malden, Mass. My grandmother was a very enterprising, intelligent, wonderful woman. My grandfather I guess had left a little bit to be desired. They bought this hotel on Old Orchard Beach called Staples Inn, and the brochure that we used [p/o] said, "Built two years before George Washington was born." It had musket proof walls on the old part of the house. It was [p/o] across from the town hall, a [p/o] kind of imposing structure. My father and mother were distant cousins, and so that's why, that accounts for some of my aberrations probably. They say it's not good genetically. Anyway, I think that about covers it, doesn't it?

**MH:** Now, we have the benefit, Clyde, of the Edmund Muskie Oral History Project [that] interviewed you twice in 1999, once in May and once in June. Much of your personal history in Old Orchard, and your education and military service are covered in those interviews. What I'd like to do to begin today is to ask you to kind of update us on what you've been doing since 1999.

**CM:** Well, in the mid-'90s, one of the groups that came to us to ask for the Senator's help was a group of cranberry growers; they were trying to start a new industry in Maine. And so I became very much interested, I was kind of the point person on it, and thought it had a lot of

potential. And prices went out of sight in 1995, '96 so, '96 especially, so when I retired at the end of '95 the head of the Cranberry Growers Association asked me if I'd be interested in [becoming its Executive Director]. They had just received a federal grant – this is interesting – they got a federal grant from the National Marine Fisheries Service to help establish a cranberry industry in Maine.

And the connection of course is that [many of] the cranberry growers that we attracted [lived on the coast] that would have started very small, people with three to seven to ten acres. The prime cranberry land was located on the coast, and at the time the National Marine and Fisheries Service was trying to encourage fishermen to get into other lines of occupation, because they could see the handwriting on the wall. Two women that were head of the [cranberry growers] association at the time wrote a grant request to try and convert them. So they got thirty-six thousand dollars.

Anyway, they asked me if I'd be interested in being the executive director for a year or two, and I was very much interested because I'd become hooked myself on the idea of Maine cranberries. And so I accepted a very small salary, I think it was thirteen thousand or something, I figured we'd string it out for three years, plus expenses. And so for the next three years, my goal was to encourage not only fishermen, but we used that grant as a springboard. We did interview a lot of fishermen, put out the word that we were interested, you know. But most of the people that were attracted to it were not fishermen. We used that grant money to reach out to people and we ended up with thirty-seven cranberry growers.

I did a lot of legislative work at the time. We had a bill in the legislature to try and get the state to agree to fund a cranberry manufacturing operation where we would – because at the time there was no place in the country where you could get frozen cranberries in small lots, and I was getting calls from Tennessee, Texas, all over the country, asking for orders of five to ten pounds of cranberries. People put [them] in small packages and froze them themselves.

I managed to convince the produce man at Shaw's in Boston that if we could put out a small package of frozen cranberries under the Maine label, would they be interested in putting them on their shelves and not charge us for shelf space. And surprisingly, they agreed to do that.

**MH:** So was this a cooperative, or was it an association of separate companies?

**CM:** The Maine Cranberry Growers?

**MH:** Yeah, or was it just a project?

**CM:** No, it was just a project, yeah, a group of people that paid annual dues and had me as the executive director; we had our own newsletter. So that's why I went to the legislature, to try and get funds to enable us to freeze cranberries. I contacted a couple of processing plants and so on and so forth.

The thing fell through in the legislature, but about that time I learned [of] that [failure], someone called me from southern Maine [and] said they had just bought a package of frozen cranberries, I think a one pound or twelve ounces, at a WalMart superstore in New Hampshire. So I knew WalMart was the first one to put these out in consumer size packages. There weren't any WalMarts in Maine [p/o] at the time, certainly no superstores.

And when you put [out] Maine cranberries, we could charge three times what you'd get for ordinary cranberries if you had the Maine label on them. Our cranberries were bigger and redder than most of the ones that were on the market. So anyway, I thought it was a very good, worthwhile project. So my goal was to attract enough growers that would give us a critical mass where we would have some bargaining power, because Ocean Spray and the Wisconsin growers, you know, dominated the market.

Well, at the end of the second year, prices collapsed.

**MH:** Why was that?

**CM:** I don't know. A lot of people accuse Ocean Spray of having manipulated everybody into thinking that there was a shortage, to get them to go into it, so they'd end up with a surplus which would benefit them. I don't accept that, I mean I think the impetus for that is too sketchy, but it's possible. Something must have happened. And so then of course we didn't want to get new people in, the aim was try and enable the existing ones to survive. I stayed on there for four years. The fourth year I didn't accept any [pay]. [We] didn't have any [money left].

**MH:** Were you working part time on this?

**CM:** No, I was full time.

**MH:** Oh, pretty much full time.

**CM:** I bought a printer and a computer, and had a deluxe telephone with several lines. [Our editor was] a woman [who] did a beautiful job on the newsletter. Later on we had a falling out and a young guy took it on. The newsletters were superb, I mean I'm not taking credit for [them], I mean I wrote a column in it, but the newsletters were superb, thanks to them.

And, let's see, where does that leave me? Yeah, the aim became to try and make it possible for the ones that were in it to survive, and they almost didn't. But so far as I know to this day, of the thirty-seven that we had in it, thirty-six of them have survived, and the prices have crept back up.

**MH:** Where are they located?

**CM:** Most of them are in Washington County. Again, that was another reason for being enthused about the project because, you know, that's one of the poorest counties in the United States and so anything you could do for Washington County, you'd want to do. That's one

reason why the Senator took interest in it early.

And, but we did have one site in Denmark, which is in northern Oxford I think, and we had a couple down somewhere near Brunswick. I think one of those two actually ended up growing cranberries. But most of them were in Hancock and Washington County. We had one, experimental one going in Aroostook that never panned out.

**MH:** What did Senator Mitchell do before he left the Senate that had to do with cranberries?

**CM:** I can't remember. [p/o] They didn't come to us until late '94 or early '95, see, and by that time he's winding down, I mean he left the Senate on December 31st, 1995 [*sic*: January 3, 1995], the day I retired and – that not being the reason of course – so I don't think we did much concrete as far as the federal thing goes, but we started. If we'd stayed there I think we would have, because we were on very good terms of course with the heads of the Farmers Home Administration and so on. And they were enthused about cranberries as well.

**MH:** Now, when you worked in the Senate you had a lot to do with the Farmers Home as well, you had contacts there?

**CM:** Yeah, but most of it was through the heads of those organizations in Maine. I didn't do much legislatively that I can remember, except to put my oar in, urging support for this or that measure, you know, or opposition or whatever.

**MH:** In the 1999 interviews, it becomes clear from reading them that you've been a very active Democrat most of your life, and had a lot of contact with the party and with, either in your representing Senator Muskie or Senator Mitchell -

*(Telephone interruption.)*

**MH:** Do you, have you been involved in Democratic politics since you left the Senate staff?

**CM:** Oh yes. Well, I shouldn't say that so emphatically. When you retire and become older, you know, all those connections you have begin to disappear. Because as I told a friend of mine, and I told the Senator in fact, that the people still think you have some influence but the truth of the matter is that the key people that owed you something or you felt obligated to, have either died or moved to Florida, and so the number shrinks.

But yeah, I've done what I could. I've gone to every convention, and I've supported candidates, I support them financially quite generously I think.

*(Taping paused)*

**MH:** What kind of things have you been doing, largely working for candidates, or other kind of party (*unintelligible*)?

**CM:** Yeah, yeah, well like Joe Brennan called me when he ran, and wanted some help. But I, it wasn't much of a campaign so I didn't do much, and I don't think he did either. But, then [Tom] Allen called me a few weeks ago and wanted my help, but that didn't quite work out either, I don't know as I want to go into it. I'm spoiled. I'm used to working on a personal basis with the candidates. I asked him [Allen] if we'd have a personal relationship, where I wrote memos and I could speak for him, he said, "Yes." And I said, "Could I be assured that any memo I write that you will see it?" He said, "Yes." So I wrote him this long memo after my first three or four weeks of doing some legwork, and he never responded to it. So I called his campaign people, told them, "I can't work this way," and I haven't done anything since.

I work for local candidates where we almost, our candidate for the legislature came within seven votes last time of beating a Republican in this district, which was pretty good. We did carry it one year, 1972 I think it was, I got a guy to run that [had] never been involved with politics and – it sounds like I'm bragging – but [I] did all the work for him and so on, and he won by three votes in a recount. [p/o] [In] Augusta nobody in the party had any use for him, he was going his own way, wouldn't listen to anybody, so he didn't get reelected and I didn't bother the next time around.

**MH:** Well it's obvious from the interviews, you had a lot of personal contact with Senator Muskie when you worked for him. Let's talk now about, let's move to Senator Mitchell. When did you first learn that a person named George Mitchell existed?

**CM:** Well, to put that in context, I guess I'd have to go back to when I first become involved in politics in the '60s as a [volunteer], I became involved because of the Vietnam War. I'd written a letter to Muskie in 1964, which he never responded to because he didn't know me from Adam, and I was working at the time for the Bangor Welfare Department while working on my master's thesis at the university.

But [between] 1965 to 1972, I was very, very active. I had started out with some university professors [who] were active in the Democratic Party – [Walter Smith], Bud Schoenberger and a couple of others – and we became very strong McCarthy supporters. When Eugene McCarthy came to Maine to speak at the university, I was one of the three people that greeted him at the [airport]. He landed in a little plane out in the Old Town landing field.

The party was bitterly, bitterly divided at the time. [p/o] I maintain [divisions are] good for a political party because [the] event[s] that we had, anyone had, were huge successes. Because the [pre-Johnson, pro-war] old guard didn't want the new people, the anti-war people, to get ahead of them, and the anti-war people wanted to defeat the old guard, so you had both wings flocking to these events. In the context of today, the Obama-Hillary Clinton campaign, I'm wondering if there's not some of that still there, that it may be good for the party [p/o].

We, [the anti-war faction], had enough support in 1968 at the state convention, I figured, so we should have had five delegates to the Democratic National Convention. But the party rules were

such, with winner take all on a county basis and other things, and the experience that the old guard had, they put the screws to us. We ended up with one half of one delegate for Gene McCarthy, a guy named Lou Dietz, an author who lived down on the coast. And I remember watching that convention on TV, and we'd have the Maine thing, you know, and one half of a vote for Eugene McCarthy.

I was pretty bitter about that, and so in [1970] I got elected to the State Committee. Let me back up again, and I know this sounds like blowing my own horn, but it is true. I was about the only recognizable leader of the anti-war movement that also had fairly decent personal relationships with the strongest members of the old guard [in Eastern Maine], except for the Brodericks in Lincoln.

**MH:** Who was the old guard?

**CM:** Well, Danny Golden was the county chairman, and he was kind of the symbol of it. The Brodericks, in Lincoln, Faye Broderick was one of the speakers at the Democratic National Convention in 1968, very attractive, capable woman. He was a former prize fighter and an attorney who was going to run for governor, and see, if the anti-war people [prevailed], he [would lose] his chance for governor. And, in fact, I made that as my mission, that he would never make it for governor.

And so in 1973, I learned [that] Barbara Mikulski, Senator Barbara Mikulski of Maryland, then a representative from Baltimore, was head[ing] up the [new] Mikulski Commission on Party Rules. After the McGovern defeat, a lot of people blamed it on the party rules [p/o], and I can see why. So they wanted to revise the party rules, and the persons [who were] behind this mostly [were] George Meany and Al Barkin in conjunction with Senator [Henry 'Scoop'] Jackson in Washington. Senator Jackson in Washington felt that his chances of becoming president [depended on how open or closed the presidential delegate selection process would become].

**MH:** Henry 'Scoop' Jackson.

**CM:** Yes [p/o]. So he or his staff people attended every one of these [Mikulski Commission] meetings, as did organized labor. [The Commission had become] hopelessly deadlocked [p/o]. So Scoop Jackson managed to persuade the head of the Democratic National Committee to appoint five more members so that they could break the deadlock. The deadlock was over quotas. The anti-war people and the most liberal groups wanted fixed quotas for gays, women and blacks [p/o].

**MH:** As early as that?

**CM:** Oh yeah. Well in fact, and this is one of the untold stories of progress in this country. I read all these things about women's groups and how women have arrived and so on and so forth. Well they arrived because of the anti-war movement, or the anti-war movement succeeded partly because of them. We had coalitions with the blacks, [women] and gays, among others, where

our support for them made them formidable and they made us formidable, and it was a beautiful interaction. It was the anti-war movement that was responsible for most of the progress on civil rights and, well maybe not on civil rights, but much of the progress in civil rights, and most on women's issues. And I think maybe on gays, too.

So where does that leave me?

**MH:** So there were a number of anti-war connections with the Mikulski Commission?

**CM:** Oh yeah, and so they were deadlocked over quotas. The Jackson people and the old guard, you know, wanted nothing to do with quotas, because they knew that these leaders of these rogue groups were not going to support Jackson [for president].

So anyway, I asked Nancy Chandler and Vi Pease, Vi Pease was state party chairman at the time, told her I wanted [to fill one of the five new positions on the commission].

**MH:** Where was she from, Vi Pease?

**CM:** Buxton, I believe, now. I don't know where they were from at the time, I think they were living in Augusta.

**MH:** Nancy Chandler's from Waterville, right?

**CM:** Yeah, originally, yeah, Bruce Chandler's her husband. Her son [Peter Chandler] is one of the leading organizers for Mike Michaud, and now Allen.

So they were deadlocked over quotas. I told Vi Pease that I wanted to be one of the new five members [and I] was appointed. [p/o] I went to my first meeting in Washington, and we had a big meeting in Boston. In Boston, we had a guy there named – his name escapes me at the moment – Alan Baron, who had a weekly newsletter that was called *The Baron Report*. In fact, he and I roomed together in Washington, or in Boston, I don't remember which. And he sat right behind Al Barkin and Henry Jackson at this Boston thing, where I was giving a speech on the future of party rules and how the existing rules would be fine if it [had not been] for the conflict between the [pro-]war people and the anti-war people. Jackson turned to Al Barkin and says, "Who in the hell is that guy, is he one of ours or one of theirs?" And Barkin [replied] "No, he's one of theirs."

I [soon] wrote a paper that I sent to Barbara Mikulski, a six- or seven-, eight-page paper arguing – this is all leading up to where I, how come I was involved with Mitchell – arguing that the way to break the deadlock on quotas would be to have proportional representation for presidential preference at every level of the delegate selection process. And that way, presuming you had several candidates, if you had a candidate that didn't want to include [a fair number of] blacks and women, [he or she would] pay a political price [p/o]. Other candidates would pop up who would become advocates, so that the situation would take care of itself.



Well, they bought that. Barbara Mikulski thought [my proposal] was [worthy of support], and I began agitating for it. There was a woman from Texas named Patman; her father [for decades had been] chairman of the House Ways and Means [Committee].

**MH:** Wright Patman.

**CM:** Wright Patman, yeah.

**MH:** The credit union in the House of Representatives is named after him.

**CM:** Is that right? Well he was there for about thirty-two years as chairman or something, you know, and [Pat] was his daughter. She and I formed an alliance, because she'd been on the commission from the beginning and she knew all those people. I didn't know anybody there when I [arrived].

[When] I'd say I was from Maine [they], instead of talking about Muskie or Hathaway, they'd say, "Oh yeah, yeah, yeah, we know George Mitchell," and they'd go into these long dissertations on what a wonderful person [he was] – because George Mitchell was our National Committeeman at the time, [and several commission members were also on the Democratic National Committee]. (I'd never met Mitchell, and never heard him speak or anything.)

I was teaching at the University [of Maine at Orono] at the time. This particular night I had just come home from teaching a night CED course, and the phone rang and it was George Mitchell. He was running for governor – this was in late 1973 or early '74 – and of course he knew [that] I had the best political organization in the northeastern part of the state because I'd managed to [get] elected to the State Committee [with] votes from some of the anti-war people as well as the, from the old guard [p/o].

And so he called and said, "Well you know, I'm running for governor," he says, "I'd like to have your support." And I said, "You know, I'm on the Mikulski Commission trying to get changes in the party rules [with] proportional representation." And I said, "If you'll support me on proportional representation with members of that committee, [p/o] I'll support you for governor." There wasn't a tenth of a second hesitation. "I'll support proportional representation," he says. Then I [said], "Then I'll support you for governor."

And he did. I mean, I don't know what he did [with individual committee members] because I didn't have any follow up contacts with him, but I could use his name, and I'm sure he did some things. I didn't know him well enough to intrude on his privacy or anything. So that's how I met George Mitchell.

**MH:** Let me ask you, Clyde, you've made several references to your political organization. Can you describe it, and how you put it together and when it existed and when it didn't?

**CM:** At first, I didn't put it together so much as inherited it. It existed when these university people primarily, a guy named Fitzgerald, a kind of wild man [who] taught English, and Bud Schoenberger and Herb Bass. Herb Bass was very astute – as was Schoenberger – very astute political people, and they, when I heard that they were putting on this symposium or something on the Vietnam War – oh, and Bill Stone was another one, he was in psychology – I went down to hear Schoenberger speak. And I remember him saying, with the case of Vietnam, he was worried about China and he says, “What would happen if the Chinese landed three hundred thousand troops in Mexico and began heading for the Texas border?” He said, “This is the way the Chinese are looking at the Vietnam War. We've got three hundred thousand people there heading into North Vietnam, which is on the Chinese border.”

And boy, that [p/o] really opened my eyes as to the massive seriousness of what we were involved with. I've always felt since that Johnson had some kind of secret understanding with China, but of course I didn't know that at the time, and I don't know it even today but I, it seems to me it had to have been that way.

I became just sort of a tagalong until the Democratic Convention in '68, and I was one of the four or five people who confronted Muskie at the entrance to the convention. I started my first political involvement working for Representative Hathaway in his first election. I thought he was anti-war but he wasn't, he was using the anti-war people to build himself up against Muskie. I didn't see that at the time, and no one did as far as that goes. And there was a Hathaway amendment on the floor, I don't remember what it was, but it gave signals to the anti-war people that the old guard didn't want it and that Muskie wouldn't support it. And so we confronted him to get him to support this amendment.

**MH:** Confronted Muskie?

**CM:** Yeah, and that was the only time that I ever saw Muskie before I went to work for him, before my interview.

**MH:** Was that, that was outside the convention hall?

**CM:** Yeah.

**MH:** What was that like, how did that happen? I mean, you just walked up to him?

**CM:** No, we waited until he came, we knew he would come and so we met him just outside the door. After that, Herb Bass I think left, Fitzgerald left, I remember that, so that pretty much left me and Schoenberger to run things in the anti-war wing. Schoenberger I would say was the leader. I was his, maybe the lieutenant or something. I decided to run for State Committee and got elected, and so became very active on the state level, [I] had all these ties with people because I worked my head off for Gene McCarthy. I went to places like Bar Harbor, Belfast, Dexter, all at my own expense in my own spare time, trying to get people to come to the convention to support McCarthy [p/o].

It's surprising, some of the people I met – one of the things I noticed at the time, by the way, that people don't seem to mention [is that] there was a very significant isolationist wing of the Republican Party at the time, and many of these people were liberal people and they swung over to the Democratic Party to support Gene McCarthy. That wing I think is dead, has been long dead -

**MH:** Who was part of that?

**CM:** In Maine? I can't give you recognizable [names].

**MH:** These were people who felt that we shouldn't be involved overseas.

**CM:** Anywhere, yeah, yeah, they weren't anti Vietnam War so much as they were, you know, to hear George Washington's remarks about no entangling alliances. I think Taft was a leader of that nationally.

**MH:** Robert Taft.

**CM:** Yeah. So it was a significant group, and they greatly strengthened our cause.

**MH:** When you went to places like Bar Harbor, did you meet with small groups of people, or did you give speeches, or was it mostly one-on-one?

**CM:** No, it was one-on-one. In fact, I had the editor, oh, I can't remember her name, it was a wonderful elderly lady that had her own [weekly] newspaper.

**MH:** *Bar Harbor Times*?

**CM:** No, I don't think so. She had her own newspaper, or maybe it was just a column. And Dr. Spock's sister lived in Bar Harbor; I met with her, because he was one of the leaders of the anti-war movement nationally. But most of these people, you know, are not people whose names would be remembered statewide or anything like that.

**MH:** So this continued throughout the 1970s, and did it wind down after the United States pulled out in '75?

**CM:** Well, of course I changed my orientation then, because when Senator Mitchell decided to run for governor in '74 and I said I'd support him, my wife and I had to make a decision. We were hired, I was hired along with three other, two others, no, several other professors, would-be professors – I wasn't a professor at the time, I was an instructor. We had a marvelous dean named Dean Nolde, and Nolde had this idea for a new curriculum. He hired me and several others who were going to be part of offering new courses for a new curriculum for the university, [but] the poor guy contracted cancer and had to leave.

**MH:** He was dean of liberal arts and sciences?

**CM:** Yeah, yeah, arts and sciences, not liberal.

**MH:** Well, they call it that now.

**CM:** Oh, they do?

**MH:** Yeah, but I guess it was, back then it was arts and sciences, yeah, right.

**CM:** And so when he left, that ruined the support for our [academic] courses. A lot of the professors and specialist professors in the university resented our existence even, because I was teaching, for example, things like an interdisciplinary course talking about what psychology has contributed and what the shortcomings of it was as a discipline, and sociology and political science and so on all wrapped into one course, and they wanted to know what the hell I was doing, as an instructor commenting on Freud and Rogers and [others].

**MH:** That wasn't the norm, then, in the mid-'70s.

**CM:** That's right. So [my wife and I] had to either decide to give up college teaching, find a college out of state, or if we wanted to stay here, find some alternative career. And my wife is just tremendous. Neither one of us has ever much been interested in money, and she said, "Well, you know, let's take a chance," because we had all these political contacts by then. [p/o] For the first six or eight years we were here, six years, we wanted nothing but to get out of here, it was awful, I mean there were no decent restaurants, and [I-]95 hadn't been completed. I just came down here to be near the university so I could take some graduate courses. I taught at Hermon High School in order to [earn] money to do that. And my wife worked as a secretary of the superintendent at Bangor Mental Health Institute.

That, by the way, is a story I won't go into, but my first organizing experience in Maine [occurred when] we defeated Longley at the height of his powers. He wanted to close Bangor Mental Health Institute and I and Marshall Stern and some other people, a woman named Robinson, who I think worked at the hospital, organized. We [created] a region-wide political organization. I wrote Marshall Stern's testimony.

**MH:** I'd like to talk to you later about that, I think we should get that down in the record.

**CM:** Okay. And so anyway, I had a lot of ties from that too. So we had to decide what to do. And by that time I'd become pretty close to Mitchell and doing some volunteer[ing] so he hired me for twenty dollars a week to be his campaign chairman, I guess you'd call it, for eastern Maine with an office in Bangor.

**MH:** This is in '73.

**CM:** 'Seventy-four, really.

**MH:** Right, okay, the year the election was going to occur.

**CM:** Yeah, and I left the University -

**MH:** What was that like?

**CM:** I left the University of Maine in '74. Huh?

**MH:** What was that like, the good governor's election, the election for governor?

**CM:** Oh, that was an exciting time. I was blessed, we had five people up here, a woman named, a young woman who was a [marathon] runner named Barbara Hameluk, Ann Pomeroy from Bar Harbor, a guy named Fields, and another guy named Morales, those were [four] of them, and Ida McDonald. I'll mention Ida in a moment, but they worked their tails off. Brennan was our chief opponent. There were three candidates, Joe Brennan, George Mitchell and, oh, [an] Irishman from Aroostook County, [Peter Kelley].

**MH:** Peter?

**CM:** Peter.

**MH:** Yes, I can remember the name.

**CM:** Kelley, Peter Kelley. Joe Brennan, in my opinion, has always run campaign[s] based on what we call the Irish mafia, which really is a distortion of course. But his greatest supporters were Irish people, and his idea of a campaign was reaching out to them and them reaching out to him, and to hell with everybody else. That's my jaundiced opinion. And they assured him that Bangor, they'd take Bangor in a walk. I don't remember what the polls showed at the time but I think he was favored, or it was so close that it was too close to call, and Kelley was always figured to be third.

Well, due to the [work] of [my crew], we had a phone banking operation. Ida McDonald was on that, and Cappy Clancy and some others, and day after day after day, I had the luxury of having eight to ten people making phone calls from like two o'clock in the afternoon till eight or nine at night every single day during this primary. And we were calling a pretty wide area, Washington County, and I don't remember if we did Aroostook as well; probably not. Plus mail and literature drops, you know, I mean what vigor these people had, just unbelievable. We were all workaholics.

**MH:** Was that because of personal visits by the Senator that energized you? Or did he, did the Senator, did Senator Mitchell, then candidate Mitchell, have personal contact with these people?

What brought them out, what motivated them to support an attorney from Portland?

**CM:** I honestly don't know. I mean, he was a tremendous speaker; the first time I heard him speak I was greatly impressed. But he wasn't up here much; I pretty much [ran] the operation myself. But, boy, they were committed.

**MH:** Did you have a campaign office, or did you run it out of your home?

**CM:** Yeah, no-no, we had a campaign office, yeah, right downtown. And, well we had, what, eight or, six or eight, ten phones or whatever. And I was getting my twenty dollars a week, I told him I needed that as a minimum to get by on. And my wife was still working. Again, thanks to her, this wouldn't have been, a lot of things wouldn't have been possible.

And so anyway, the results came in. And the surprising thing to me was that Kelley edged us in Bangor, but Mitchell and Kelley ran one and two, with Joe Brennan a lesser third.

**MH:** So Kelley came in first?

**CM:** Yeah.

**MH:** And Mitchell was close behind him.

**CM:** Yeah, in Bangor, in Penobscot County. And the reason that Kelley – I picked this up during the campaign, because I did some, a little door-to-door stuff myself – was that a lot of people from Aroostook had moved [p/o] to this area, a lot of them, a lot of them were Irish people too, not that it was just Irish. But they all had a high regard for Peter Kelley, and I guess he really is a pretty honorable guy. And I think that accounted for his strength. Or it may have been because the fireworks between Mitchell and Brennan were so hostile.

**MH:** What was the nature of that?

**CM:** Well, of course I'm biased but I put the whole onus on Brennan. I mean, Brennan was saying that he was the candidate of the people, where Mitchell, Mitchell was never shy about going, asking people for money to support his campaign, and Brennan wouldn't do that, a lot of candidates won't. And he had Mitchell [portrayed] as the candidate of the 'fat cats,' while he was the common guy. [p/o] I can remember wearing a Mitchell button [when] I was friends with Brennan's wife, Kaye, Miss Maine. She was very active politically at the time, before they divorced. I remember sitting, standing in conversation [near] her at Augusta, and she looked over her shoulder and saw me there. We'd had great relations until that point, [but] she says, "I'm sorry, Clyde, but I don't want you in our group with that button on." See, I had a Mitchell button on my [coat]. It was really bitter.

And Joe Brennan, wrongly, I'm sure, but he blamed me. Word got back to me through some of the Brennan people later that he blamed me for his defeat because he didn't take Bangor, he

didn't take this area. And as I say, that's probably giving me too much credit. So my relations with Brennan were extremely bitter after that. They were before too, because I always gave him the needle and, you know, did what I could to put him down and elevate Mitchell.

**MH:** Who did you work with in that campaign, I mean in other words, who was the Senator's campaign manager, or did he run it himself?

**CM:** Nancy Chandler.

**MH:** Nancy Chandler, okay, I see. Were there similar operations in Portland and Waterville, Augusta?

**CM:** Oh, no one had the organization [I had]. [p/o] But these workers I had, you just could not, you couldn't match, you know. I don't think anybody could match the dedicated employees that I had.

**MH:** Any interesting stories from that primary race you can remember?

**CM:** I remember that there was a national outfit that filmed the campaign, and he came up, and I remember on election night eve I had an outlandish necktie, it was orange, blue, and green, great big necktie that I always used to wear at political events for Mitchell. And so they took extensive films, and they filmed Barbara Hameluk and others that were going around door-to-door. Mitchell called me from Portland and, on the eve, you know, to get an input of what our results were and so on and so on several times, and they were filming on that but nothing ever came of the film. I don't know what happened [to it].

**MH:** So Mitchell prevails in the primary, and your opponent, you had two opponents, you had Jim Erwin, is that right?

**CM:** Erwin.

**MH:** Erwin, and Jim Longley.

**CM:** The Republican, and then, and Longley.

**MH:** What went wrong, I guess is the question?

**CM:** Well, the Senator never would buy this, but we led in the polls all the way, you know, there was never any, no one was close to us, I mean like we'd have twenty-nine to twenty-two for Mitchell over Erwin, or maybe thirty to twenty-two, something like that – I remember twenty-nine was one of them – with Longley down around four or five. But the thing was, there was a huge [number of] undecided and I was very much aware of that. And I remember we had a big dinner at Old Town that I emceed, I think I did anyway. I remember I introduced the Senator at this supper meeting in Old Town, we must have had I'll say a hundred to a hundred

and fifty Democrats there. I think it cost them two dollars apiece or something like that for a baked bean supper.

And I was sitting at the head table with him and he [said], “Well, how’s it going Clyde?” And I says, “Well I’m a little bit concerned,” Senator – I didn’t say Senator, of course, “George,” I said, “about Longley.” And he says, “About Longley?” And I said, “He’s coming on like gang busters and I think he’s, I’m really worried.” And there was a pause and he [Mitchell] said, “What are you saying, that he’s going to win this election?” I paused a long time and said, I couldn’t quite bring myself to that conclusion, but I said, “No, but he’s going to be very, very close.” And then a couple of weekends later, maybe the next weekend, the *Bangor News* endorsed him, endorsed Longley.

**MH:** Now how, where, time-wise, when was this, how long before the election date?

**CM:** Maybe September, I think September, ‘74. The *Bangor News* endorsed Longley, and as I say, this was mid-September, and that made him overnight from a joke candidate into a serious candidate. The other thing was that Jim Erwin’s campaign collapsed completely. He wasn’t even a contender, I mean, the last week it was going to be Mitchell or Longley.

And so Mitchell, understandably, and this was my view which he doesn’t quite accept I think to this day, was that with him leading in the polls throughout, he ran a campaign based on not to make any mistakes, rather than to be an aggressive type campaigner [that] he became later. He wasn’t a great campaigner in ‘74, in my opinion.

**MH:** Why not?

**CM:** Well for one thing, he has a tremendous smile, and he worked his head off like he always does, and he’d come up to strangers, you know, and he’d flash that smile and say he was running for governor, and for a lot of people it came across as phony. I think that was one thing.

The other thing – this is a good story – Barry Valentine -

**MH:** Now, who’s he?

**CM:** Okay, Barry Valentine, I refer to him to this day as my driver. We were in Aroostook County, coming back from Aroostook County, and I remember we’d just left Houlton. We were on the turnpike heading home [p/o] from Houlton, and Barry Valentine was driving and the Senator was in the front seat, and I was in the back working on some papers. He was working on some papers, too. And I’d been waiting for a long time to say this, and finally I got up the courage and finally I said, “George,” I said, “there’s something I’ve got to say.” I said, “You know, you don’t have a good image on TV.” I said, “You have a heavy dark beard, and you’ve got those dark rimmed spectacles and it gives you a dark” – I don’t know if I used the word sinister, but I think I did – “almost sinister appearance.” And I said, “I think if you got glasses like mine that were more open and didn’t hem you in like that it would help.”



Well, he didn't say anything. And we drove for, oh, my guess is maybe twelve, fifteen miles, and finally he turned around in the seat and he looked me in the eye and he says, "Clyde, you know how [badly] I want to be governor, don't you?" And I said, "Well, yes." He said, "You know, I'm working night and day and wearing myself to a frazzle; we're up here in Aroostook County going here and there and everywhere else, there's nothing more I can do. You know that don't you?" And I said, "Yeah, yeah." He says, "Well I don't want to be governor [badly] enough to get glasses like yours."

I've been gratified in recent years, and I haven't mentioned it to him but you'll notice that about ten years ago he began to get glasses that opened up his eyes. In fact, I saw him one time with these huge lenses, you know, and I'm gloating as I'm looking at him, you know, but I've never had the heart to remind him. Barry Valentine, by the way, was appointed the head of the Federal Aviation Administration by Jimmy Carter, by President Carter, it was a presidential appointment, and I still refer to him as my driver.

**MH:** What's he doing now?

**CM:** I don't know. He's from York County; he's from Kittery or York or somewhere around that way.

**MH:** Was he always from there, or was he up in this area at some point?

**CM:** No, he was the Senator's driver, that's how come he was up here. In those days you didn't, in the gubernatorial campaign you didn't fly everywhere, you know, it was expensive.

**MH:** Now when it came to be, you know, the last hours of that campaign, did you stay in Bangor or did you go to Portland, or where were you when the election results came in?

**CM:** Oh, in Portland, I was in Portland. No, no, oh, the primary.

**MH:** I'm talking about general election.

**CM:** The general election, I was in Portland. Yeah, Muskie and all those people on the stage down there at the Eastland Hotel, yeah. Something I reminded myself of that I've just, slipped back, had to do with the election. Turn that off for a second.

*(Taping paused)*

**MH:** Three you were going to tell.

**CM:** Two of them. I think he had a lot of confidence in me at the time. The Maine Snowmobile Association that was founded – their newspaper, they had a marvelous newspaper – by a fellow in Hampden [named Ed Armstrong], and he came here from Chicago, was a strong

right wing, sort of like a Ron Paul was type of Republican, and he and I hit it off real well, and became good friends as a matter of fact. And they were an extremely powerful organization in those days. I think they still are formidable but I don't think as much as then.

So I think they were the sponsors of the debate in Bangor between, oh, let me see, the Republican candidate was from Millinocket. There was a Republican candidate from Millinocket – can't remember who the other candidates were. But it was a forum for all of those that were running for governor. I spoke for George Mitchell at that forum and got into a debate with some of the Republican candidates, which I enjoyed immensely, I felt quite honored to serve in that capacity.

The other story is not very flattering to me. Late in the campaign, I think it was in late October when he ran against Emery – am I jumping too far ahead?

**MH:** Nope.

**CM:** This would be 1982. I'll backtrack.

**MH:** That's fine, this is fine.

**CM:** I had heard through the grapevine, one of my Republican friends or something, that Emery had a masterful rabbit that he was going to pull out of the hat, and that he thought this would either make or break him in the campaign. And at the time he decided [p/o] to walk from Bangor to Ellsworth. Well, it snowed that night, and Emery was ridiculed in the press and elsewhere, I heard it many times from many people, what an idiot he must be to make a walk like that in a driving snowstorm.

**MH:** It's a dangerous walk on a good day.

**CM:** But they had an event in Machias where he was going. This was about a day after this snowstorm, where he was supposed to spring this thing. Well, the day came [but] it was an extremely foggy night in Portland and the Senator's plane couldn't get out of the airport. So he called me. He wanted me to represent him. Well I felt that whatever it was that Emery had planned, I didn't want to be there because I didn't know what it was and I thought it must be extremely significant and I could do nothing but let [Mitchell] down. [But] he said, "No, no, no, you've got to go." And I said, "No, I'm not going to go." And we went back and forth for maybe ten minutes on the phone, and finally I caved in and said I'd go. And I went. But Emery had no master plan. I mean, I think I carried the thing fairly well. As a matter of fact, in the exchanges that we had, I made a little talk for Mitchell. It was open to questions and so on. So of course I enjoyed those kinds of things -

**MH:** So you were his, kind of a surrogate for him when he wasn't in the area, in both the race for governor in 1974 and later in '81, '82.

**CM:** I think that's a fair statement; I think he would say that that probably was true. We were not as close when he became majority leader [p/o]. I mean we drifted. He had so many other interests and things probably and wasn't up here as often.

**MH:** When Churchill was out of power, they used to call it the Wilderness Years, you know, when he was kind of out in the wilderness, you know. And when Mitchell lost the governor's race, until Jimmy Carter came in and appointed him to be U.S. attorney, did you have any contact with the Senator at all in that period?

**CM:** No, no.

**MH:** So when did it resume?

**CM:** Because he felt that it was, well, of course he was only [a federal] judge for what, sixteen months, eighteen months or something like that?

**MH:** It was less than a year, actually.

**CM:** Was it less than a year? I know it was a very short period of time. But when, the most astounding thing that happened in my whole political career was when Joe Brennan appointed Mitchell to fill the Muskie seat.

**MH:** Let's talk about that a little, I'd like to know more about that.

**CM:** Well, I don't know a lot about it except that when I heard that, when Muskie said he was going to become secretary of state, Muskie asked me if I wanted to go with him to Washington. I talked to my wife and we decided no, we'd take our chances here. We didn't know what the future held. And people, a couple people called me, wanted me to make some calls [to Brennan urging him to appoint] Hathaway, [but] by that time I had had it with him, and I said, "But why not George Mitchell?" So I started making some calls for George Mitchell, [while he] was upstairs in the courthouse.

**MH:** This is on your own, you started making calls.

**CM:** Yeah, and he was in the courthouse, upstairs in the courthouse, so after three or four phone calls I said, "Well geez, I'd better tell him that, you know, that I'm doing this." So I called him, he says, "Clyde," he says, "I'm a federal judge, I can't lift a finger on my own behalf." And to me, I took it as a further signal that I should, you know, make more phone calls, and I said, "Well all right, all right." And I didn't think it would work, I mean I didn't think there was a prayer that Brennan would appoint his old enemy Mitchell, I mean that he resented so. I mean, Mitchell had all this brilliance, you know, and in my opinion all the things that Brennan didn't have.

And so Mitchell was the one, to backtrack a little, that got me the job with Muskie in '74, after

his defeat. And so I had this [Muskie] office in Bangor. [Six years later], when Brennan decided to appoint Mitchell, I didn't change desks, phone numbers or anything, I just stayed right there and continued to operate.

**MH:** [p/o] After George Mitchell was appointed by Brennan, did you have a meeting with him, was there ever any doubt that you would stay on, from his side?

**CM:** I don't know. I kind of thought on my side that it would most likely that I would. But I don't know what he was thinking.

**MH:** Talk to me a little about, tell me about your kind of personal interaction with George Mitchell. It obviously became much more intense when you were working for him when he was a sitting senator.

**CM:** Well, yeah, so we're talking about probably the '82 campaign.

**MH:** Right. He was appointed in May of 1980, when Muskie becomes secretary of state. And so that's really when your, you become his employee, a federal employee for him as senator.

**CM:** Yeah, yeah, just continued right on, I never missed a paycheck, you know. Mitchell was remarkable. And I've never known anyone that would carve up the clock the way he would. He would have every minute of every day figured in. He didn't like to get started early in the morning, but let's say we're going to start at quarter of nine. The political strategy was that we were going to hit the rural areas throughout the early days of the campaign, right up to Labor Day, and talk with as many groups and many people as we could, and then when Labor Day came, to focus more on Bangor and Portland, maybe Presque Isle, where the three TV centers were, and the newspaper centers were. And of course Lewiston also had newspapers, but they didn't have a TV station.

And so we would start out like at quarter of nine in the morning, and maybe at ten after nine we got a meeting with some, I remember we had a meeting with a Catholic priest in Ellsworth who was dedicating a new church building or a new community building or something, you know. And so he allowed like twenty-five minutes for that, so at twenty-five to ten, you know, we're to be heading for, let's say, Machias, which is about an hour away, or Milbridge, let's say, it's probably half way there. [p/o] [I might say it's] thirty-five, forty minutes [to] here. He'd look at the schedule, the preliminary schedule and say, "No no, we can make that in twenty-eight minutes." I don't know what would have happened if we'd ever had a flat tire, because there was not a spare moment in the whole schedule, [but] we never did have [a flat].

**MH:** When you were at a meeting, like this priest in Ellsworth, did the Senator look to you to extract him from one appointment so he could get to the next, or did he do it himself? [p/o]

**CM:** Both, both. If I didn't think, if I thought it was a little awkward for him to do it, I would do it. But ordinarily he would cut it himself.

**MH:** You mentioned the press, the three media outlets, Portland, Bangor, and Presque Isle. Senators obviously have press secretaries, but I sense that people like you who were working in the state, a lot of your job was to deal with the press.

**CM:** Yeah.

**MH:** Can you talk a little bit about your role in terms of dealing with -

**CM:** Well, Mitchell didn't have any regard I guess for what I call [specialized functions]. I mean, we'd be driving down, I remember one time we left Presque Isle and we'd hardly got out of the city, and Dean Rhodes was the *Bangor News* correspondent up there. "When you get back to the office I want you to write a press release and send it up to Dean Rhodes," to say such-and-such, you know [p/o]. So when I got back to the office I'd write the press release and send it up to Dean Rhodes, and probably send a copy to Washington.

I was kind of spoiled because when Muskie was there we had, to me, one of the best newsmen that anybody ever had named Bob Rose. Bob came to respect me I guess and authorized me to write press releases, although I'd usually run them by him. [p/o] And of course I wrote a lot of memos throughout my [tenure], and that may have been part of the thing.

Well, when Mitchell became senator, I don't know whether I'm imagining things, but somehow I don't think he had a high opinion of Bob Rose and he didn't hire him to stay on, which I thought was a big mistake. I didn't say anything about it, but I did have [a conversation concerning] a woman on [the Muskie] staff named -

**MH:** I think Anita [Jensen].

**CM:** Yeah, so I said, so we're driving somewhere and I said, "Senator, there's one person on the Muskie staff, who's probably one of the most obnoxious people you've ever met in your life, and I think that you'll develop a hostility toward her, as most people do, I think." And I [added], "I think there's a great danger that you're not going to keep her on, but I think she's probably the most valuable, single person you could keep on your staff." He didn't say anything, but he did keep her on and I always wondered if I had a role in that. And he did come to see [how valuable she was].

**MH:** Well, he's asked Anita Holst Jensen to be part of this oral history project [*sic* Jensen's legislative compendium is a separate endeavor from the oral history project].

**CM:** Oh, he has?

**MH:** She's doing the legislative record for this project.

**CM:** Well she's a brilliant, brilliant woman. The Senator wrote all [of] his own speeches

when he ran for governor, in the early days, but as he became majority leader and things got so pressured, he and Anita would collaborate on draft[s]. Maybe [we would] be riding along in the car and he'd say – Anita tended to use big words, you know – and he'd cross [something] out [saying], “People don't talk that way,” and he'd write in his own [words]. So he'd end up with his own version of the speech, which is one of the things that I really liked about him. He always had to have his own input on his own speeches.

And now, where does that leave us?

**MH:** Well, let's cycle back a little bit to the, let's talk a little bit, think in terms of the 1982 campaign, and you know, how was that run, what was that like?

**CM:** Well, we had the strategies, as I said, of hitting the rural areas [first]. I can remember one time the janitor of the Congregational Church in Machias, the Senator had given a talk on any number of subjects, you know, as he tended to, foreign policy and this and that and so on. And I happened to be back there two or three days later and I ran into this janitor, and he came up to me and said, “Boy,” he says, “I enjoyed hearing Senator Mitchell talk.” He [said], you know, “He can explain the big subjects, in ways that even people like me can understand.” And that was the talent, one of the real talents that he had. He [p/o] would have made a great teacher or professor, which was one of his ambitions earlier on.

And as I say, he'd carve up the clock. He'd [cover a lot of ground even in Aroostook County], all the big issues were in Aroostook [p/o]. I mean, there was still a carry over of the Maine woodsmen, who were almost in armed conflict against the imported Canadian labor. We had the possible closing of Loring Air Force Base, [p/o]. And the Dickey-Lincoln Dam project was to be in Aroostook County, which had tremendous support in eastern Maine. Potato issues were a perennial thing, about getting federal help when their storage made the potatoes go soft, [because] moisture content was too high.

**MH:** Just there, you obviously have, I think, a fondness for Aroostook County; you spent a lot of time up there. That comes out in your interviews with the Muskie Oral History Project. How did the Senator, Senator Mitchell, deal with Aroostook County and its particular challenges?

**CM:** Well, he dealt very extensively and well with the big issues, it wasn't so much on a personal level, you know. But I was up there [p/o] a great majority of my time. You had to be there, because that's where the issues were. And everybody knew it, that I had a direct liaison with the Senator, and that helped a little bit. I think he was on the right side of, you know, just about all those issues, so it was a win-win situation for us.

I had a personal confrontation with probably the most powerful single guy in the County when I worked for Muskie, named Jim Baressi who was the head of the Northern Maine Regional Planning Commission. And Aroostook is kind of a, you know, it's a small town area, even in some of the larger communities. The town managers and representatives to the legislature didn't [have] much *savoir faire* as to the real world of Washington and so on and so forth. Baressi was

a master at getting federal grants, and he was responsible for an enormous number of economic development projects that took place in that county, and I give him credit for that. But he also built a personal empire. He had this marvelous office building, with like phones in the bathroom, you know, in several bathrooms I guess. And in my opinion it went to his head. When he took on Muskie publicly, I confronted him on it and so on and so forth a few years before.

But I learned when I was working for Mitchell that, I remember the town manager of Madawaska and a couple of other individuals, not necessarily town managers, gave me signals that they didn't really like Baressi, but they had to publicly go along with him because he was the key to their success. So that enabled me to put some distance between myself and [Baressi].

**MH:** What kind of grants was he getting for the towns?

**CM:** Well, they were economic, EDA grants mostly, you know. And, you know, he was just tremendously instrumental.

**MH:** When you went to the County, alone and with the Senator, did you have kind of a routine?

**CM:** I had two great friends, one in the St. John Valley, and one in Presque Isle. The one in Presque Isle was a guy named Burrell Carmichael. He had his own business, he ran his own stationery store where he sold typewriters and office supplies and so on. I just loved the guy. I mean, he's dead now, of course but, and he -

End of Interview

[For a further interview with Clyde MacDonald, see: June 12, 2008]